

**NORTH EAST SURREY CREMATORIUM BOARD**

**12 September 2017 at 10.00 am**

**MEMBERS:** Councillor Paul Wingfield (Chair), Councillor Stuart Thom (Vice-Chair) and Councillors : Philip Jones, Abdul Latif, Geraldine Stanford, Vincent Galligan, Candida Jones

**ABSENT:** Councillor(s) Claire Clay, Ryder and McKinney

**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

The Chair welcomed those present and opened the meeting. For the minutes it was confirmed that Councillor Wingfield is Chair, as this was not clear from the published Agenda. Apologies were received from Councillor Sue McKinney, Councillor Claire Clay and Councillor Michael Ryder.

**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**

The minutes were agreed and signed as a correct record.

**REPORT OF THE SURVEYOR**

Clive Andrews, The Surveyor introduced the report, and drew Members attention to the following points:

- Business activity in first 5 months of the year has seen an ongoing increase in bookings and a 5% average increase in the past 5 years. It was confirmed that despite there being 3 days in August where the site was closed for resurfacing the drive, this did not impact the level of business in August.
- Performance Monitoring of Enable Leisure and Culture was discussed. It was highlighted that Merton Environmental Health officer is very happy with performance and the regular emissions reports. It was confirmed that the Crematorium has retained gold status in this year's Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management's Charter for the Bereaved. This means that it is in the upper quartile of services provided to the bereaved. On behalf of the Committee Councillor Thom thanked the Management and Barbara Ward in particular for their work in achieving gold status. Councillor Abdul Latif asked about how the achievement of gold status is shared with the public. Councillor Geraldine Stanford asked if this is included on the website and promotional literature. The Surveyor advised that he will check if it is on the website and if not look to have it included there. Simon Ingyon Executive Director Parks and Leisure (Enable Leisure and Culture) advised there is a certificate from

ICCM showing the Gold status that has been achieved and this is displayed in the reception to make members of the public aware of this achievement. The Surveyor confirmed that items in the report will be addressed before next meeting and Councillors will be updated accordingly.

- Quality Control Issues. The 2 Complaints detailed in the report were discussed and it was confirmed both have been responded to and resolved.
- Discussion then focused on Cremation fees for children under 18 years of age. The Surveyor advised that whilst writing his report he used the data in the 2015 report, he advised members that subsequently there has been a 2016 report published. Members previously agreed to reduce the fee for cremations for before 10am. It was highlighted that the cremation fee only represents a small part of the overall cost of a funeral, as there are also discretionary fees that make up the total cost.

Councillor Latif asked how much non-discretionary and discretionary fees are. The Surveyor confirmed the non-discretionary fees include the cremation fees and medical fees these are approximately 40% of the overall cost of the service. Councillor Thom asked about Medical fees. The Surveyor advised there will be an update at this years ICCM Learning and Training Convention later this month from Ministry of Justice regarding medical fees and once this is available it will be shared with the Members of the board.

The Surveyor highlighted that according to the Royal London National Funeral Cost Index Report 2016 Funeral Debt for 2016 increased to £147M. Those in debt owed on average £1601 per person for 2016. Councillor Candida Jones asked if there is information on demographic of where that debt is owed. Councillor Latif asked if this debt is usually written off or if individuals are taken to the small claims court. The Surveyor advised this information is not available with regard to the demographics of who owed the debt. He also said it was for the Funeral Director to make a decision on whether to pursue individual funeral debt.

Councillor Galligan asked if funeral directors collect fees in advance and the Surveyor confirmed that sometimes fees are requested in advance and that there is a growing move for funeral directors to ask for payment up front.

The Surveyor pointed out that NESC have helped families by giving a less expensive option of cremation fees before 10am. He pointed out that the aforementioned Royal London 2017 report states 6% of people shopped around for different funeral costs. The Surveyor will provide members with a link to the 2017 report for information.

The Surveyor drew Members attention to appendix C showing crematorium costs. In particular the board were reminded of the current breakdown of Crematorium fees charged by NESC for different ages of people using the service. Members were asked if they wish to retain the current age related Cremation fees structure or if they wish to amend this to a nil charge for a 40 minute chapel service and cremation up to the deceased's eighteenth birthday.

Discussion on this followed and Members pointed out the child age sometimes used is 16 rather than 18. It was clarified that the legal definition of the age of a child is under 18 and Jean Stevenson pointed out state school leaving age has now increased from 16 to 18. Councillor Galligan queried if the charge for children up to 12 should still be made. It was highlighted that in the last year there were only 2 cremations for children under 18. His view was for younger children under 12 would be a good gesture at a very difficult time not to

charge this fee. Councillor Candida Jones suggested that it would be a useful to make this service free for all children up to age 18 years of age.

Following further discussion, the Chair Councillor Paul Wingfield asked for a show of hands from members to indicate if they were willing to agree to change and simplify the charging structure of fees for children under 18 and for adults over 18. All members agreed unanimously that they would wish to make this change.

After the agreement to the simplification of charges, a proposal was made by Councillor Candida Jones to make cremation fees for a 40 minute chapel service and cremation up to the deceased's eighteenth birthday to be at a nil charge from January 2018, this motion was seconded by Councillor Wingfield and considered by the Board. The Board voted unanimously in agreement with this proposal also.

**RESOLVED** that the North East Surrey Crematorium Board

1. Agreed that the fee for a 40 minute chapel service and cremation up to the deceased's eighteenth birthday be at a nil fee from January 2018.

Councillor Wingfield raised a question to the Surveyor regarding the cremation fees charged for persons over 18 years of age being lower than other crematoriums. The Surveyor advised the fees are usually reviewed in December annually. Councillor Candida Jones highlighted that as there is funeral poverty highlighted in this report when this is discussed in December it may be difficult to increase the fee. The Treasurer and Surveyor will advise Members as part of the Treasurer's charges report at the December meeting.

Visits to Funeral Directors Barbara Ward (Bereavement Services Manager,(Enable Leisure and Culture) visited over 60 funeral directors in the area, responses were very positive. No issues were raised for the boards' attention. In respect of Action Plans Members did not raise any questions on the action plan. In respect of Repair and Renewal Works there were no questions on this or on the capital programme. Members were advised resurfacing of the main drive has taken place. The Surveyor highlighted that the ICCM representative advised that this drive way into the crematorium is in top 5 in the country.

In respect of the installation of the heating system Members were advised that there will not be any impact on the crematorium whilst this work is in progress. This is due for completion by the end of October 2017.

### **REPORT OF THE TREASURER**

Jean Stevenson, The Treasurer Introduced the Report. Referring to Appendix A, Expenditure on the Management Agreement by Wandsworths' contractor, Enable, The Treasurer outlined performance for 1 April 2017 to 31 July 2017 against annual budget. She highlighted that there is an ongoing problem with the energy supplier. London Borough of Wandsworth have now had credit notes for the amount charged to them in error, however, Enable have not yet received the invoices for the backlog of energy bills . It was confirmed that the Finance team at Enable are in conversation with energy supplier to resolve this and bring it back up to date. It was confirmed that while there are a couple of items where queries have been raised regarding expenditure being reported on codes that were not in

line with expectations, however the treasurer confirmed that the bottom line of each invoice was in line with her expectations.

Councillor Philip Jones queried why only 64% of budget has been spent so far on the annual memorial service when the service was in July. The Treasurer advised that this is due to delays in raising cheque payments for those due to be paid who did not submit invoices. The Treasurer advised these are now being actioned.

Referring to Appendix B Interim accounts for period 1 April to 25 August 2017 The Treasurer brought board Members attention to the credit figure on maintenance of building and plant. She explained that this is because only very few invoices have been processed through the system, so a number of invoices for the last financial year for Facultatieve Technologies had not been paid. However the Treasurer advised that she now believes these invoices are now being processed.

Referring the Appendix C Annual review of Risks, The Treasurer outlined these for the Members of the Board. She advised that the report has not changed substantially from last year, she asked Members to approve the risk management strategy and to approve the action taken. Councillor Thom mentioned there are 40 risks listed and The Treasurer confirmed this is reviewed and added to every year and new risks are added as and when they are identified. The Treasurer advised the conclusion of the audit information will come to the next meeting.

The Chair asked the Board Members to note the annual review of the Risk Management Strategy and the action plan. The Board voted unanimously to note the review of the Risk Management strategy and the action plan.

**RESOLVED** that the North East Surrey Crematorium Board

1. Agreed that the Risk Management Strategy and action plan be noted.

**ANY URGENT ITEMS BROUGHT FORWARD AT THE DISCRETION OF THE CHAIR**

There was no urgent business.

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting will be held on 5 December 2017 at 10am at Sutton Civic Offices, St Nicholas Way, SM1 1EA.

The meeting ended at 11.30 am

Chair: .....

Date: .....