

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
COYCHURCH CREMATORIUM JOINT COMMITTEE

4 SEPTEMBER 2020

REPORT OF THE CLERK & TECHNICAL OFFICER

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Joint Committee on the arrangements at Coychurch Crematorium during the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic.

2. Connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives/Other Corporate Priorities

- 2.1 This report assists in the achievement of the following corporate well-being objectives under the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015:-**

1. **Supporting a successful economy** – taking steps to make the county borough a great place to do business, for people to live, work, study and visit, and to ensure that our schools are focused on raising the skills, qualifications and ambitions of all people in the county borough.
2. **Helping people and communities to be more healthy and resilient** –taking steps to reduce or prevent people from becoming vulnerable or dependent on the Council and its services. Supporting individuals and communities to build resilience, and enable them to develop solutions to have active, healthy and independent lives.
3. **Smarter use of resources** – ensuring that all resources (financial, physical, ecological, human and technological) are used as effectively and efficiently as possible and support the creation of resources throughout the community that can help deliver the Council's well-being objectives.

3. Background

- 3.1 In March 2020, "The Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (Wales) Regulations 2020", imposed restrictions for crematoria. This included allowing them to hold funeral services only if social distancing measures were introduced, ensuring a distance of 2 metres between all individuals on the premises (unless they were from the same

household). The regulations allowed only immediate family and close friends to attend the funeral service as long as it did not involve extensive travel and that those attending were:

- The person organising the funeral;
- Invited by the person organising the funeral;
- The carer of a person invited to attend the funeral.

The numbers attending were to be restricted in accordance with local amenities and risk assessments.

- 3.2. Initially the regulations stated that the Crematorium grounds should remain shut to the public with only those officially attending funerals allowed access to the site. This resulted in the Crematorium grounds being closed for a short period which included the two-week Palm Sunday and Easter period. The regulations were quickly amended by Welsh Government allowing the Crematorium grounds to re-open for those invited to attend a funeral and to enable members of the public to lay flowers at a graveside.
- 3.3 Welsh Government pandemic regulations were observed and appropriate signage was erected around the Crematorium site to advise mourners of the restrictions in place and the need for social distancing. The larger chapel, Crallo, was the only chapel utilised and the chapel layout was adjusted to promote social distancing. The one way directional passage of mourners throughout the building was strictly enforced. Sanitisation and ventilation were carried out in between services. Procedures were adapted in order to protect the safety of chapel staff and appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) was utilised. The Chapel of Remembrance remained open in order for members of the public to access the Book of Remembrance and the toilet facilities in the Waiting Room, Flower Court and at Coity chapel remained open to ensure that mourners and visitors to the grounds had access to hand washing facilities as they passed through the site. These were subject to an intense daily cleaning and sanitisation regime.
- 3.4 All staff worked at the facility throughout the pandemic with relevant PPE and social distancing measures in place. Risk assessments were carried out and regularly reviewed, and procedures adapted to enable the service to continue its normal duties.
- 3.5 The administration office remained fully operational but was closed to the visiting public with all assistance provided over the telephone and via e-mail/postal correspondence. Funeral Directors were provided with access to the office via an intercom service in order to deliver forms and deliver/collect urns and were additionally allowed to deliver forms electronically. They were provided entry to the office via the use of screens and additionally hand sanitizer was provided. The Medical Referee was accommodated for a daily visit and a private room made available with hand sanitizer provided. Staff socially distanced within the offices and work stations were adapted accordingly. Intensive daily

cleaning measures were adopted. All elements of the service continued to function.

- 3.6 Interments and scatters of cremated remains continued within the Crematorium's grounds with family present, utilising social distancing measures.
- 3.7 Extra measures were implemented to ensure the Crematorium did not become overwhelmed during the pandemic. Funeral service times were restricted to thirty minutes and additional service times were introduced to increase the daily capacity from a maximum of ten funerals to fourteen, to ensure that the bereaved did not have a long wait for a service to take place. Two additional staff members were redeployed into the service to enable additional cremator technicians to be trained to ensure resilience and business continuity. Shift patterns were operated into the nights.
- 3.8 During the peak of the pandemic funeral attendance numbers were restricted to ten and then relaxed to twenty when it became safer to do so, to try to protect staff and mourners from infection. Risk assessments were carried out and regularly reviewed and social distancing maintained. Mourners continued to be provided with the option to stream the funeral service over the internet and to record the service. Mourners were reminded of the option to hold a memorial service at a later date. While the Crematorium was placed under pressure during the Covid-19 pandemic it was never close to being overwhelmed.
- 3.9 Regular mass fatality meetings took place between the Bereavement Services Manager and Registrar and BCBC's Emergency Management Team to maintain communication with Welsh Government and Local Health Boards and additionally to ensure that local Funerals Directors were provided with the required PPE/body bags and that the procurement of temporary mortuary facilities was secured.
- 3.10 The Bereavement Services Manager and Registrar held regular briefings and communications with Funeral Directors to ensure that Welsh Government pandemic regulations were observed and that all Crematorium procedures and strategies were fully understood as the pandemic progressed.

4. **Current Situation / Proposal**

- 4.1 The following table provides a comparison of the number of funeral services during 2019 and 2020:

	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	Total
2019	171	151	139	143	130	133	867
2020	171	172	163	207	165	137	1015
Difference	0	21	24	64	35	4	148

- 4.2 The Bereavement Services Manager and Registrar is analysing the processes and procedures adopted during the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic and reviewing the Pandemic Plan.
- 4.3 Coychurch Crematorium continues to operate under pandemic regulations. In order to adhere to Welsh Government legislation and that of Public Health Wales regarding social distancing, local measures remain in place restricting funeral attendance, selected by prior invitation.
- 4.4 Funeral Directors continue to receive updates as required.
- 4.5 The health and wellbeing of bereaved families, funeral directing teams, Council staff and their families, and the wider community, continues to be the Crematorium's highest priority and Welsh Government guidance is being monitored accordingly.
- 4.6 The numbers attending funerals is under constant review in accordance with Welsh Government guidance. The Crematorium service remains appreciative of how difficult this pandemic period is for bereaved families and their friends as it continues to manage the service safely.

5. **Effect upon Policy Framework and Procedure Rules**

- 5.1 None.

6. **Equality Impact Assessment**

- 6.1 There are no equality implications arising from the report.

7 **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 Implications**

- 7.1 The wellbeing goals identified in the Act were considered in the preparation of this report. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable impacts upon the achievement of wellbeing goals/objectives as a result of this report.

8. **Financial Implications**

- 8.1 Additional expenditure for PPE, cleaning equipment and staff training is met from the revenue budget and detailed in the attached Treasurer's Report.

9. **Recommendation(s):**

- 9.1 The Joint Committee is recommended to note the report.

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CLERK AND TECHNICAL OFFICER
17th August 2020

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Background Papers: None