

**North East Surrey Crematorium Board****8 September 2020****NORTH EAST SURREY CREMATORIUM BOARD****8 September 2020 at 10.00 am**

**MEMBERS:** Councillor Nick Draper (Chair 2019/2020), and Councillors Joan Henry, Nigel Benbow, Jean Crossby, Ryder, Rosemary Birchall, Terry Walsh, Graeme Henderson, Walker and Annie Moral (Chair from this meeting 2020/21.)

**ABSENT** Councillor(s) Vincent Galligan

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Councillor Draper the Chair for the municipal year 2019/20 presided over the meeting until the end of item 5.

Apologies were received from Councillor Vincent Galligan. The Board were advised that Councillor Joan Henry and Councillor Rosemary Birchall were in the process of joining the meeting.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 March 2020 be agreed as a correct record.

**4. COVID RESPONSE - REPORT FROM CHIEF OFFICERS REGARDING DECISIONS MADE DURING LOCK DOWN**

This report was presented by the chief officers, who provided an update to the Board on decisions taken by the Chairman under the Board's Scheme of Delegation on behalf of the North East Surrey Crematorium Board during the COVID-19 lockdown period.

The Chair thanked officers on behalf of the Board for all their work during the pandemic.

*Councillor Rosemary Birchall joined the meeting at 10.12am.*

The Surveyor spoke about the increased operating hours of the crematorium during the pandemic and also the increased use of the direct cremation slots which are less expensive for mourners. Councillor Paula Walker thanked the Board for allowing that flexibility.

Following questions from Members, it was confirmed while for some periods there was a short waiting list, all demands for cremations were met and that there were no issues with mortuary storage facilities.

In debate Members raised if there could be consideration at a future meeting regarding using some of the excess income from the increased number of cremations over this period to build a fund to support mourners who are not able to cover costs of cremations in case of

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need for local people. The Surveyor commented there is the funeral fund in place from the government to help people when needed. The Board was advised that people do not know if their request for assistance is successful until after the arrangements of the funeral have been made, under that scheme.

The Board was also reminded that 75% of funeral costs are from funeral directors. The remaining costs are made up of Crematorium fees and disbursements. Officers commented that the charges from NESCB are recognised as being among the lowest in the country and have always been very mindful of costs of cremations.

Councillor Jean Crosby also queried if it could be considered to have a memorial plaque put in place dedicated to the victims of the virus. The Chair Councillor Nick Draper commented that the Board would need more information on proposals and costs before this can be considered further. He asked for these two suggestions to be costed and brought back to a later meeting. The Surveyor suggested that perhaps we should wait until there is more clarity of the total impact of COVID-19 before making the decision, and the Board confirmed.

**RESOLVED** The decisions taken by the Chairman on behalf of the board be noted.

#### **5. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR / VICE CHAIR**

By convention the role of Chair of the Board was taken by the three constituent authorities in rotation. To accord with that convention the Chair for 2020/21 should be elected from amongst the London Borough of Sutton Councillors. It was proposed by Councillor Jean Crosby, and seconded by Councillor Nick Draper, that Councillor Annie Moral be elected Chair for the municipal year 2020/21. A vote was taken.

**RESOLVED:** That Councillor Annie Moral from London Borough of Sutton be appointed Chair of the Board for the municipal year 2020/21. Councillor Annie Moral confirmed she was willing to take on the role as Chairperson.

By convention the role of Vice Chair of the Board was taken by the three constituent authorities in rotation. To accord with that convention the Vice Chair for 2020/21 should be elected from amongst the London Borough of Wandsworth Councillors. It was proposed by Councillor Terry Walsh, and seconded by Councillor Nigel Benbow, that Councillor Rosemary Birchall be appointed Vice Chair for the municipal year 2020/21. A vote was taken.

**RESOLVED:** That Councillor Rosemary Birchall be elected Vice-Chair for the municipal year 2020/21. Councillor Rosemary Birchall confirmed she was willing to take on this role as Vice Chairperson.

#### **6. REPORT OF THE CLERK REGARDING REVIEW OF NUMBER OF MEMBERS FROM EACH CONSTITUENT AUTHORITY TO BE APPOINTED TO THE BOARD**

Sharon Major, Clerk to the Board, presented the report. Members were advised that Section 6 (2) of the North East Surrey Crematorium Board Act 1956 as amended by the London Government Order 1965 states that "As from 1 June in 1965 and in every subsequent fifth year the constitution of the Board shall be revised so that the number of members to be

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appointed by each of the constituent authorities to hold office during the next following period of five years shall be on the basis of one member for every 70,000 inhabitants of the constituent district or part of 70,000 inhabitants above 70,000 or a multiple thereof according to the population of that constituent district at that time.”

The Office for National Statistics provided updated population numbers for each constituent authority. The latest data available was at mid-2018 which indicated that there was no need for any change in the number of Board members.

**RESOLVED:**

- 1 It be noted that based on the population figures there is no requirement to amend the number of Board Members appointed by each constituent Authority this year.
- 2 It be agreed that Membership will remain as is, whereby constituent authorities are able to appoint up to the following number of Members each: London Borough of Merton three Members, London Borough of Sutton three Members and London Borough of Wandsworth five members.

**7. REPORT OF THE SURVEYOR**

This report was presented by Clive Andrews, the Surveyor to the Board. He provided an update to the board on activities in the quarter to September 2020 relating to the management agreement between North East Surrey Crematorium Board (NESCB) and Wandsworth Council. The day to day management responsibilities are carried out on behalf of the Council by Enable.

The Surveyor advised that in relation to the business level activity, the crematorium had been very busy for the first 4 months of the financial year. The Officer pointed out that 148 cremations were carried out in August this year and compared to August last year the numbers look very much the same. He confirmed that the estimate for the number of cremations for the year will be considered in the December 2020 report.

The Surveyor pointed out the cremators during this period were running at over 90% efficiency. It has been confirmed the annual emissions tests of the cremators did not take place due to COVID-19 restrictions and this test has been put back to Spring 2021. This had been agreed by Merton's Environmental Health Officers.

The board were advised of the work that Barbara Ward has undertaken in her qualifications and they gave their congratulations to her on this ongoing work to finalise her qualification for the ICCM certificate.

The Surveyor drew members attention to the Action Plan on page 67 and spoke through each item. The Surveyor updated the Board on the work that is ongoing with the Ashes Lawn project. He highlighted a date between Easter and Father's Day 2021 for when the Ashes Lawn project will be carried out, he also advised he had commissioned Wandsworth Council's Design Services to carry out a drainage plan to help avoid flooding and to improve that area with appropriate drainage.

A new technical drawing had been approved and details will be provided to Members as they develop to show images of what the new ashes lawn area will look like.

The Surveyor went on to discuss the new land to be acquired adjacent to the crematorium to use as memorial land. He advised that the purchase will be for the freehold of the land.

*Councillor Graeme Henderson left the meeting at 11.21am.*

The Surveyor also touched on how the Land Survey and has received initial proposals to generate new ideas for how the land is to be used. Further details will now be requested from the contractor.

*Councillor Joan Henry joined the meeting at 11.24am.*

The Board was advised of the Focus group meetings undertaken by Barbara Ward every two years with key stakeholders, the Funeral Directors.

On a final point Members were also updated on the energy efficiency of the crematorium. The Wandsworth's Energy Management Team will update the display energy certificate shortly. The Board were advised that in line with WBC Climate Change policy there is now a new 4-year contract to have 100% electricity from green sources and this will further enhance the crematoriums green credentials.

**RESOLVED:** The report be noted as an overview of the Surveyors findings for the management of the crematorium for the past three months. (July – September 2020).

## **8. REPORT OF THE TREASURER**

This report was presented by Mark Davies, Treasurer to the Board. He provided an update on the performance against the Management Agreement Annual Budget as approved in December 2019 and an update to the Board on the latest Interim Accounts.

The Treasurer highlighted that costs are slightly ahead of the budget at present and this is largely due to the response to the COVID-19 pandemic including additional staffing costs and the decision to absorb costs of sound recordings. He also highlighted that going forward gas and electric costs will come to the Board directly from Wandsworth Borough Council rather than via Enable as responsibility for the management on energy related matters had passed back to the Council under the new contract. The Treasurer noted the over spend on water charges which was being investigated.

He summarised that the accounts continue to show good cost control. In respect of interim accounts in Appendix B the Treasurer confirmed that the costs were forecast in line with the management agreement. He pointed out that line 18 of the accounts shows additional income as a result of additional cremations carried out as a direct impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Treasurer advised he was previously predicting a year-end balance between £150,000 and £200,000 higher than originally anticipated.

### **RESOLVED that:**

1. The Management Agreement performance for the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021, attached at Appendix A, for information, be noted and,
2. The Interim Accounts for the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021, attached at Appendix B, for information be noted.

## **9. RISK MANAGEMENT REVIEW**

This report was presented by Mark Davies, Treasurer to the Board, to give an overview of the Annual Review of Risks. The Treasurer highlighted the new approach to scoring the actual risk and likelihood of risks occurring and spoke through the colour coding of the report.

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In debate Councillor Nick Draper asked about Risk Number 25 - The Pandemic Plan, and how this went when staff were dealing with the issues that have arisen over the last few months.

The Treasurer responded that the plans that have been in place have helped to ensure the efficient operation of the crematorium. He confirmed the plans were robust. He commented that the ranking for this risk within the latest review are still considered high as it is currently unknown what the impact of any second wave may be.

**RESOLVED:** The Annual Review of Risks be noted.

**10. REVIEW OF GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS**

This report provided an update to the Board following the review of the Standing Orders, Scheme of Delegation and the Financial Regulations. The Treasurer highlighted the proposed changes to each document to the Board. There were no questions raised.

**RESOLVED:that**

1 It be noted that the review of the Boards Standing Orders, the Scheme of Delegation and the Financial Regulations has taken place.

2 The updated Standing Orders attached at appendix A. be approved.

3 The updated Scheme of Delegation attached as Appendix B, be approved.

4. The updated Financial Regulations as attached at appendix C, be approved

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

There was no urgent business.

**12. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

Councillor Annie Moral motioned that the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.and that the item would be the subject of a separate exempt minute.

This was seconded by Councillor Nick Draper and the board agreed.

The live stream of the meeting was therefore ended at 11.57am so that the meeting could continue in closed session.

*Councillor Paula Walker left the meeting at 11.58am.*

**14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting will take place on 8 December 2020.

The meeting ended at 12.18 pm

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Chair: .....

Date: .....