

11 September 2018

NORTH EAST SURREY CREMATORIUM BOARD

11 September 2018 at 10.00 am

MEMBERS: Councillor Michael Ryder (Chair), Councillor Marsie Skeete (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Rosemary Birchall, Terry Walsh, Jean Crossby and Vincent Galligan

ABSENT Councillor(s) Pauline Cowper, David Simpson, Tony Belton and Graeme Henderson

10. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Belton, and also subsequently from Councillor Pauline Cowper. Also absent were Councillor David Simpson and Councillor Graeme Henderson.

11. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made

MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 June 2018 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

13. REPORT OF THE SURVEYOR

Clive Andrews, the Surveyor introduced the report, which provided an update on activities covering the quarter to September 2018 relating to the management agreement between North East Surrey Crematorium Board and Wandsworth Council, and the responsibilities carried out by Enable Leisure and Culture. Members attention was drawn to the following points:

Business level activity. The Surveyor advised the increase in number of cremations for the year, and also the month on month increases recently seen.

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Performance Monitoring of Enable Leisure and Culture for quarter 4 year 3 (Aug 2018) was discussed. The Surveyor spoke through the exempt report, and responded to Member enquiries on if more of the report could be made public.

Action Plan. The surveyor went through the action plan in appendix C, and outlined in particular the update on the purchase of new land. The Board were advised that once all valuations have been received a report will come forward to a subsequent meeting to provide more details.

The Surveyor spoke through the repair and renewal and capital works, and responded to Member queries, Councillor Galligan asked about the condition of the main driveway. The Surveyor advised that it had been resurfaced 18 months ago and is still in good order and it is believed that no further repairs should be needed for the next 10 years.

Establishing a new ashes lawn. The surveyor advised that last year the board agreed a sum of money to raise the level of the ashes lawn forming part of capital works programme, due to exhaustion of available land within the Garden of Remembrance. The Board were advised that it is now believed that the capital budget for this would exceed the allocated budget as it is now estimated that this would cost minimum of £100k against a budget of £75k.

Following the tour of the ashes lawn in June concerns were raised by Members regarding raising the level of the ashes lawn. Therefore the Surveyor has re-examined the proposals to provide an alternative option. The Board were advised that an alternative site has been identified to establish a new ashes lawn. Members were asked to consider two options

Option 1 to continue with the existing arrangement to mound over the original ashes lawn which would provide space for approximately 50 more years interments. The Board were advised that as part of looking at this option an area of the original ashes lawn has been found which is not yet used, which would potentially give another 5 years worth of space for interments.

Option 2 to create a new ashes lawn elsewhere in the garden - the land identified is adjacent to the cloister walkway. It was estimated that this would provide space for 15 years of interments with the additional possibility of extending the size of the lawn by incorporating space currently used for memorial rose beds thus extending the capacity.

In debate Members indicated they would like to meet at the site to look at the areas allocated for these two options whilst viewing the area and the Surveyor offered to arrange that.

A request was also made for the costs of option 2, to be provided. The surveyor advised that he believed the cost of option 2 would be within the existing £75K budget.

It was suggested that more detail on the costs of the two options should be provided. The Surveyor agreed to get more accurate costings for a subsequent meeting. The Chair pointed

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out that if the options are costed now, and action is not taken within a short period of time detailed plans on costs will have changed.

Councillor Crosby thanked the Surveyor for revisiting the options available.

The advantages and disadvantages for both schemes were provided in the report and these were discussed. Members asked for consideration on if there would be any risk of flooding to be taken into account and asked that a plan for the whole site be provided before a decision is made on the location of the new ashes lawn. Members wished to understand information from a ground water survey. Councillor Walsh was keen that due diligence be completed and asked if there should be consultation with Environment Agency (EA). The Surveyor advised the EA have instigated all cemeteries to carry out ground water surveys which would also include land occupied by NESC.

It was suggested that when a meeting is arranged on site to discuss the options that consultants and experts regarding the land be in attendance to respond to Members queries, and to help with consideration of the long term impact.

Councillor Walsh motioned that a meeting be arranged on site and additional information on costs and long term implications, including suitability of the site, be provided in a report before the decision is taken. It was proposed that this report be considered in the June meeting and also that a pre meeting is arranged on site before this report for decision comes forward. The motion was seconded by Councillor Ryder

RESOLVED: that the North East Surrey Crematorium Board

1. Approved the report as an overview of the Surveyors findings for the management of the crematorium in the past three months from July to September 2018
2. It be agreed that regarding the decision on the arrangements for a new ashes lawn, that a meeting is arranged on site and additional information on costs and long term implications including suitability of the site be provided before the decision is taken. It was agreed that this be considered in the June 2019 meeting and also that a pre meeting is arranged on site ahead of the June meeting.

14. REPORT OF THE TREASURER

Mark Davies, the Treasurer to the Board introduced the report, and drew Members attention to appendix A. In respect of administrative costs where there is a negative figure on gas, he advised this is still being investigated but that the costs coming through from Enable are now based on actual meter readings and should therefore be accurate. The Treasurer advised that overall costs are being well controlled.

In respect of the accounts, in appendix B, the Treasurer highlighted that line 23 shows cash received to August, and updated the Board on the payments received from funeral directors. He advised that the level of arrears have now improved so at end of August £109K was outstanding of which £75K related to August so was not due under the invoice payment

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terms. The Treasurer advised there was previously an issue with one Funeral Director not paying within the agreed terms and that firm are now not given credit terms. Members queried how much capital is available to spend on capital expenditure. It was confirmed that if the cost of the original ashes lawn proposal increased to in excess of 100K as suggested by the Surveyor, that could be absorbed without negatively impacting on the budgeted level of the surplus balances to be distributed.

RESOLVED: that the North East Surrey Crematorium Board

1. Management Agreement performance for the period 1 April 2018 to 31 July 2018 attached at Appendix A was noted
2. The Interim Accounts for the period 1 April 2018 to 31 July 2018 were noted.

15. ANNUAL REVIEW OF RISKS

The report was presented by the Treasurer who spoke through the risk management plan to control risk. Members queried if any of the risks identified could tip from satisfactory to Unsatisfactory, and if so if they should be highlighted. The Treasurer confirmed that the review was completed by Chief Officers and no issues were identified.

Councillor Galligan asked about funeral costs and if more families are querying prices now. Barbara Ward, The Crematorium Manager, advised NESc are cheaper than other crematorium in the area. She also pointed out that some families are doing more themselves like completion of documentation and also not using the services of a funeral director. So it was confirmed that people are looking at how to reduce costs. She also advised that there has been more use of the less expensive early morning time slot.

Councillor Walsh asked what the options are for families not using the services of a funeral director. It was confirmed that some families ask for the hospital to retain the deceased ahead of the funeral rather than using the storage services of a funeral director and also that they arrange their own transport. Members asked if the coffin is sealed on arrival at the crematorium and a concern was raised regarding any malpractice in respect of these family managed arrangements. The Surveyor pointed out that regardless of if arrangements are made by the family themselves or by a funeral director, in all cases the same statutory paperwork is provided and the coffin will be closed on arrival. He advised that if the nameplate on the coffin matches the paperwork that that is taken on trust. The Surveyor accepted that as more funerals take place, where the services of a funeral director are not used this could be an issue to consider in the future.

RESOLVED: that

- 1 The annual review of Risks be noted.

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16. UPDATE ON PROGRESS WITH ACTIONS FROM ANNUAL REVIEW OF INTERNAL CONTROL REPORT

The Treasurer confirmed the review has taken place in line with the Internal Audit recommendations reported in June 2018 and highlighted the proposed minor amendments.

There were no Member questions

RESOLVED: that

1. It was noted that the review of the boards Standing Orders, Scheme of Delegation and Financial regulations had taken place within the Internal Audit recommended time frame
2. The Standing Orders at Appendix A be approved.
3. The Scheme of Delegation at Appendix B be approved.
4. The Financial Regulations at Appendix C be approved
5. It was noted that all other recommendations and actions arising from the Annual Review of Internal Control have now been implemented

17. ANY URGENT ITEMS BROUGHT FORWARD AT THE DISCRETION OF THE CHAIR

There were no urgent items.

18. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Board will take place on 4 December 2018 at 10am at London Borough of Sutton Civic Offices, St Nicholas Way Sutton. SM1 1EA.

The Meeting ended at 11.34.

Chair:

Date: