

NORTH DEVON COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the NORTH DEVON CREMATORIUM JOINT COMMITTEE held at the Crematorium on Friday 7th June 2024 at 2.30 p.m.

Present: Representing North Devon District Council

Councillors Cann, Haworth-Booth, P. Leaver, Lovering, Renshaw and Walker (Vice Chair).

Representing Torridge District Council

Councillors Johns (sub for Councillor Cottle-Hunkin), Gubb, Harding and Inch (Chair).

Officers

NDC Head of Customer Focus, Crematorium Manager, Treasurer, Secretary and Accountant

(a) APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR 2024/2025

RESOLVED that Councillor Inch be appointed Chair of the Joint Committee until re-appointments are made in the next municipal year.

(b) APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Denton and Trainee Crematorium Manager.

(c) APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIR 2024/2025

RESOLVED that Councillor Walker be appointed Vice Chair of the Joint Committee until re-appointments are made in the next municipal year.

(d) MINUTES

(i) RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 2nd February 2024 (previously circulated) be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

(ii) Matters Arising. There were no matters arising.

(e) ITEMS BROUGHT FORWARD WHICH IN THE OPINION OF THE CHAIR SHOULD BE CONSIDERED AS A MATTER OF URGENCY

There were no items of urgency.

(f) DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest declared.

(g) CREMATORIUM MATTERS

The Joint Committee considered a report by the Crematorium Manager (previously circulated).

i) Trainee Manager: Update

It was noted that new Trainee Manager had been appointed following interview on 1st March 2024. Jo Teasdale from North Devon Council was the successful candidate and she started on 1st April.

ii) Crematorium Figures- (excluding NVF)

The Cremation figures were noted. It was also noted that there were 35 direct cremation in May.

iii) Phase B Works (Garage Store/Memorial Room)

There were a few final invoices yet to be received but the project was essentially 'on-budget'

iv) Crematorium Solar Panels

It was noted that the consultant who we had hoped to use to assist with the design/costing of the solar panels at the crematorium was unable to assist due to workload. Enquiries were in hand to identify another local alternative.

v) Metals Recycling Charity Award

It was noted:

That Cruse had been nominated for the second 2023 award (due approx. July 2024) and Children's Hospice SW had been submitted for the first 2024 nomination (Due December 2024).

Rota for subsequent awards:

Families in Grief
North Devon Hospice
Cruse
Children's Hospice SW

The Crematorium Manager tabled photos of the new Bereavement Suite at North Devon Hospital that had been supported by a metals recycling grant award. He reported that he and Councillor Walker had visited the suite. The Committee recorded its thanks to the bereavement team and others that had delivered an excellent facility.

vi) Maintenance Costs

It was noted that an unexpected failure in the heat management system for the abatement equipment (to remove pollutants) prevented cremations for over two days in April. As a result, a single cremation was transferred to another crematorium with the knowledge and consent of the family as they needed certainty on the collection day for the ashes due to them being taken on a flight.

The cost of this repair and part replacements was approximately £17,500. In addition, on the recommendation of the manufacturer, the filters in the same abatement equipment were replaced after 12-years use as part of preventative maintenance at a cost of £33,000.

Both works were outside the normal maintenance budget expectations and would be funded from the reserve fund.

vii) Utility Costs

It was noted that the gas and electricity were provided through the Crown Commercial Service, a Trading Fund and an Executive Agency of the Cabinet Office, which pooled local authorities to provide best value when procuring.

This had not entirely mitigated the extremely high charges businesses had incurred, resulting in some exceptionally high utility bills, particularly for gas.

Fortunately, from 1st April the gas charges had reduced to a third of their previous level and were now set for 12-months.

(h) OUTTURN 2023/2024

The Joint Committee considered a report by the Treasurer (previously circulated) regarding the outturn for 2023/2024.

RESOLVED:

- i) That the outturn report be noted
- ii) That the 2023/24 surplus of £129,232 be allocated to reserves as follows:
£69,232 surplus transferred to the Equipment Replacement Reserve (some additional equipment costs would be incurred in 2024/25) and £60,000 to the Budget Management Reserve (to provide protection for the increased utility costs).
- iii) That the reserves and balances as outlined in paragraph 5.1 of the report be approved.

(i) DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

It was noted that the next meeting would be on Friday 2nd August 2024 @ 2.30 p.m.

Chairman

The meeting ended at 2.49 p.m.