

# Minutes



## Greater Gwent Cremation Joint Committee

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Date: 18 October 2023

Time: 12pm

Present: Councillors Y. Forsey (Chair), L. Lacey (NCC), M. Lane (Monmouthshire), Elizabeth Bryant (Head of Law and Standards), Phillip Toms, Joanne Hazelwood (Finance Business Partner - Systems with Finance IT Project responsibilities), Joanne Gossage (The Service Manager Environment & Leisure) Karl Donovan (Newport Norse), Meirion Rushworth (Head of Finance), Councillor J Taylor (Caerphilly). Taylor Strange (Governance Officer),

Apologies: S Evans, J Simmonds J Taylor

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### 1. Declaration of Interest

N/A

### 2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting held on the 24.05.23.

The minutes of the previous meeting were held as a true record.

### 3. Review of Budget Performance 2023/24

The Finance Business Partner Systems with Finance IT Project responsibilities presented the report.

#### Key Points

The Crematorium financial position has been impacted by the building works.

The budget needs to be signed off as well as the approval of the restated annual return.

The Temporary issues are a major reason for the overspend budget.

The overspend required more use of reserves, this would need to be reviewed and approved.

There had been an increased cost in relation to the cremator however provisions in budget were being looked at in order to create an allocation specifically for repairs.

Burial memorials have been purchased in bulk but over the last few years this had been reduced.

£172,000 less income was expected which was linked to the building repairs which had impacted morning time slots before 11:30am.

Councillor Forsey highlighted that the building works had a bigger impact than previously thought.

- The Service Manager Environment and Leisure noted time slots up to 11:30am had been lost.
- K Donovan, Newport Norse, noted the works are expected to be dealt with on the 27 October 2023.

Audit Wales noted an error in the annual return which showed it was overstated by £120,000.

The refurbishing works would be continued to be monitored.

The Committee was asked to note the financial position of this year and approve the annual return.

The Head of Finance highlighted the importance of the reserve reduction due to the error and the noted overspend.

Councillor Forsey wanted reassurances that the error would not happen again.

- The Finance Business Partner Systems with Finance IT Project responsibilities highlighted that it was human error that made the mistake, but processes were put in place to mitigate any future issues.

Councillor Tudor noted once all works are done would this improve the budget position. The Finance Business Partner Systems with Finance IT Project responsibilities highlighted the budget has taken this into account.

**Resolved:**

The Committee noted the financial statement and signed off the reserve.

**4. Community Energy: Solar PV at Gwent Crematorium**

The Service Manager for Environment and Leisure gave an overview of the report.

The purpose of the report was to construct a solar panel array which noted a £900 saving on energy per year and a reduction of 9 tons of carbon.

The project would be funded through the grant aid system.

The company in charge of installing the panels, would provide all maintenance for the lease of 21 years at which point the deal could be renegotiated.

M Ryan Funeral Association queried when the works would take place.

The Service Manager for Environment and Leisure would look into this.

The Head of Finance was not aware of the cost of the panels; therefore, the officers could not advise the Committee actions to take.

The Head of Finance also queried what would occur should the council not be able to fulfil their requirements.

The Service Manager for Environment and Leisure highlighted that option 3, following the 21 years, the panels could be removed at no cost to the councils.

The Head of Law and Standards queried what would happen if the company folded. She also asked could the roof space be maintained should any further work need to be undertaken. Finally, the Head of Law and Standards queried whether there was a lawful Planning Development Certificate in place.

This information would be available at a future meeting.

The Committee would like the report to reflect that the work undertaken be subject to minimal disruption.

- The Service Manager for Environment and Leisure detailed ways in which to minimally impact the workings of the crematorium.
- The Carbon Reduction Project Officer noted the works would be done as soon as possible but the restrictions would have to be factored into this.

Councillor Forsey asked if the Committee were content to approve based on the conditions proposed.

These conditions included more information on any outcomes should the provider company fold, the ability to access the roof space for maintenance, information on the Planning Development Certificate as well the issues raised by the Head of Finance.

**Resolved:**

The Committee were content that based on the conditions proposed the installation of 33.75 kWp solar panel array at Gwent Crematorium could proceed.

## **5. Facilities Management**

K Donovan, Newport Norse, presented this item.

K Donovan, Newport Norse noted the works due to be completed by 27 October and also highlighted other sections of work that was ongoing such as the roof taking roughly eight weeks.

The Chair asked whether Norse carried out inspections on works already completed.

- K Donovan, Newport Norse, noted that they did not carry out inspections specifically but did highlight that any issues spotted could be reported and then dealt with.

## **6. Funeral Director's Report**

M Ryan Funeral Directors, Funeral Association presented this item.

M Ryan Funeral Directors, Funeral Association gave thanks to the builders on the works already completed.

M Ryan Funeral Directors, Funeral Association would like the chapel looked at, in addition to the roof panels to see if there were any issues.

- The Service Manager for Environment and Leisure highlighted that a report had been conducted on the roof and a leak had been found which was currently being addressed.

- K Donovan noted that Egni Coop should conduct a report on the roof to see whether it is structurally viable to house the solar panels.

M Ryan Funeral Directors, Funeral Association, queried when the new staff would be employed in order to fill the current vacancies.

- The Service Manager for Environment and Leisure noted this would be covered in the following agenda item.

## **7. Manager's Report**

The Service Manager for Environment and Leisure presented this item.

### Key Points

The Service Manager for Environment and Leisure noted that the year had seen a decrease in bookings.

The Service Manager for Environment and Leisure noted three positions that were lost due to retirement and asked if the Committee would like to give thanks to the retired officers for their hard work.

The Committee wanted it noted that they passed on their thanks to the retired officers.

The Service Manager for Environment and Leisure advised that a new deputy manager and cremator operator had been appointed and the remaining administrative staff vacancies would be advertised.

K Donovan, Newport Norse advised that full services should be back in order by 22 October.

The Service Manager for Environment and Leisure mentioned that there had been two car collisions into the pillars near the funeral directors' office and public car park.

The Service Manager for Environment and Leisure explained that Cremators 3 and 4 were serviced recently but noted there was an issue with the filtration system in the other cremators.

The Service Manager for Environment and Leisure informed the Committee that they were consulting closing services on dates within the Christmas Period.

## **8. Part 2 confidential**

**Not for publication as consideration of the report involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in schedule 12 A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) and the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure.**

## **9. Equipment Update**

### **Resolved:**

The Committee considered the information provided as a first stage review.

The Committee understood and noted the issues and the options available and that officers were looking at the financial impacts and would come back in due course for a decision when full financial information was available.