

NORTH EAST SURREY CREMATORIUM BOARD**13 June 2017 at 10.00 am**

Members: Councillor Paul Wingfield (Chair), Councillor Stuart Thom (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Jones, Vincent Galligan, Latif, Stanford, Clay, Ryder, Jones and McKinney

Officers: Jean Stevenson (Treasurer)
Clive Andrews (Surveyor)
Barbara Ward (Bereavement Services manager, Enable)
Simon Ingyon (Executive Director of Parks & Leisure, Enable)
Aimee Wittams-Smith (Clerk)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies received.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

3. ELECTION OF CHAIR

Councillor Candida Jones nominated Councillor Paul Wingfield to be Chair, this was seconded by Councillor Vincent Galligan and the Board agreed.

Councillor Stuart Thom was nominated to be Vice-Chair by Councillor Michael Ryder and seconded by Councillor Claire Clay, and the Board agreed.

4. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes were signed and agreed as a correct record subject to the amendment from Councillor Sue McKinney to clarify in item 32 that customers have the choice between a live organist or a live music system at the crematorium.

5. REPORT OF THE TREASURER

Jean Stevenson, Treasurer, introduced the report.

Referring to Appendix A, she outlined that there had been ongoing issues with the energy supplier and as such the energy costs reflected were an estimate as not all expected invoices had been received. Enable's accountant was investigating the position with the energy supplier.

Referring to Appendix B, she highlighted that the income was greater than it had been previously as more services had been undertaken than budgeted for and the expenditure was less than forecast, so the Board's surplus was higher than expected at the year end. There was approximately £200k more than the anticipated balance as of 31 March 2017.

Jean Stevenson indicated that the debtors had been higher than usual at year end and reminded the Board that the audit report reviewed at their previous meeting had indicated that some funeral directors were behind with payments, however that this had significantly improved since March. Councillor Claire Clay sought clarification on the balances on p13

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of the agenda, that 1 April was referring to 2016 and 31 March was referring to 2017. She went on to ask what was done with the money in the balance and Jean Stevenson confirmed that it was invested through Wandsworth Council. Councillor Candida Jones asked what the rate was, and Jean Stevenson confirmed that rates higher than the current base rate were being achieved, but rates remain at historically low levels. Councillor Claire Clay asked if it was a good investment and what the other options were. Jean Stevenson informed the Board they had the option to take a decision to distribute some of the surplus to the three Councils now, sooner than in December, any distribution would be according to their Council Taxbases (pro rata). Clive Andrews, Surveyor, added that it may be prudent to keep some money back as there were some upcoming costs, for example to purchase additional land from Wandsworth Council in the next 12-18 months. Councillor Clay suggested that the surplus money shown in the budget should be distributed between the three councils after accounting for the amount in reserve and the money to buy the land. Jean Stevenson advised that they could safely consider £300k as surplus and Councillors Candida Jones and Claire Clay considered that other councils may be able to get a better investment rates.

Following the discussion, Councillor Paul Wingfield proposed a motion that the £300k surplus money would distributed between the three councils. The motion was seconded by Councillor Claire Clay and the Board agreed.

Jean Stevenson introduced the Statement of Governance and the Statement of Accounts in Appendix C of the report and the Board considered and agreed the recommendations.

RESOLVED that the North East Surrey Crematorium Board:

1. Agreed to distribute £300k of surplus money from balances to the three Councils: Wandsworth, Merton and Sutton.
2. Approved the Statement of Governance.
3. Approved the Statement of accounts

6. REPORT OF THE SURVEYOR

Clive Andrews introduced the report.

Business level activity was up 3% on the average for the past 5 years, which he believed was due to funeral directors choosing this crematorium as a result of the good facilities offered.

Councillor Michael Ryder asked if cremation had become a preferred and accepted choice for a funeral and Clive Andrews responded to confirm that 72% of people in the UK are cremated the choice could be due to religious reasons or the higher cost of burial. Councillor Philip Jones asked what the cost of a funeral paid for by the Council would be and Clive Andrews responded to confirm that it would be relative to the individual as there would be a review of the person's assets however would likely cover the cost of the cremation. It was confirmed that a service arranged through social services would cost £267.

Clive Andrews referred the Board to the exempt performance report and noted that the crematorium had met all of its legal and operational requirements. The Merton Environmental Health Officer had also visited in the past quarter and was satisfied with the information received from the crematorium and the procedures in place. He went on to inform the Board that funeral directors will work around the required days for the relaying of the new driveway in August and that they hoped to install the new heating system simultaneously for minimal disruption. The new heating system would allow for waste

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heated water from the filtration system to be circulated around the heating system, providing both environmental and financial savings.

With regards to financial matters, Clive Andrews reported that following ongoing problems with the CCTV system where the crematorium had paid out lots of money for repairs over the years, it was still not functioning and with the agreement of the Chair it was decided to replace the entire system. Enable had researched prices for a new system and believed that the local company, DS Security, provided the best value for money and so an order would be placed with the intention of working to install that in the coming weeks.

With regards to quality control, Clive Andrews reported that there had been two complaints, one about the retention of ashes and the other about the misspelling of a name. He said that both complainants had received a letter explaining the circumstances and that no other correspondence had been received. The Chair asked if there was a checking procedure in place for names. Barbara Ward said there was although regrettably on this occasion it was not noticed.

The Board congratulated Barbara Ward, Bereavement Services Manager, who had received a distinction for Cemetery and Crematorium law as part of the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management diploma.

Clive Andrews went on to report that the Wesley music system had been installed, and that a new lectern would be installed which would contain a control board. He added that they could add-on visual equipment to allow customers to display memories as well as music. Barbara Ward confirmed that people do request photographic tributes, videos, and also that there is already a live streaming service via a webcam to share the service with friends and family across the world.

Following a question from Councillor Latif, Simon Ingyon confirmed that should a customer require music that the system doesn't offer then they would be able to get it uploaded, including culturally diverse requests.

With reference to Appendix C, Item 1, Clive Andrews brought attention to the options that would be available to the crematorium to develop income from their Tradable Mercury Abated Cremations. Following the establishment of a burden sharing agreement with Putney Vale Crematorium, there was a potential to partner with any council in the UK to develop income from their remaining Tradable Mercury Abated Cremations. The burden requires that, between two crematoriums, they can show that they are abating 50% of their emissions. Following a question from Councillor Wingfield, Clive Andrews confirmed that North East Surrey Crematorium was 100% abated.

Barbara Ward informed the Board that she was arranging visits to local funeral directors in late June, The Chair asked Clive Andrews if he would be attending the meetings. He said that although he hadn't at present been asked he would attend if required. He went on to say that he considered the meetings to be important as the Funeral Directors were the main stakeholders.

Councillor Latif asked for a tour to demonstrate how the heat exchanger works once it is installed and it was agreed that there would be an opportunity for the Board to visit the crematorium after the next Board meeting in September / October.

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7. TIME OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Board discussed moving their meetings to the afternoon or to an earlier or later time in the morning. Following discussions it was agreed to keep the start time of Board meetings as 10am.

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

Councillor Candida Jones alerted the Board to changes that came in March 2017 following a campaign by an MP who had lost an 8 year old child and could not afford the funeral. She informed the Board that Co-Op Funeralcare announced that they would no longer be charging for funerals for children up to 18 and an agreement had been secured with some Councils to not charge for funerals of children (eg Swansea and Plymouth). She suggested that a similar policy could become a consideration by the Board at a future meeting and Clive Andrews confirmed that he would include details of adopting the policy including the financial implications in a report to the September meeting, with the potential to implement changes on 1 January 2018 should the Board agree to the proposal.

Councillor Claire Clay asked for the report to include information relating to services for children that had been held in church prior to the service at the crematorium and to consider whether they would charge for requests for longer services (eg double bookings) Councillor Candida Jones clarified there were still costs for a doctors/hospital , celebrant and/or minister and Clive Andrews confirmed that cremations were already free for children up to 12 so the suggestion would be an extension to the current arrangements in place.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on 12 September 2017 at 10am at Sutton Civic Offices, St Nicholas Way, SM1 1EA.

The meeting ended at 11.22 am

Chair:

Date: