

Minutes



Greater Gwent Cremation Joint Committee

Date: 21 January 2015

Time: 2.00pm

Present: Councillors J Taylor (Caerphilly County Borough Council) (Chairman), B Jones (Monmouthshire County Council), N Davies (Torfaen County Borough Council), N George (Caerphilly County Borough Council), P Huntley and V Delahaye (Newport City Council)

G Price (Honorary Secretary), J Hazelwood (Assistant Accountant), P Dundon (Manager), M Deacon (Deputy Manager), S Tom (National Association of Funeral Directors) and R Bailey (Democratic Administrator)

Part 1

1 Apologies for Absence

Councillors Dally and White (Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council), Councillor Williams (Monmouthshire County Council) and Mr K Donovan (Newport Norse)

2 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3 [Minutes](#)

The Minutes of the meeting held on 26th November 2014 were taken as read and confirmed.

4 [Revenue Estimates 2015/16](#)

Consideration was given to a report providing details of the draft revenue estimates for 2015/16 and the [proposed Cremation fee increase with effect from 1 April 2015](#), details of which were appended to the report.

The Assistant Accountant expanded upon the proposals within the report and the rationale behind the suggested estimates and fees increases. The Committee considered the various percentage increase proposals tabulated within the report and agreed to the recommendation that the proposed increase of 10% was consistent with other Welsh authorities.

Reference was made to the accumulated balance of £1.46 million held in reserve as at 31 March 2014. Members were reminded of the previous decision to repay 50% of the outstanding loan (£744,246) for the funding of the Mercury Abatement Project which reduced reserves to £722,000. It was noted that the surplus up to March 2015 is currently estimated to be £740,000 taking the

surplus back up to £1.46 million. The Committee, having noted the surplus figure, considered the proposed reduced figure of £450,000 to the Member Councils on a pro rata population basis. The Assistant Accountant advised of the respective figures to be allocated based on the reduced figure and the usual distribution of £750,000 to each Council. It was noted that the higher figure of £750,000 would result in a surplus figure of approximately £750,00 which was felt sufficient to meet any emergency works in the forthcoming year. Bearing these figures in mind a vote was taken on both options with the figure of £750,000 being agreed unanimously.

Resolved

- (a) To approve the estimates for 2015/16
- (b) That crematorium fees are increased by 10%
- (c) That a distribution of £750,000 be made prior to the financial year end, retaining a sufficient level of reserves to cover any emergency works.

5 Budget Monitoring and Forecasting 2014/15

Consideration was given to a report regarding budget monitoring and forecasting for 2014/15.

The approved estimates for 2014/15 were appended to the report which showed a planned surplus of £551,254. However, having reviewed the position at the end of December, the forecasted surplus has been increased to £741,866.

The Committee noted the key factors supporting the increase of £190,000 in relation to employees, premises and income.

Resolved

To note the monitoring report.

6 Facilities Management

The Committee noted that apologies had been tendered by the Newport Norse representative but had indicated that there were no major building maintenance issues to report at this meeting.

7 Funeral Directors Report

The National Association of Funeral Directors representative reported that a member of the Association had enquired into the possibility of the chapel remaining vacant until the Funeral Director arrived with the Cortege

The Manager advised that this was not possible for a number of reasons, examples of which were quoted, and that this action would have time implications on funeral services during the day. Mr Tom advised that he would report back to the funeral director concerned.

Councillor Davies raised the recurring issue of the public leaving services by not taking the correct route. The Manager advised that appropriate signage had been ordered which would help to alleviate the situation but this could not be guaranteed. There was also an issue of Funeral Directors vehicles stopping on the pavements which exacerbated the problem especially for disabled members of the public.

Resolved

That the abovementioned comments be reported back to the National Association of Funeral Directors.

8 Managers Report

Consideration was given to the Managers report providing statistical information on the number of visitors on the Book of Remembrance online , memorial sales and cremation statistics. It was noted that this was the fourth highest number of cremations recorded at Gwent.

The Committee noted that , for the fourth year running, the crematorium had held onto its silver accreditation in the Charter for the Bereaved benchmarking exercise. The Manager explained that the gold standard could not be achieved as the crematorium was unable to offer extended time slots to the public as it would reduce the number of funeral services and increase waiting times. Congratulations were extended to the Manager and staff for the achievement nevertheless.

An inspection by the Environmental Health Officer was carried out on 12th December 2014 which found that all reporting was up to date and there were no contraventions to the premises operating permit. It was further noted that the bi-annual inspections had now been reduced to that of an annual basis as the process was deemed to be low risk.

Subsequent to the report, the Manager advised that he had received the results of the annual independent emissions monitoring exercise and that the crematorium was operating well within the guideline parameters.

In response to a query as to the commencement of disabled access works within the Remembrance Room, the Manager advised that materials had been ordered and that the work would commence in Spring with the improving weather conditions.

Resolved

That the report be noted.

9 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting to be held on 18 March 2015 at 2.00pm, the venue being Committee Room 4, Civic Centre, Newport.