

Minutes



Greater Gwent Cremation Joint Committee

Date: 28 July 2021

Time: 10.00 am

Present: Councillors J Taylor (Chair), Councillor R Jeavons, J Hughes, S Evans, Pratt, J Simmonds and Moore

Steve Tom, Gareth Price (Head of Law & Regulation), Meirion Rushworth (Head of Finance), Joanne Hazlewood, Paul Dundon, Karen Sansom and Joanne Gossage (Green Services Manager)

Apologies: Councillors K Williams and Meredith

1 **Declarations of Interest**

None received.

2 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The Minutes of the meeting held on the 27 January 2021 were accepted as a true and accurate record.

3 **Draft Accounts Report 2020/21**

Members were asked to receive and approve the draft accounts position, and note that a £950,000 distribution was made to Constituent Authorities, as agreed, in line with budget expectations.

Agreed:

The Committee approved the draft accounts/annual statement, prior to audit, and agreed to use the surplus of £63,028 to increase balances to £1,437,303, which will enable the ongoing programme of essential works to continue.

4 **Facilities Management**

Norse representative submitted his report by email. Nothing major to report from a building maintenance perspective only the usual maintenance requests eg; fence and toilet repairs. As stated at the previous meeting Paul Dundon and K Donovan have been looking at ways to improve the current facilities. We have looked into improving the toilets and waiting area as well as a refurbishment of the Book of Remembrance room. We are now at the stage where we have created draft drawings and we are finishing off putting a cost plan together for the proposal.

I had originally planned to share the drawings at this meeting but having discussed it further with Paul we came to the mutual agreement that although a picture paints a thousand words, we do not believe that it would properly represent the difficulties of the current layout or the scale of the works required to make it an altogether better experience for the crematorium user.

Therefore, we would like to propose that the Committee seek a couple of volunteers to accompany Paul and myself for a walk around the building with the new drawings and witness first-hand what we are proposing.

Councillors John Taylor, Chair. Julian Simmonds, Jane Pratt and Roger Jeavons volunteered.

P Dundon and K Donovan to arrange the visit with the four Councillors.

This will enable us to finalise the drawings and prepare a cost plan ready to bring to the next Committee meeting to seek approval.

5 **Funeral Director's Report**

S Tom asked about increasing the service time as he had received a letter from a family who had a family cremation recently and they had less than 20 minutes because the previous funeral was slightly delayed. The Minister felt that some of their service needed to be omitted to keep to time. The increase in service time is included in the Manager's report below.

6 **Manager's Report**

Cremations were up in Jan and Feb compared to the same period last year however, in April they have dropped to 111 compared to last year.

In the past 28 days to date there have been approximately 14000 views of the crematorium web pages.

Maintenance Issues

One of the emissions abatement streams is currently out of action due to a major internal water leak in the heat exchanger. Following advice the heat exchanger is being replaced in its entirety. This is due to be started on 26th June. Unfortunately, because of the need for heavy lifting gear on site, and the anticipated noise levels during the works, no services will be available on 28th and 29th June.

Installation of Audio-Visual Equipment

The installation of equipment to allow visual tributes during services has been arranged. This will be combined with a full upgrade of the sound system, giving a better experience for families in the chapel and improving the sound levels for any people gathered outside the chapel. A second microphone will also be introduced so that there will be no need for people giving eulogies to share a lectern with celebrants. Dates for installation have not yet been finalised, due to supply issues with some of the specialist equipment required.

Service Times

Because of issues with demand, it has not been possible until now to offer service times longer than 20 minutes without creating a backlog of services, to the detriment of families. However, since the provision of crematoria in the area has increased and demand has decreased. PD proposes a 45 minute service within each hour slot however, there needs to be some leeway to shift times in practice.

J Pratt reported she went to a cremation in Hampshire recently and the crematorium was modern with the service being streamed live with music.

When the crematorium first opened, the normal procedure was that a funeral service would take place in church or chapel, and then the crematorium was used as only a place for committal of the body. The increased secularisation of society has changed this practice and far more funeral services are held solely at the crematorium. The content of funeral services has also become more diverse and complex, and twenty minutes is simply not adequate.

It is proposed that the service times should initially be changed to 45 minutes within each hour. This will also give additional time to enable thorough cleaning of the chapel and preparation for the next service. However, there needs to be some flexibility in the initial arrangements to allow for unforeseen operational issues.

The Committee agreed to increase the Service time to 45 minutes within each hour starting from July 2021.