

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COYCHURCH CREMATORIUM JOINT COMMITTEE
HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOMS 2/3, CIVIC OFFICES ANGEL STREET BRIDGEND CF31 4WB
ON FRIDAY, 4 MARCH 2016 AT 2.00 PM**

Present

Councillor CL Jones – Chairperson

E Dodd
E Williams

G John

DR Pugh

C Westwood

Officers:

Sarah Daniel
Gareth Evans
Joanna Hamilton
Nigel Smith

Democratic Services Officer - Committees
Parks and Playing Fields Manager
Bereavement Services Manager and Registrar
Finance Manager

125. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from the following Members:

Councillor A Owen
Councillor R Turner
Councillor B Stephens
Councillor H Williams

126. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

127. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of a meeting of the Coychurch Crematorium Joint Committee of 4 December 2015 were approved as a true and accurate record of the meeting

The Chairperson wished to record thanks to everyone that was involved in the Christmas Service for all their hard work in the preparation of the event. He stated that it was a very successful and enjoyable service.

128. PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS 2016/17

The Parks and Playing Fields Manager submitted a report to the Joint Committee to seek approval for the proposed programme of meetings for 2016/17

The following programme of meetings was proposed:

Friday 24 June 2016 – Annual General meeting and Site Visit
Friday 9 September 2016

Friday 2 December 2016

Friday 3 March 2017

RESOLVED: The Joint Committee approved the programme of meetings for 2016/17

129. AUDIT INSPECTION

The Parks and Playing Field Manager presented a report that informed the Joint Committee of a recent Internal Audit of the administration processes within the Crematorium.

He explained to the Joint Committee that the scope of the controls audited included a review of:

- Orders and Payments
- Petty Cash
- Income Management
- Budgetary Control

He stated that the Audit identified a number of strengths and areas of good practice that included:

- All documentation examined was complete, accurate, thorough and easily accessible;
- Invoices and reminders are sent promptly to funeral directors at the end of each month.
- Robust controls were found to be in place in relation to the payment of suppliers

The Parks and Playing Field Manager informed Members that the Audit concluded that the effectiveness of the internal control environment is considered to be sound and therefore substantial assurance can be placed upon the management of risks. He added that the overall opinion was supported by the identification of a well-controlled system and no recommendations were deemed necessary for enhanced control or improved value for money.

The Chairperson congratulated the Crematorium Manager and Registrar for the excellent work by the staff which was apparent throughout the Audit Report. Members praised the report and were pleased to see that there were no recommendations coming from the report

RESOLVED: That the Joint Committee noted the report

130. CREMATORIUM BUSINESS PLAN AND CREMATION FEES

The Crematorium Manager and Registrar presented a report to the Joint Committee to approve the Business Plan and expenditure Programme for 2016/17 which included proposed increases to the cremation fees.

She explained to the Joint Committee that a Business Plan was presented annually to the Joint Committee for approval which includes service objectives and proposed

maintenance, and improvement projects to enhance and maintain the Crematorium grounds and buildings for the forthcoming period.

The Crematorium Manager and Registrar informed Members that the total number of cremations for 2015 was 1581, made up of 933 from Bridgend, 199 from Vale of Glamorgan and 375 from Rhondda Cynon Taff, with 74 non-residents. She added that statistical records for the period from January to December 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015 were included in the Business Plan for comparison.

The Crematorium Manager and Registrar updated the Joint Committee on current and planned Service Developments that were detailed in Appendix 1 of the report and included information on the following:

- Closure of Margam Crematorium
- Mercury Abatement
- Cremators
- Expand Infrastructure in New Land Extension
- Upgrade/ Repairs to Organ
- Roof Repairs
- Footpaths and Landscaping
- Periphery Fencing
- Property Contingency

The Crematorium Manager and Registrar explained that the replacement of the cremators was delayed until 2015/16 to allow the accumulation of operational surpluses necessary to cover the cost of the project and this was achieved. She added that the current cremation charge placed the Crematorium at 212 out of 277 cremation authorities in a national fee league table published in summer 2015. The funding strategy included in previous Business Plans recommended an increase to the cremation charge by inflation plus £25 each year. This was for a temporary period to ensure that sufficient funding was available to support the future programme of improvements works, the Crematorium extension and the replacement of Crematorium equipment, but still retain the Crematorium's competitive position.

The extension of the Crematorium and associated installation of new equipment had been completed and the fees accordingly reviewed. It was not considered necessary to increase the cremation fee by an additional £25 this year but instead the need would be reviewed on an annual basis. It was recommended that the cremation charge be increased by inflation from £615.00 to £623.00.

A Member asked how Coychurch Crematorium organist fees compared to other Authorities. The Crematorium Manager and Registrar informed Members that the fee for the Organist was included in their Cremation fee as they employed a full time salaried organist which in addition to the organ playing and accompanying singers, controlled all the digital music, recordings and webcasts. She added that as they had a large extension pipe organ they needed to have a high calibre organist in post. She informed Members that the fee was usually around £25 per funeral service and that some Crematoria charged for the use of the organ and the organist.

RESOLVED: The Joint Committee:

1. Approved the Service Level Business Plan 2016/17
2. Confirmed the cremation fee for 2016/17

131. PROPOSED REVENUE BUDGET 2016-17

The Finance Manager gave a report to the Joint Committee to inform them of the projected financial performance for the Crematorium for 2015-16, and to obtain approval from the Joint Committee for the proposed budget and fees and charges for 2016-17. He explained to members the financial position at 31 January 2016 and the projected outturn for 2015-2016 which was displayed in table 1 of the report

The Finance Manager informed Members that when the budget was set, there was an anticipated budget deficit of £746,000 which was to finance the costs of the purchase of new cremators. The actual projected outturn as at the end of January was a deficit of £575,000 which would require a transfer from earmarked reserves.

The Finance Manager advised Members that although Committee Members accepted the proposals by BCBC to strengthen the Crematoriums staffing structure and BCBC Burials Service for 2015-16, the implementation had been delayed, and was now due to be implemented on 1 April 2016. He added that the Business Plan for 2016-17 indicated that there was a budget requirement of £150,000 to meet service development expenditure which was itemised in the report.

The Finance Manager informed Members that the Capital Financing charge had been maintained at £50,000 in order to accelerate the amount of loan repaid at a time of low interest rates. The income budgets had been prepared assuming a general increase in fees of 1.3%, and had also been realigned to reflect current levels of activity (based on 1484 cremations)

The Finance Manager informed Members of the effect of the accumulated balance and this was detailed in the report for information. He added that it was projected that at 31 March 2016 there would be an accumulated balance of £620,000. The balance had reduced from 31 March 2015 due to the replacement of the Cremators. The balance of reserves at 31 March 2016 was considered a sufficient level to maintain the service in light of unknown demands or emergencies.

The Finance Manager advised that the Capital Expenditure would not require any additional loan charge or contribution from constituent authorities in 2016-17. Items of a capital nature for 2016-17 in Table 3, paragraph 4.6 of the report would be directly funded from revenue contributions and the accumulated surplus from previous years.

RESOLVED: That the Joint Committee

1. Confirmed and approved the revenue budget to be adopted for 2016-17
2. Approved the increase in fees and charges with effect from 1 April 2016 outlined in Appendix one of the report

132. URGENT ITEMS

None

The meeting closed at 2.24 pm