

Minutes



Greater Gwent Cremation Joint Committee

Date: 13 September 2017

Time: 2.00 pm

Present: Councillors Evans, D Davies, R Jeavons, Simmonds and Taylor

In attendance:

Gareth Price (Head of Law & Regulation), Joanne Hazlewood (Finance Business Partner), Paul Dundon (Superintendent Registrar) and Anne Jenkins (Democratic Services Officer)

1 Apologies for Absence

Councillors R Clark (Torfaen) and B Jones (Monmouthshire), K Crawley (Deputy Manager) and S Tom (Association of Funeral Directors).

2 Declarations of Interest

Nothing to declare.

3 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting of 14 June 2017 was accepted as a true record.

4 Audited Accounts for 2016/17

It was explained by the Finance Business Partner that due to the change in the accounts and audit regulations in 2015, smaller local government bodies that met the qualifying condition were able to complete a simplified annual return rather than a full Statement of Accounts.

It was felt that the board would not gain from receiving both a full set of accounts and the annual return and that only the annual return would be completed for the Crematorium and delivered to the board for sign off. It was therefore proposed and recommended that a full set of accounts would no longer be produced and the smaller body annual return would be the only return to bring to the board.

Agreed:

That in future only the annual return be provided to the Greater Gwent Joint Cremation Committee to be signed off.

5 Budget Monitoring Report

The Finance Business Partner gave a brief overview of the report, highlighting the out turn and variances. Rates revaluation had risen substantially resulting in a dispute with the valuation office. The Finance Business Partner would however report back to the committee once she received a response. The additional income was actual to date.

Finally, a further report would be brought to committee at a future meeting to discuss the surplus.

Agreed:

That the monitoring report was noted.

6 **Manager's Report**

The Superintendent Registrar went through the report for the committee.

- The Crematorium website had a recent spike in viewing over the past month peaking at over 600 views a day.
- Memorial sales in July and August were down.
- Cremation figures for the first eight months of the year were higher than the corresponding period in 2016.
- The Crematorium was successful in retaining their Green Flag status for the second year running. The Green Flag report noted that the site was immaculate. The Superintendent Registrar praised the grounds staff for their outstanding work.
- There were six large burial plots currently being created to give 20 years extra life for the grounds. Once however the site had reached capacity, expansion could be reverted to civic scattering.

Chair asked whether the expansion works of burial plots would affect the operation of the crematorium. The Chair was advised that in the short run there would be minor disruption.

In response to Councillor Davies' query the maximum cremations carried out was 15 a day, which had been reached in the past but not this winter.

Councillor Davies went on further to ask whether the crematorium had the capacity to manage the demographic expansion in Gwent. There was an increase in the provision of a service at the crematorium, with double and triple bookings; this was probably due to secularisation.

Lengthy discussion ensued on how to alleviate the high volume of cremations, including weekend working. The Superintendent Registrar advised that this was not a consideration due to the additional staffing costs that the crematorium would incur. There was a private crematorium under construction in Llanwern, which would have benefits in relation the concerns discussed.

The committee suggested that a Forward Plan be brought to a future meeting.

- There was an increasing trend for cremated remains to be collected from the crematorium for short periods to allow for the remains to be made into individual keepsake items. The cremated remains were then returned for the interment in the burial plots at the crematorium. This had caused an increase in costs in terms of the supply of containers and certificates as well as increasing the administrative burden on the crematorium. Additionally, where cremated remains were being transported from one crematorium to another for interment, there was a charge of £78.

It was therefore considered that an imposing fee for the subsequent interment of any remains be agreed by the committee.

Agreed:

- That an additional fee of £78 to cover the cost for the return of the remains from one crematorium to another be enforced.
- To recommend a forward plan at a future meeting.

7 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting would take place on 6 December at 2pm in Room 4.

The meeting terminated at Time Not Specified