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Greater Gwent Cremation Joint Committee

Date:	Wednesday, 20 January 2016
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Time: 2.00 pm

Venue: Committee Room 4 - Civic Centre

To: Councillors Brookes, V Delahaye, P Huntley, Dally, Morgan, White, Taylor, Jones and Williams

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Wards Affected

All Wards

All Wards

All Wards

- 1 Apologies for Absence
- 2 Declarations of Interest
- 3 <u>Minutes of the Meeting held on 23 September 2015</u> (Pages 3 6)
- 4 <u>Review of Fees and Review Estimates 2016/17 and Appendices A&B</u> All Wards (Pages 7 12)
- 5 <u>Budget Monitoring and Forecasting 2015/16 and Appendix A</u> (Pages All Wards 13 14)
- 6 Facilities Management (Oral Update)
- 7 <u>Funeral Director's Report</u> All Wards To consider any issues raised by the local Funeral Directors.
- 8 <u>Manager's Report</u> Report to follow.
- 9 <u>Dates of Meeting for 2016</u> To agree the suggested dates for 2016: 17 March 16 June 15 September 1 December

Contact: Anne Jenkins, Democratic Services Officer Tel: 01633 656656 E-mail: anne.jenkins@newport.gov.uk Date of Issue: 14 January 2016

Agenda Item 3

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 crematiorium 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.

Agenda Item 4

ITEM 4

REPORT TO : GREATER GWENT CREMATORIUM JOINT COMMITTEE

DATE : 20 JANUARY 2016

PURPOSE : REVIEW OF FEES AND REVENUE ESTIMATES FOR 2016/17

1. Introduction

This report is intended to:

- outline the draft revenue estimates for 2016/17. These are included in detail at Appendix A.
- 2. propose Cremation fee increases commencing on the 1 April 2016. Details of our proposals are included at Appendix B.

2. <u>Revenue estimates 2016/17</u>

The draft estimates for 2016/17 outlined at Appendix A show a planned surplus of £719,471. Key factors to note are:

- Employee costs reflect a 1% increase which applies to the local government sector.
- The only inflationary increases applied are:
 - a) Energy costs 5%
 - b) Rates 2%
 - c) Refuse collection 8.2%
 - d) I.T 2.5%
 - e) Insurances 2%

** No increase in cremation fees has been reflected in these figures, so further surpluses could be generated by an increase in fees.

3. Fee Increases 2016/17

Given the continuing financial challenges that local government is currently facing, we are recommending that the Committee considers increasing the Cremation fees to be more consistent with other welsh authorities.

This will ensure that the Crematorium is on a firm financial footing going forward, and can continue to provide a reasonable distribution back to its member Authorities.

A number of options for fee increases are considered at Appendix B. Having considered the Cremation Society of Great Britain published statistics, we would recommend a fee increase of 10% at this time.

4. Accumulated Balances

As at 31 March 2015, the Committee held a balance in reserve of £1.63 million. The surplus to 31 March 2016 is currently estimated to be £855,000, taking the surplus back up to £2.48 million.

5. <u>Recommendations</u>

It is recommended that :-

- a) the estimates for 2016/17 are approved,
- b) crematorium fees are increased by 10%,
- c) a distribution of £750,000 be made, prior to the financial year end, retaining a sufficient level of reserves to cover any emergency works.

Mr Meirion Rushworth Honorary Treasurer

GREATER GWENT CREMATION JOINT COMMITTEE

ESTIMATES 2016/17

	Estimate 2014/15 £	Estimate 2015/16 £	Estimate 2016/17 £
Expenditure			
Employees Premises Transport Supplies & Services Support Services Mercury Abat.Capital Costs Capital Financing	272,672 298,649 13,134 167,824 35,587 110,000 62,000 959,866	275,387 277,642 3,134 176,559 27,293 110,000 62,000 932,015	278,127 284,067 3,134 177,028 27,293 110,000 62,000 941,649
Income	(1,449,120)	(1,599,120)	(1,599,120)
Operating (Surplus)/Deficit	(489,254)	(667,105)	(657,471)
Capital Charge Adjustment	(62,000)	(62,000)	(62,000)
(Surplus)/Deficit for year	(551,254)	(729,105)	(719,471)

REPORT TO: GREATER GWENT CREMATORIUM JOINT COMMITTEE

DATE : 20 JANUARY 2016

PURPOSE : TO REVIEW THE CREMATION FEES FOR 2016/17

1. INTRODUCTION

The Joint Committee received a report on the review of fees for 2015/16, in January 2015, and decided to implement an increase of 10% from 01 April 2015.

It is now necessary to review fees for the coming year in light of our recent review of fees elsewhere in the country. It is proposed that any increase in fees as a result of this report will be actioned from 01 April 2016.

2. FEES in 2015/16

The table below shows the current cremation fee in Gwent, in relation to our geographically nearest competitors.

	Basic adult Cremation fee*	TOTAL Crematorium Charges**
CARDIFF	515.00	515.00
GWENT	592.00	592.00
HEREFORD	603.00	603.00
ABERDARE	626.00	626.00
BRIDGEND	615.00	635.70
BARRY	665.00	715.00
PONTYPRIDD	626.00	724.00
FOREST OF DEAN	740.00	740.00
GLOUCESTER	680.00	756.00

* cremation fee, plus medical referee's fee and environmental surcharge

** cremation fee plus medical referee's fee, environmental surcharge, use of chapel, music (recorded), and scattering/strewing of cremated remains

In 2014/15 Gwent was the 17th busiest crematorium out of 273 nationwide, and the busiest single chapel crematorium. It was the busiest in Wales, carrying out 13.17% of the 21,628 cremations in Wales.

Only 45 crematoria have lower cremation fees than Gwent. 230 are higher.

London (City of)	Local Authority	£360.00								
Belfast	Local Authority	£360.00								
South West Middlesex	Local Authority	£490.00								
Nottingham	Local Authority	£498.00								
Greenock	Local Authority	£511.60								
Cardiff	Local Authority	£515.00								

The 6 lowest fees nationwide are:

and the 5 highest fees nationwide are:

Beckenham	Private	£900.00
Chichester	Private	£900.00
Crawley	Private	£900.00
Leatherhead	Private	£900.00
Nuneaton	Private	£900.00

3. FEES for 2016/17

The following table shows the impact of various increases in the fees, with the additional estimated income based on cremations of 2781

% increase	Revised Fee	Additional
		estimated income
3%	£610	£50,058
5%	£622	£83,430
10%	£651	£164,079
15%	£681	£247,509
20%	£710	£328,158

4. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Joint Committee considers increasing the cremation fees by 10%. This would ensure sufficient funding for the Committee to maintain its services going forward, and for a distribution to constituent authorities.

Meirion Rushworth Honorary Treasurer

Agenda Item 5

ITEM 5

REPORT TO: GREATER GWENT CREMATORIUM JOINT COMMITTEE

DATE : 20 JANUARY 2016

PURPOSE : BUDGET MONITORING AND FORECASTING FOR 2015/16

1. Introduction

A summary of the budget monitoring reports to December 2015/16 is included in Appendix A.

The budget monitoring reports are distributed monthly, and highlight variances between budget and actuals.

2. Budget Monitoring and Forecasting 2015/16

The approved estimates for 2015/16 outlined in Appendix A showed a planned surplus of \pounds 740,695, however having reviewed the position at the end of December, the forecasted surplus has been increased to \pounds 855,373. The key factors to support the increase of \pounds 114,000 are:

£36,000 underspend on Employees, due to vacant posts (Deputy Manager and Gardener) £50,000 underspend on Supplies and Services, due to spending freeze. £28,000 additional income from increased cremation numbers

3. Comments of the Honorary Secretary

There are no legal implications to which attention needs to be drawn.

4. Recommendations

To note the monitoring report.

GREATER GWENT CREMATION JOINT COMMITTEE BUDGET MONITORING 2015/16

		ACTUAL to December	FORECASTED OUT-TURN	FULL YEAR BUDGET	VARIANCE TO FY BUDGET	NOTES
	EMPLOYEES	188,460	239,386	275,386		vacant post Deputy Manager, and Gardener (vacant 3mths Nov-Jan) pending recruitment
Page	PREMISES	143,526	266,052	266,052	0	maintenance orders to be placed in January
je 14	TRANSPORT	144	3,134	3,134	0	
	SUPPLIES & SERVICES	78,109	153,853	203,853		underspend within Supplies and Services, due to spending freeze.
	CAPITAL FINANCING	0	110,000	110,000	0	
	EXPENDITURE	410,239	772,425	858,425	86,000	
	INCOME	-1,216,990	-1,627,798	-1,599,120	28,678	additional income from increased cremation numbers
	GRAND TOTAL	-806,751	-855,373	-740,695	114,678	forecasted additional surplus

Manager's Report

Statistics

Book of Remembrance Online



The overall number of different users who have viewed the online Book of Remembrance is 15218 at the time of writing.

MEMORIAL SALES

MONTH	VASE BLOCKS	SANCTUM 12	LEASE RENEWALS
September 2015	5	1	2
October 2015	3	3	2
November 2015	4	0	4
December 2015	5	0	0

CREMATIONS

	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006
Jan	262	278	220*	254	278	254	283	298	279	263
Feb	262	254	200*	268	256	226	262	227	239	225
Mar	287	241	267	279	249	235	253	218	250	241
Apr	245	222	268	237	193	229	222	246	227	227
May	230	234	274	270	232	198	204	236	224	226
Jun	241	239	218	193*	232	235	206	201	224	202
Jul	237	257	211	175*	204	208	205	206	247	202
Aug	187	206	183	168*	241	198	191	223	220	215
Sep	232	204	194	158*	221	218	204	210	211	211
Oct	225	243	234	186*	233	232	225	251	241	210
Nov	249	222	226	176*	220	219	212	200	225	217
Dec	266	248	200	182*	234	227	238	234	207	186
TOTAL	2913	2848	2695	2546*	2793	2679	2705	2750	2794	2625

* Figures marked with an asterisk are at times with reduced service provision due to the installation of mercury abatement plant.

Record numbers of cremations took place in the months of September, November and December. Likewise, the calendar year as a whole was the crematorium's busiest ever.

However, January 2016 seems set to be the have the fewest cremations for that month since 1989 (*excluding 2012, when the crematorium operated on reduced capacity*).

Apart from 21st January, every forthcoming date has service times available.

Service time availability is available on the crematorium website.

Pressure on Service Availability at Gwent Crematorium

Background

Gwent Crematorium opened in 1960, and serves a wide geographical area of South East Wales. The most recent available statistics show Gwent as being the 17th busiest crematorium out of 273 nationwide. It is the busiest single chapel crematorium in the UK, and the busiest in Wales, carrying out 13.17% of the 21,628 cremations in Wales.

	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006
Jan	262	278	220*	254	278	254	283	298	279	263
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Aug	187	206	183	168*	241	198	191	223	220	215
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TOTAL	2913	2848	2695	2546*	2793	2679	2705	2750	2794	2625

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The average number of cremations per year over the past 20 years is 2743, with the highest being 2944.

Causes of Raised Demand

Demand for cremation services are driven by a number of factors, including

- Changes in public perception of cremation have led to a long term increase in demand.
- The death rate varies year to year, due to outbreaks of illnesses like influenza, and due to weather-related changes.
- Demographic factors, specifically an aging population profile
- Pricing. Burial fees have risen significantly in recent years
- External factors, e.g. in recent months Llwydcoed Crematorium in Aberdare closed for refurbishment, leading to increased demand in December 2015.

Causes of Delay in Service Time Availability

The time between booking a funeral service and it actually happening is influenced not only by simple pressure of numbers, but also by a number of other factors:

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- Although the crematorium may have plenty of times available for services, the family's funeral director may be otherwise committed
- Families may be unwilling to take the times available, for any number of reasons
- Funeral officiants may not be available to suit the times offered
- Families may wish to postpone funerals due to pre-booked holidays, exam periods, etc.

These factors, often in combination may lead to very significant delays in the provision of service times, but are beyond the control of the crematorium.

Cultural Changes

In the past decade, there has been a very significant trend to not engage ministers of religion to officiate at funerals, as society becomes generally more secular. Initially, this showed though a rise in Humanist funerals, but more recently has been evidenced in the rapid growth in popularity of independent secular funeral celebrants. This has an important impact on service provision, because whilst the" traditional" funeral was held first in a local church or chapel, with a committal service at the crematorium, the secular funeral tends to be solely at the crematorium. The standard service time at Gwent Crematorium is 20 minutes, which is ideal for a committal service, but not long enough for numerous pieces of music, eulogies, poems, etc. There is a serious lack of provision of suitable venues for secular funeral services outside the crematorium itself; hence the secular services tend to use a "double slot" at the crematorium, giving a total of 50 minutes.

These "double slots" were previously virtually unknown, but now impact significantly on the availability of service times. In 2015, 247 "double slots" were used; effectively more than three full working weeks of cremation times were "lost". In week beginning 25th January 2016, for example, 12 "double slots" have been booked, which has a very significant local impact.

Current Situation

January 2016 seems set to have the lowest number of cremations for that month since 1989. There are no significant pressures on the facility. At the time of presentation of this report, only one day (21st January) has no available time for funeral services.

The availability of cremation times is being published on the crematorium's website (www.gwentcrematorium.org.uk)

Mitigating Against Delays

If undue pressure on availability is noted, there are a number of options;

• Limit the number of "double slots" made available in any given week. This would have a variable effect, since the numbers of "double slots" required normally is beyond the control of the crematorium.

- Revert to the pattern of 22 cremation times per day instead of the current 15. This would have a significant negative impact on each service, since it allows 20 minutes, including entry and exit to the chapel. With the increased use of orders of service, recorded music that needs to be confirmed, etc., this is recommended only as a last resort.
- Open on Saturdays for a limited period. This would have a limited impact on provision. Each coffin received on a Saturday would need to be cremated that day. Allowing for the possibility of coffins that would have extended cremation times, and allowing any staff involved to be leaving at 5.00pm, this would allow about 10 funeral times to be made available. Because of the extreme elasticity of demand for cremations, this would not increase revenue for the crematorium. However, it would entail fixed costs, namely:

Staffing : Minimum staffing levels would be 1xChapel Attendant, 2xCremator Technician 1xAdministrative. All crematorium staff in this scenario are paid at grade 4, £12.79 at overtime rates. Over a 7.5 hour day, this equates to a wage cost of £384. To provide a Saturday service on a short notice ad hoc basis would need the availability and co-operation of half of the crematorium staff on any given Saturday.

Utility Costs: This is virtually impossible to calculate, because it would depend on how fully the day was booked, but would certainly run into £100s

There would be other dis-benefits, in that any maintenance planned for a Saturday would not be able to be done. If this involved essential work on a cremator, there could be major disruption to the operation of the crematorium.

Likewise, persons who habitually use the crematorium chapel on the weekend for contemplation would be stopped form doing so.

There are concerns for the well-being of the crematorium staff, who need a break after constantly dealing with death for five consecutive days.

	Registered	cremations	5	Extension			NVF			Unused		
	2014	2015	Change	2014	2015	Change	2014	2015	Change	2014	2015	Change
						_				_		_
Week		60	35	1	6	5	1	1	0	4	8	4
Week		65	3	5	5	0	2	1	-1	6	4	-2
Week		70	6	/	2	-5	2	1	-1	2	2	0
Week		70	3	3	4	1	0	1	1	5	0	-5
Week		67	3	4	/	3	0	0	0	/	1	-6
Week		65	4	/	4	-3	0	1	1	/	5	-2
Week		65	-1	3	3	0	1	0	-1	5	4	-1
Week		68	3	4	8	4	2	1	-1	4	3	-1
Week		63	0	5	5	0	0	1	1	7	3	-4
Week		66	10	4	3	-1	3	2	-1	12	5	-7
Week		65	5	5	7	2	0	1	1	10	1	-9
Week		66	5	4	7	3	1	2	1	9	1	-8
Week		65	9	4	2	-2	2	1	-1	13	2	-11
Week		55	-4	2	2	0	1	2	1	13	0	-13
Week		42	-16	5	5	0	0	2	2	12	2	-10
Week		66	20	7	9	2	1	2	1	6	0	-6
Week		64	30	3	8	5	0	3	3	8	1	-7
Week		63	2	4	1	-3	1	4	3	9	0	-9
Week		55	5	2	3	1	2	5	3	6	4	-2
Week		63	1	4	5	1	1	1	0	8	11	3
Week	< 21 57	58	1	2	2	0	2	2	0	14	11	-3
Week		52	12	6	4	-2	0	2	2	14	17	3
Week	< 23 58	58	0	5	6	1	0	2	2	12	9	-3
Week	4 52	54	2	7	8	1	0	1	1	16	12	-4
Week	< 25 59	59	0	5	4	-1	1	0	-1	10	12	2
Week	26 59	52	-7	6	7	1	2	0	-2	8	16	8
Week	27 53	54	1	0	3	3	1	7	6	22	11	-11
Week	< 28 47	59	12	3	3	0	2	2	0	23	11	-12
Week	c 29 57	47	-10	9	3	-6	2	3	1	7	22	15
Week	30 59	53	-6	2	5	3	2	1	-1	12	16	4
Week	31 55	33	-22	2	5	3	3	2	-1	15	35	20
Week	32 50	48	-2	7	5	-2	0	3	3	18	19	1
Week	33 57	52	-5	6	6	0	3	3	0	9	14	5
Week	34 56	55	-1	8	11	3	1	3	2	10	6	-4
Week	x 35 44	42	-2	3	4	1	2	3	1	11	11	0
Week	4 4	56	12	1	6	5	0	2	2	30	11	-19
Week	4 4	53	9	6	4	-2	1	1	0	24	17	-7
Week	x 38 44	52	8	4	3	-1	1	3	2	26	17	-9

Week 39	49	55	6	6	3	-3	2	1	-1	18	16	-2
Week 40	55	47	-8	5	6	1	1	3	2	14	19	5
Week 41	52	57	5	3	7	4	2	2	0	18	9	-9
Week 42	62	52	-10	3	5	2	1	2	1	9	16	7
Week 43	59	49	-10	5	4	-1	1	3	2	10	19	9
Week 44	53	58	5	5	5	0	2	0	-2	15	12	-3
Week 45	56	59	3	4	8	4	2	1	-1	13	7	-6
Week 46	57	60	3	6	3	-3	0	0	0	12	12	0
Week 47	52	63	11	4	4	0	0	0	0	19	8	-11
Week 48	57	64	7	2	3	1	2	0	-2	13	8	-5
Week 49	56	67	11	4	5	1	0	1	1	15	2	-13
Week 50	58	66	8	5	6	1	1	1	0	11	2	-9
Week 51	67	53	-14	4	1	-3	1	0	-1	3	0	-3
Week 52	36	32	-4	0	2	2	1	1	0	1	3	2
		2982	138	221	247	26	59	87	28	605	457	-148