

Minutes



Greater Gwent Cremation Joint Committee

Date: 23 September 2015

Time: 2.00 pm

Present: Councillors Jones (Chair) (Monmouthshire County Council), S Brookes (Torfaen County Borough Council), P Huntley (Newport City Council) J Simmons (Caerphilly County Borough Council) and J Taylor (Caerphilly)

Also in attendance:

G Price (Honorary Secretary), P Dundon (Superintendent Registrar), J Hazelwood (Assistant Accountant), A Jenkins (Democratic Services Officer)

Apologies: Councillors V Delahaye (Newport City Council), Dally (Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council) and K Williams (Monmouthshire County Council)

1 Apologies

Councillors Dally (Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council), Williams, (Monmouthshire County Council), Delahaye (Newport City Council) and Mr S Tom (National Association of Funeral Directors).

2 Declarations of Interest

None received.

3 Minutes of the Meeting

The minutes of the meeting of 17 June 2015 were recorded as a true record.

4 Budget Monitoring Report 2015/16

A brief report was presented by the Assistant Accountant, outlining the increase of the forecasted surplus. An underspend of £82,000 was due to the underspend on employees, due to a vacant post and an underspend on supplies and services due to spending freeze.

Councillor Huntley was informed of the details of the underspend, in relation to supplies and services by the Superintendent Registrar.

The committee would be informed on the future outcome of the vacant post as part of the consultation process.

Resolved:

That the budget monitoring report for 2015/16 was noted by the committee.

5 **Facilities Management**

The Newport Norse representative was not in attendance at the meeting.

6 **Funeral Director's Report**

The representative from the National Association of Funeral Directors sent his apologies and advised in advance that there was nothing to report to the committee.

7 **Manager's Report**

The Superintendent Registrar gave a brief presentation on the report. One of the gardeners, Mr Graham Wookey was due to retire on 6 November 2015. During his 10 years of service, Mr Wookey was key in helping the crematorium winning a number of awards, including the Cemetery of the Year scheme, best floral displays and first prize in the Wales in Bloom competition. Mr Wookey would be missed by all staff at the crematorium.

Memorial sales were down in the summer. Cremation figures were normal to date. The committee were informed that in general, the figures have remained static since 1971.

Resolved:

That a thank you letter be sent to Mr Wookey for his hard work during his employment at the Crematorium.

8 **Motion Proposal at Torfaen County Borough Council**

A motion submitted by Councillor M Barnett of Torfaen County Borough Council to extend the opening hours for funeral services during critical periods, including the possibility of opening of a Saturday was considered by the committee. Councillor Brookes informed the committee that unfortunately he was not present at Council to explain to Councillor Barnett that there were plenty of time slots at the crematorium. The booking of popular time slots was one of the contributing factors to the back log.

The Chair invited committee members to put forward their opinions.

Councillor Taylor considered that there would be staffing implications involved with extending the services on a Saturday. Committee members agreed that it could be costly.

The Superintendent Registrar suggested that if availability of time slots were published daily or weekly to the crematorium website to show members of the public that there was not an issue with unavailability it might help to change the public perception.

Councillor Huntley asked if there was an alternative way in which figures could be accessed to the public as not everyone had computers or devices. This would involve additional costs, however the website received on average 1,000 hits per month. The previous month there were 2,000 hits.

The Chair advised the committee that there was a need to provide the information to Torfaen County Borough Council in a reasonable and measured way. It was therefore suggested that a report on the staffing implications, availability of time slots and any other additional information could be compiled and considered at the next meeting. This would then be presented to Torfaen County Borough Council for information and assurance that there was no requirement for extending the opening hours for cremation services this winter.

In the meantime, a letter would be sent on behalf of the Committee to the Chief Democratic Services Officer, explaining the outcome of the discussion at this meeting.

Resolved:

That a report be compiled and presented to the next meeting.

That information would be available on the website within the month.

That a letter be sent to Torfaen County Borough Council on the resolution

9 **Date of Next Meeting**

25 November 2015 at 2pm in Committee Room 4.