

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COYCHURCH CREMATORIUM JOINT COMMITTEE HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOM 2/3, CIVIC OFFICES, ANGEL STREET, BRIDGEND ON FRIDAY, 7 MARCH 2014 AT 2.00PM

Present:

Representing Bridgend County Borough Council

Councillor E Dodd - Chairperson
Councillor C L Jones
Councillor A D Owen
Councillor D R Pugh
Councillor C Westwood

Representing Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council

Councillor B Stephens JP

Officers:

J Hamilton - Crematorium Manager and Registrar
S Hooper - Bereavement Services Manager
M Williams - Chief Accountant
A Hobbs - Acting Clerk and Technical Officer
J Monks - Democratic Services Officer - Committees

52 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from the following Members:

Councillor K J Geary - Other Council Business
Councillor E Hacker - Attending a funeral
Councillor G John - Other Council Business
Councillor P J White - Other Council Business

53 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

54 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: That the minutes of a meeting of the Coychurch Crematorium Joint Committee held on 6 December 2013 were approved as a true and accurate record.

55 PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS 2014/15

The Bereavement Services Manager presented a report, the purpose of which was to seek approval for the following proposed Programme of Meetings for 2014/15:

Friday, 13 June 2014 - Annual General Meeting
Friday, 19 September 2014
Friday, 5 December 2014
Friday, 6 March 2015

RESOLVED: That the Joint Committee approved the Programme of Meetings for 2014/15.

56 RECYCLING OF METALS SCHEME DONATIONS

The Bereavement Services Manager presented a report to obtain the Joint Committee's approval for a nomination for charitable funding.

Coychurch Crematorium participates in this national scheme, where the profits from the sale of metals derived from cremation processes are distributed to charities associated with bereavement services. The charities are nominated by member authorities of the Institute of Cemetery and Cremation Management (ICCM).

The nomination this year is Bridgend Samaritans. The organisation participates in pastoral care on Saturday nights in Bridgend Town Centre. Also the organisation's schools support programme invokes general discussion in schools with youths and children. The Bridgend Branch has been part of a multi-disciplinary team tackling the level of teenage suicides in the Borough over the past few years.

One Member recommended that a charity called Eye to Eye Counselling Service, who also dealt with bereavement situations, be considered for next year's nominations.

RESOLVED: That the Joint Committee supported the nomination of Bridgend Samaritans to be a beneficiary of the National Recycling of Metals Scheme.

57 AUDIT INSPECTION

The Bereavement Services Manager presented a report to inform the Joint Committee of a recent Internal Audit, attached at Appendix 1 to the report, of the administration processes within the Crematorium. The objective of the Audit was to provide assurance that satisfactory internal controls are operating at the Crematorium.

The Bereavement Services Manager reported that due to the Crematorium's good performance in recent years, staff submitted a desk top questionnaire to complete the Audit. She reported that the Audit had concluded that the effectiveness of the internal control environment at the Crematorium was sound and no substantive areas needed to be looked at.

The Chairperson, on behalf of the Joint Committee, thanked those Officers who were involved in the Audit and congratulated them on such a positive outcome.

RESOLVED: That the Joint Committee noted the report.

58 CREMATORIUM BUSINESS PLAN AND CREMATION FEES

The Bereavement Services Manager presented a report, the purpose of which was to approve the Business Plan and expenditure programme for 2014/15, which included proposed increases in cremation fees.

She reported that some slight improvements had been made from previous years, deleting some minor details, and the report contained comparative data from last year and the previous year. She referred to the temporary closure of Margam Crematorium, and advised that it was provisionally planned to re-open in April this year.

The Crematorium Manager and Registrar explained that Margam Crematorium would initially open for two to three services a day from the 17th March 2014. She advised that this would not have a significant impact on Coychurch Crematorium, although it would relieve some of the pressure on staff and would of course help the residents of Port Talbot. She estimated that Margam Crematorium should be fully operational by the beginning of May 2014.

The Bereavement Services Manager informed Members of the mercury abatements figures for 2013/14 which gave a projected spend for 2014/15 and 2015/16.

The Bereavement Services Manager advised that as the Crematorium building was Grade 2 listed, a design plan had been submitted to CADW for consideration and a response was awaited. In the meantime contracts were being prepared in readiness so that building works could then proceed. The installation of the cremators replacement would take place during the summer of 2015, subject to approval from CADW.

She reported that the expenditure for building works had been deliberately excluded from revenue budgets, detailed at page 11 of Appendix 1, and those savings this year would contribute towards the cost of replacement cremators. Consultation had been undertaken with the manufacturers regarding the cost of the installation.

The Bereavement Services Manager reported that the fee for week-day cremations had been increased by £40 to £580 in accordance with the business strategy to replace the cremators. She advised that despite the increase, the Crematorium would still be in the bottom quartile of UK cremation fees; the Margam Crematorium charges £585 and Swansea charges £576.

RESOLVED: That the Joint Committee:

- (1) Approved the Service Level Business Plan 2014.
- (2) Confirmed the cremation fee for 2014/15 at £580.

59 PROPOSED REVENUE BUDGET 2014/15

The Chief Accountant presented a report, which informed the Joint Committee of the projected financial performance for the Crematorium for 2013/14 and sought approval for the proposed budget, fees and charges for 2014/15.

Table 1 under paragraph 4.1 of the report showed the financial position at 31 January 2014 and the projected outturn for 2013/14.

She advised that at the start of the current financial year there was an anticipated surplus of £62k; however the actual as at 31 January 2014 stood at £168k, and by the end of the financial year the surplus is projected to be £360k which is £298k above the original projection.

The Chief Accountant informed Members that paragraph 4.2 explained in detail the significant variances between budget and projections, showing an underspend of £10k on the premises. She reported that there were a couple of net overspends on supplies and repairs, and a net overspend of £15k on administration which was due to an increase in central support charges. The Crematorium realised an additional income of £127k due to the temporary closure of Margam Crematorium, which reflected the increase in the number of cremations, and the accumulated balance would be held in reserves to fund the requirement for new cremators. She reported that the proposed budget for 2014/15, outlined under paragraph 4.3, posed the biggest challenge as a result of building works taking place during 2014/15. Income budgets assumed a general increase of 3% in fees, based on an estimated 1484 cremations and the projected balance as at 31 March 2015 was estimated to be £1.01m.

RESOLVED: That the Joint Committee:

- (1) Approved the revenue budget for 2014/15.
- (2) Approved the increase in fees and charges with effect from 1 April 2014 outlined in Appendix 1.

The meeting closed at 2.20pm.