

**COYCHURCH CREMATORIUM JOINT COMMITTEE - FRIDAY, 3 MARCH 2017**

**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, 3 MARCH 2017 AT 2.00 PM**

Present

Councillor E Hacker – Chairperson

E Dodd  
R Turner

G John  
E Williams

AD Owen

B Stephens

Apologies for Absence

CL Jones, DR Pugh and CL Reeves

Officers:

Adele Ahearn	Accountant
Julie Ellams	Democratic Services Officer
Joanna Hamilton	Bereavement Services Manager and Registrar
Huw Powell	Assistant Accountant
Zak Shell	Head of Neighbourhood Services

158. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillors C Reeves, D Pugh and C Jones

159. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

160. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Coychurch Crematorium Joint Committee of 2 December 2016 be approved as a true and accurate record.

161. NEW LAND EXTENSION INFRASTRUCTURE

The Bereavement Services Manager and Registrar advised the Joint Committee on the progress of the expansion of the infrastructure in the new land extension and requested approval to award the Contract resulting from the tender process.

At the meeting of 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2016 the Joint Committee approved the issue of tenders to potential contractors in accordance with Bridgend County Borough Council's Contract and Financial Procedures Rules. The construction costs for the Phase 2 infrastructure for the continuation of the access road and an additional car park were estimated at £340,000.

Tender documents were issued to six contractors and the returned tenders were detailed in the report. The lowest tender was submitted by Alun Griffiths Contractors Ltd

at a corrected total of £269,498.68. The construction works were included in the expenditure budget and Service Level Business Plan for 2017/18.

The Committee asked if other Members or officers had previously worked with Alun Griffiths Contractors Ltd. Members were advised the contractor had completed work at the entrance to the Chapel in addition to various contracts in the Vale and Rhondda Cynon Taff.

The Committee asked if the lowest tender was always accepted. Members were advised that the lowest tender was usually accepted subject to advice provided by the surveyors and engineers.

The Committee asked by how much the lowest tender had been corrected and the reason for the correction. The Bereavement Services Manager and Registrar explained that when a tender was submitted there were individual amounts allocated to different sections. These were totalled to find the final sum and during this process an error of less than £2 was discovered.

**RESOLVED**

- 1) The Joint Committee approved Tender Number 1 from Alun Griffiths Contractors Ltd in the sum of £267,498.68 and awarded the Contract to this contractor.
- 2) The Joint Committee delegated to the Clerk and Technical Officer the power to approve the final terms of the Contract in consultation with Bridgend County Borough Council's Corporate Director of Operations and Partnerships, and thereafter arranged for the execution of the Contract by the Corporate Director of Operations and Partnerships on behalf of the Joint Committee.

**162. CREMATORIUM BUSINESS PLAN AND CREMATION FEES**

The Bereavement Services Manager and Registrar presented a report on the Business Plan and expenditure programme for 2017/18 which included proposed increases in cremation fees.

The Business Plan was presented annually to the Joint Committee for approval which included service objectives and proposed maintenance and improvement projects to enhance and maintain the Crematorium grounds and buildings for the forthcoming period. The total number of cremations for 2016 was 1589, made up of 950 from Bridgend, 190 from Vale of Glamorgan and 366 from Rhondda Cynon Taff, with 83 non-residents. An agreement with the Princess of Wales Hospital for the cremation of non-viable foetal remains (NVF) had resulted in an additional 6 communal cremations. A further 9 individual NVF cremations were arranged directly with families. Statistical records for the period from January to December 2015 and 2016 were included in the Business Plan for comparison.

The Bereavement Services Manager and Registrar summarised the key achievements over the past 5 years including the high level of public satisfaction maintained and the completion of the construction of an extension to the crematory to provide space for new cremators and a mercury abatement plant.

The local performance indicator relating to user satisfaction reported annually to the Joint Committee continued to be 100%.

The Bereavement Services Manager and Registrar presented the service developments and objectives. In 2005 the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

(DEFRA) announced its plan to reduce mercury emissions from UK crematoria by 50%, effective from 31<sup>st</sup> December 2012. This was later revised and eventually commenced in January 2013.

The Federation of British Cremation Authorities (FBCA) and the Cremation Society formulated a proposal to offset the costs for those crematoria that installed abatement plant to reduce mercury emissions by contributions from those that did not. Coychurch Crematorium opted to burden share the costs until such time as their cremators were replaced. The charge for 2015/16 related to the total number of cremations in 2015 and equated to £41k for that period. The installation of abatement plant, which was completed to schedule by April 2016, would reduce this figure to zero for 2016/17. Those crematoria that had abated more than 50% of their cremations could sell the excess mercury abated cremations to those which had abated less than the target, via CAMEO. Those who had abated derived an income, and those who had not shared the financial burden. Consequently, Coychurch Crematorium was awaiting confirmation of the potential amount of income it could expect to generate in 2017/18.

In 2009 the Committee approved the construction of an access road and additional car parking into the new land, and the layout for the extension to the memorial gardens inside the new land extension. Phase 1 of these works was carried out at that time and the new memorial gardens had been well received. At the meeting on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2016 the Joint Committee approved the Service Level Business Plan for 2016/17, which included design costs of £30,000.00 for the planning of Phase 2 infrastructure to facilitate the continuation of the access road and an additional car park. At the meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2016 the Joint Committee approved the issuing of tenders for the construction works, which were planned for 2017/18.

Improved landscaping to the concrete burial plots was postponed from 2016/17 in order to combine it with the landscaping to the new land infrastructure. The replacement of the failing fencing adjacent to the public footpath to match the higher quality fencing already installed at the exit gate and along the main car park was planned. This would improve security and make the area more aesthetically pleasing.

The Crematorium had a series of flat roofs with drainage channels that required regular pedestrian access to enable maintenance due to the amount of debris that gathered from nearby trees. In order to comply with current health and safety laws the Crematorium had been investigating the various safe access systems available for permanent installation on the roofs that would be unobtrusive in order to comply with the planning requirements of the Crematorium's Grade 2\* listing. Bridgend County Borough Council's Health and Safety Department was advising on the most efficient and cost effective method. Projected costs for the objectives were detailed in the report.

The current cremation charge placed the Crematorium at 230 out of 278 cremation authorities in a national fee league table published in summer 2016 (highest first). The fees had been reviewed and it was not considered necessary to increase the cremation fee by an additional £25 (to provide funding to support the future programme of improvements) this year but this would continue to be reviewed on an annual basis.

All variations to expenditure and income as outlined in the Service Level Business Plan, had been incorporated into the Treasurer's report.

Members thanked the Bereavement Services Manager and Registrar for an excellent report and business plan. Members considered the fees and that compared to other authorities there was scope to increase the fees to fund improvements in future. The Clerk and Technical Officer explained that there were sufficient funds to cover existing

projects. The site was of a very high standard which was appreciated but plans to develop the site further could be counter-productive.

Members asked for more information regarding the full capacity of the crematorium. The Bereavement Services Manager and Registrar reported that at its peak the total number of cremations was 1800 in a year. Numbers had then decreased to 1450 per year but were now starting to creep back up. The number of cremations from Rhondda Cynon Taff were increasing and the crematorium was busy but there were no backlogs. There were no plans to increase capacity however there were two chapels that could be in use at the same time but this would require additional staff.

**RESOLVED**

The Joint Committee:

- 1) Approved the Service Level Business Plan 2017/18
- 2) Confirmed the cremation fee for 2017/18 at £636.70.

163. **PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS 2017/18**

The Clerk and Technical Officer presented a report seeking approval for the proposed programme of meetings for 2017/18. The Memorandum of Agreement for the Coychurch Crematorium Joint Committees stated that :-

- The Joint Committee shall hold two meetings at least in each municipal year (one of which is to be the Annual General Meeting mentioned in the next sub-clause) for the transaction of general business and may hold such other meetings at such intervals as they find necessary or convenient.
- The first meeting of the Joint Committee after the annual meetings of the Councils shall be the Joint Committee's Annual General Meeting. At that meeting the Joint Committee shall elect a Chairman and Vice Chairman for the ensuing year. The Joint Committee shall also receive a report reviewing performance against the Business Plan for the preceding year.

A review of the business needs and previous agenda reports for the Crematorium had been carried out and it was considered appropriate to reduce the number of meetings a year in line with the Memorandum of Agreement. The following programme of meetings was now proposed:-

Friday 15<sup>th</sup> September 2017 - Annual General Meeting  
Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2018

plus additional meetings as and when required.

The Chairperson thanked the officers for their help and support as he would not be standing again. He wished staff all the best and said that he did not envisage any problems with the proposals in the report.

**RESOLVED**

The Joint Committee approved the programme of meetings for 2017/18.

164. PROPOSED REVENUE BUDGET 2017-18

The Accountant presented a report on the projected financial performance for the Crematorium for 2016-17 and sought approval from the Joint Committee for the proposed budget and fees and charges for 2017-18.

When the budget was set, there was an anticipated budget surplus of £122,000. The actual projected outturn as at the end of January was a surplus of £258,000.

The main variances between the Budget and the Projected Outturn were the underspend of £57,000 on Premises, the underspend in Planned maintenance and the underspend of £35,000 on Supplies, Services & Transport including the write off of an unidentified debtor of £2,356. Income had been higher than budgeted by £66,000 resulting from increased cremation fees and income from the sale of two items.

Employee budgets had been adjusted to reflect salary increments where applicable. The budget included a 1% uplift for the 2017-18 pay award, as well as an increase in pension contributions from 17% to 19.4%. There was a capital budget requirement of £350,000 to meet expenditure itemised in the report.

RESOLVED            1) The Joint Committee confirmed and approved the revenue budget and capital expenditure to be adopted for 2017-18.  
                                 2) The Joint Committee approved the increase in fees and charges with effect from 1 April 2017 outlined in Appendix 1.

165. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

The meeting closed at 3.00 pm