

3 December 2019

NORTH EAST SURREY CREMATORIUM BOARD

3 December 2019 at 10.00 am

MEMBERS: Councillor Nick Draper (Chair), Councillor Vincent Galligan (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Joan Henry, Nigel Benbow, Jean Crossby, Ryder, Rosemary Birchall, Terry Walsh, Tony Belton and Graeme Henderson

ABSENT Councillor(s)

20. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

21. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

22. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 September were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

23. REPORT OF THE SURVEYOR

Clive Andrews, the Surveyor to the Board presented the report, to provide an update on activities in the quarter to December 2019 relating to the management agreement between North East Surrey Crematorium Board (NESC) and Wandsworth Council. The day to day management responsibilities are carried out on behalf of the Council by Enable Leisure and Culture.

The Surveyor drew Members attention to: Business Level Activity, as shown in appendix A. The Surveyor highlighted that cremation numbers continue to decline in comparison to 2018/2019 figures which was a very busy year. However, based on the five year average the number of cremations undertaken is slightly higher than average for the year and this is positive bearing in mind a report by a leading Funeral Director shows there is a 5% decline nationally in deaths.

Councillor Nigel Benbow arrived at 10.07

Member's attention was drawn to the issue reported regarding the days where the filtration equipment was not in use for 12 cremations. It was clarified to Members that usually 100% of cremations are abated which is above the national requirement. The Environmental

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Health Officer from Merton was kept informed throughout the issue and was satisfied with the action taken.

The Ashes Lawn lawn consultation has concluded, and the results will be shared with Merton and Sutton Consultation teams. The board was advised that the Monitoring officer from Wandsworth had advised that the results of the consultation could not be shared in the purdah period. The results will be discussed in the special meeting on 21 January 2020.

In respect of the purchase of new land the Board were advised that the length of lease is currently being finalised. Board members thanked officers for carrying out the meetings with the funeral directors they asked about the location of the funeral directors and reasons they gave for using NESC. Officers confirmed that funeral directors are both local and also from surrounding areas such as Carshalton and Tadworth. Members also sought clarity on income from recycled metals and the Officer was pleased to report that a further cheque of £8,000 was being prepared as the latest donation to St Raphael's hospice.

Members also asked how long ashes are stored at the crematorium and the Manager advised that the crematorium generally only hold ashes for up to 3 months. In respect of routine and capital works shown in Appendix C and D. The Board was advised that the Capital Programme has progressed well this year. In particular the heat exchanger is now in place and this is used to heat the crematorium. The Board was advised that the 2019 Carol Service will be held at the chapel on Sunday 8 December 2019 at 2.30pm, and all Members are welcome to attend.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted as an overview of the Surveyors findings for the management of the crematorium for the past three months (October - December 2019)

Councillor Henderson arrived 10.37

24. REPORT OF THE TREASURER

The report was presented by Mark Davies, the Treasurer, to the Board. He spoke through each Appendix to draw Board Members attention to key points. In respect of Appendix A, the review of fees and charges. It was highlighted that fees and charges are generally to be increased in line with inflation, as RPI increased by 2.4 % based on the 2019 index. It was confirmed that NESC is one of the cheapest and even with the proposed increase to £605 for a standard cremation fee the charge is still very competitive, compared to other crematoriums, both locally and nationally. It was confirmed that in relation to national statistics NESC is still in the cheapest 5% in respect of level of charges in the country. In particular they asked for details of Direct cremations. The Board were advised that this would be where a funeral director requests a cremation only with no service. These are mainly used for Council contracts where there are no living family members to attend any service hence the reduced fee. It was confirmed that early morning services at broadly half the standard fee are still available.

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In debate members indicated that they would wish to keep the actual cremation cost as low as possible but to continue to increase charges in line with RPI and to cover increases in costs. In respect of Appendix B the Management Agreement, the Treasurer spoke through the main differences as detailed in the report.

Members requested further information regarding energy efficiency of the cremators and if there are plans for the future to use more renewable sources of energy other than gas. The Surveyor confirmed that a number of steps have already been taken to improve efficiency and he outlined these accordingly. He highlighted that the new cremators which have recently been installed are much more efficient and this is evidenced through the reduced gas costs. In addition to improved machinery there have also been improvements in working practice. Electric cremators were tried within the industry but could not compete with gas fuelled cremators. Availability of suitable electric cremators will be investigated at the end of the life span of the current equipment in 10 -15 years-time.

In respect of Appendix C the Boards annual budget for income and expenditure the Treasurer spoke through the proposals. It was confirmed to Members that budget provision for ashes lawn had been increased to allow financial capacity for either option to progress following the consultation. It was also confirmed that there is an ongoing budget provision within the plan to give some flexibility to consider future capital expenditure and continued investment. In respect of Appendix D regarding the Distribution of Surplus Balances it was confirmed the funds will be distributed to the three constituent authorities before Christmas. Finally in respect of Appendix E relating to the conclusion of the External Audit following approval of accounts on 21 June, the Board were advised that the audit was concluded in September, and no matters of concern were raised by the auditors, as part of the process.

RESOLVED that:

1. In relation to Appendix A, the Annual Review of Fees and Charges:
 - a) The Fees and Charges be agreed to take effect from the 1 January 2020.
2. In relation to Appendix B, the Management Agreement Annual Budget:
 - a) The revised Management Agreement Annual budget for 2019/20 be agreed, and
 - b) The original Management Agreement Annual budget for 2020/21 be agreed.
3. In relation to Appendix C, the Income and Expenditure Estimates and the Board's Annual Budget:
 - a) The revised Income and Expenditure Estimates and the Board's Annual budget for 2019/20 be approved;
 - b) The original Income and Expenditure Estimates and the Board's Annual budget for 2020/21;be approved and,
 - c) Payments be authorised to be made within these approved estimates.
4. In relation to Appendix D, the Distribution of Balances to Constituent Authorities:
 - (a) The distribution of £500,000 of its surplus balances in 2019/20 and the proposed distribution to Constituent Authorities be approved.
5. In relation to Appendix E, the Conclusion of the External Audit for the Year Ended 31 March 2019:

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- a) The audited Annual Governance and Accountability Return for the year ended 31 March 2019 be approved.

25. DATE OF NEXT MEETING AND PROPOSED MEETING DATES FOR 2020.

The next meeting of the Board will be a special meeting which will take place on Tuesday 21 January 2020 at 10am at London Borough of Sutton Civic Centre.

RESOLVED That: The following dates be agreed for the meetings in 2020, Tuesday 10 March 2020, Tuesday 23 June 2020, Tuesday 8 September 2020, Tuesday 8 December 2020

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

There were no urgent items, The Chair took the opportunity to request that an additional agenda item be added to a future meeting to review a plan further for energy efficiency. Members took the opportunity to thank officers for their work and quality of reports provided to this meeting.

The meeting ended at 11.40

The meeting ended at 11.40 am

Chair:

Date: