

NORTH EAST SURREY CREMATORIUM BOARD**Report by the Surveyor to the Board – 9 June 2015****1. BUSINESS LEVEL ACTIVITY**

- 1.1 Appendix 1 to this report provides information on cremation numbers for the past five years and for the first month of this financial year. Appendix 2 shows the same information in a graph. The forecast of total cremations for the year 2015/16 has been set conservatively at 1500.
- 1.2 The month in question has seen a 13% increase in activity with 160 cremations compared to the same period last year, despite the need to limit the number of cremations undertaken each day. Demand for business remains high, but it is still necessary to limit the number of cremations to eight per day, due to the continuing problems with the abatement equipment.

This item is for information.

2. PERFORMANCE MONITORING

- 2.1 Performance monitoring records of the day-to-day management and operation of the Crematorium by Wandsworth Council's Bereavement Services team for March, April and May have been included as Appendices 3, 4 and 5. A summary of the information included in the monitoring forms follows below.
- 2.2 **Financial matters.** All financial matters have been correctly reported and there are no issues needing to be drawn to Members' attention.
- 2.3 **Quality control issues.** Both cremator machines continue to be maintained by specialist German company IFZW. The machines are currently operational, but not abated. Ongoing issues with the abatement equipment mean that no more than eight cremations a day are being undertaken. No complaints have been received to date for this quarter. Members are advised that six compliments were received during March and April.
- 2.4 **Employee matters.** Members are asked to note the following:
- Margi Singh (Administration Manager) has received an overall distinction for her first module in Law as part of the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM) Certificate in Management and continues her studies;
 - Karen Levi and Jo Benjafield (Administration Assistants) continue with their studies towards an NVQ in Business Administration.
- 2.5 **Customer statistics.** All statistics have been produced as required.
- 2.6 **Health and safety matters.** There are no matters to report.

This item is for information.

3. OPERATIONAL MATTERS

3.1 In order to achieve 100% abatement while preparations are made to replace the crematory equipment, trading arrangements have been made with Eastbourne and Tunbridge Wells crematoria in order to purchase their spare abated cremations for calendar year 2015. These arrangements are included in the Action Plan at Appendix 6.

3.2 **Replacement of cremators.** The Board’s decision of 15 April 2015 was to award the contract for replacement of cremators and abatement equipment to Facultatieve Technologies (FT). There was no challenge (during the 10-day ‘Alcatel’ standstill period) to the proposed contract award and an order was subsequently placed on 23 April 2015 with FT. The first meeting to establish a programme of works took place on 21 May 2015. The programme indicated at the last Special Meeting of the Board on 15 April 2015 was as follows:

| Task | Completion Date |
|---|---|
| Issue of tender documentation | 8 October 2014 (completed) |
| Closing date for queries regarding the tender documentation | 5 November 2014 (completed) |
| Closing date for return of tender documentation | 10 December 2014 – 12 noon (completed) |
| Site visits to crematoria | 27-29 January 2015 (completed) |
| Interviews with tenderers | 24 March 2015 (completed) |
| Evaluation of tender documentation | 31 March 2015 (completed) |
| Contract award decided (NESC Board meeting) | 15 April 2015 (completed) |
| Contract award notified to Preferred Supplier | 16 April 2015 (completed) |
| Order placed | 22 April 2015 (completed 23 April 2015) |
| Contract commences | Estimated w/c 15 June 2015 |
| Contract completion (26 weeks’ term) | Estimated w/c 14 December 2015 |

3.3 At the meeting of 21 May 2015 it was confirmed that FT will be on site 15th June 2015 and it will take four weeks to remove the existing abatement equipment. Thereafter, in the final week of July, preparations will be made to remove the first old cremator and install the first of the two new cremators. Only once that is satisfactorily installed, will work commence on installing the second cremator. During the installations, cremations will be limited to four per day. The abatement equipment will be installed from October to December 2015 and the crematorium should be fully abated and working to full capacity by 31st December 2015.

3.4 Funeral directors are being informed of the work and the impact on services.

3.5 **Staffing resources.** At its March 2015 meeting, the Board approved the appointment of a 20 hours part-time Administrative Assistant to help with workload in the office. Interviews for six candidates were held on 5 May 2015 and the potentially successful candidate has been informed, the commencement of her role being subject to the standard pre-employment checks.

This item is for information.

4 CREMATED REMAINS CIRCLES

- 4.1 The Board meeting of 9th December 2014 authorised officers to commence negotiations with Wandsworth Council for the use of land surplus to requirements in order to create three additional cremated remains circles. An initial meeting was held with representatives of Wandsworth's Property Services who have undertaken to consider the approach by the Board's officers. Wandsworth's officers have visited Morden to survey and measure the site and detailed consideration is now under way between Wandsworth's property contractor (Lambert Smith Hampton) and the crematorium's management. Further progress will be reported to the next meeting of the Board.

This item is for information.

5 FUTURE SUPPORT FROM WANDSWORTH COUNCIL/ENABLE LEISURE AND CULTURE

- 5.1 **Operational and Management Support.** The Board will recall that in June 2014, a decision was taken to appoint me, Paul McCue, to replace Tony McDonald as Surveyor to the Board. At that time, it was noted that a longer-term decision on the role, and operational support from Wandsworth Council, would need to be made in the light of Wandsworth's moves towards creating a staff mutual for leisure and culture services by 1st October 2015. The final decision on the creation of such a staff mutual will be considered by Wandsworth's Executive on 29th June 2015, but it is anticipated that the recommendation will be to finalise the setting up of the staff mutual – entitled Enable Leisure and Culture – and the granting of a four-year contract to 30th September 2019. The services to be managed by Enable for Wandsworth include bereavement services for the borough, together with any arrangement (as at present) for operational support for the North East Surrey Crematorium Board. The Board are therefore asked to note the expected decision by Wandsworth and, subject to that decision, to confirm that it is content for Wandsworth, via Enable, to continue to give operational support for the running of the North east Surrey Crematorium, as it does now. I would stress that if this is the case, the agreement will remain between NESCB and Wandsworth Council and the latter will then require Enable, under a specification and contract with Wandsworth Council, to provide the service.

This item is for decision.

- 5.2 **Role of Surveyor.** For the past three appointments (Peter Robinson, Tony McDonald and myself), the role has been held by a senior manager from Wandsworth, who has also held senior line management responsibilities for the staff from Wandsworth's Bereavement Services who are responsible for providing the NESC's operational support. While this has not, to my knowledge, led to any conflict of interests, I believe it is right and proper at this point in time to bring to the Board's attention that they have the opportunity to obtain a more independent role for the Surveyor by divorcing the role of Surveyor from that of operational management and to instead either a) ask Wandsworth Council to provide another senior officer nomination for the role of Surveyor, involving an officer without line management responsibility for Bereavement Services and therefore from outside of the Enable staff mutual group; or b) seek such an appointment from elsewhere. This matter is brought to the Board's attention for consideration and decision; given the lack of conflict of interest issues in the past, I remain available to continue in the role of Surveyor should the Board wish.

This item is for decision.

6 ACTION PLAN – BUSINESS PLAN

- 6.1 Appendix 6 gives the Board's current 2015/16 action plans, updated in bold to reflect actions taken since the last meeting.

This item is for information.

7 REPAIR AND RENEWAL – ROUTINE WORKS

- 7.1 Appendix 7 provides information on the repairs and renewals revenue programme for 2014/15 and provision for 2015/16. Members are advised of a new item to be added to the works budget: £7680 for works to repair/replace/improve the lightning conductors.

This item is for information.

8 REPAIR AND RENEWAL – CAPITAL WORKS

- 8.1 Appendix 8 provides information on the repairs and renewals capital programme with expenditure requirements forecast through until 2024/25. Members are advised that future expenditure will largely be directed towards cremator replacement, external cleaning and repairs to paths and driveways.

This item is for information.

27 May 2015

**Paul McCue
Surveyor to the Board**