

Agenda



Greater Gwent Cremation Joint Committee

Date: Wednesday, 14 March 2018

Time: 2.00 pm

Venue: Committee Room 1 - Civic Centre

To: Councillors Clark (Chair), Evans, D Davies, R Jeavons, Edwards, Daniels, Jones, Williams, Simmonds, Taylor and Tom

Item		Wards Affected
1	<u>Apologies for Absence</u>	
2	<u>Declarations of Interest</u>	
3	<u>Minutes of the Previous Meeting</u> (Pages 3 - 6)	
4	<u>Facilities Management</u> To receive an oral update from the Newport Norse representative	
5	<u>Funeral Director's Report</u> To consider any issues raised by local Funeral Directors	
6	<u>Manager's Report</u> (Pages 7 - 8)	
7	<u>Date of Next Meeting</u> Wednesday 13 June 2018 at 2pm in Room 4	

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Minutes



Greater Gwent Cremation Joint Committee

Date: 24 January 2018

Time: 2.00 pm

Present: Councillors D Davies, R Jeavons, Jones, Williams, Taylor and Tom
Gareth Price (Head of Law & Regulation), Joanne Hazlewood and Paul Dundon

In Attendance:

Apologies: Councillors Daniels and Simmonds

1 Apologies for Absence

2 Declarations of Interest

The Chair declared that his partner was employed by Tovey Bros Funeral Directors.

3 Review of Fees and Revenue Estimates for 2018/19

The Finance Business Partner referred to the above report which proposed a cremation fee increasing from 1 April 2018.

The Committee was informed that there had been a slight amendment to the figures and new copies were distributed. The new figures related to the employee cost, this had no impact on the income.

The suggested fee increase was 2%, this was projected to increase revenues by £29,000.

In addition, the budget due to be announced at Council would show that there would be a surplus of £750K. This took into account the anticipated decrease in cremations, predicting a loss of income due to new Crematorium recently opened in Llanwern. This was only a precautionary measure, projecting the decline in bookings year on year and was a minimum distribution requirement that would see the Crematorium's finances in good stead for a while.

The Chair also considered that there might be cause for concern with the new Crematorium and asked the Committee to give careful consideration to the increase in fees.

Councillor Williams (MBCB) felt that the Committee was led to believe that the new Crematorium would not affect the income of the Gwent Crematorium.

Discussion ensued regarding the decrease in figures, this was highlighted in the Manger's Report (item 6), showing that December 2017 saw a considerable drop in bookings.

The Committee, Head of Finance and Superintendent Registrar would monitor the figures continually and see if there was a significant decrease after 12 months.

S Tom, Association of Funeral Directors advised the Committee that the death rate in Llanwern was also down for the month of December, again, this would have to be monitored on a monthly basis rather than speculating on why there was a significant decline in bookings.

The Committee was notified that the medical referee requested an increase to £20. This had not been changed since 2006 and would see an increase of £2. The Superintendent Paul explained that the medical referee's role was a direct recommendation by the Department of Justice to review any medical forms, ensuring that they had been completed correctly; the medical referee had the power to request a further examination or stop a cremation from being carried out. This role however would only exist for 12 months and was due for review by Central Government.

Councillor Davies said that it was a private sector that was benefitting from the cremation services in Llanwern and that the Committee but needed to be mindful of how it could impact on the Gwent Crematorium in the future.

The Chair, referred to the limitations of the Gwent Crematorium and that consideration should be given as to where the excess funding could be spent.

Finally, the Superintendent Registrar also referred to the cut-off age range point for children which was 16 years and suggested that it be increased to 18 years. There was a concession for children and because the frequency of services within the 16-18 year age range was negligible, it was felt that the age range should allow for the extra two years. The Committee unanimously agreed the increase the age to 18 years.

Agreed:

That the fee increase would be raised to 2% for 2018/19.

That the medical referee fee be increased by £2.

That the age range be extended from 16 to 18 years for government concession.

4 **Funeral Director's Report**

S Tom referred to the newly built Lanwern Crematorium which was being used frequently by Funeral Directors and asked fellow members to give a 'top five' list as to why they were using it more than the Cwmbran Crematorium. Apart from the pleasant surroundings and new build, it was considered that the top three reasons that the Funeral Directors preferred to use Llanwern was due to the following:

1. The availability to have a photo tribute, ie slide show which played during the service.
2. An additional set of voile curtains to close around the casket.
3. Online booking facility to secure a slot for a service.

Members of the public were not put off by the fees which were £120 higher than the Gwent Crematorium.

The Committee therefore unanimously agreed that these services should be matched to compete with the Llanwern Crematorium.

The Superintendent Registrar did highlight some logistical obstacles that might hinder the progress, where to install media facilities, the age of the building and electrical installation etc.

After lengthy discussion for and against the modernisation of the building and facilities, it was unanimously agreed by members that the issues mentioned above should be investigated and overcome for the long term benefits of the crematorium.

S Tom pointed out that there was not the facility for a wheelchair user to speak at the pulpit. The Superintendent Registrar however was currently looking into this.

Finally, S Tom requested that the chapel attendants be trained to change the music on the Wellesley machine, rather than wait for officers who might be indisposed when a service was about to commence.

Agreed:

1. That installation of media equipment to provide a slide show for photo tributes be investigated.
2. That an online booking system be investigated.
3. That a new voile curtain and track be installed.

5 **Manager's Report**

The Superintendent Registrar highlighted the above report and gave an outline of the following:

Cremations:

As was the running theme of the meeting, the cremation figures were much lower than the average for the month of December 2017, however S Tom did say that deaths in December were lower than anticipated.

The figures for January were likely to be 239, this was also lower than average and would await to see what happens in February.

Single Use Plastics:

The Chair made reference to the single use plastics which caught the interest of the BBC earlier in the week when they contacted the Chair for further information. The Crematorium used both plastic containers and cardboard boxes for cremated remains. The boxes were recyclable and locally sourced and have been used since 2003. In line with recent moves by central government, it was proposed that the use of the single use plastic containers no longer be purchased, removing any harm to the environment and lowering the carbon emissions due to deliveries round the country. It was also proposed to cease using the heavy plastic bags accompanying any other purchase within the Crematorium and use paper bags instead.

Interment of Cremated Remains:

There had been a change in what people did with cremated remains over the past years, which meant that remains interred in garden of remembrance had significantly reduced. With this in mind, it was suggested by the Superintendent Registrar that weekly interments be reduced to fortnightly, preserving the remaining the grounds that were set aside for burials and also allowing clients more time to change their minds, should they so wish.

Work on garden of remembrance was almost complete, including the planting of native trees, giving and extra 25-30 years burial space within the grounds. Due to recent storms, there was a loss of five conifers between the Crematorium and the neighbouring golf course. The area had been cleaned up and debris from the trees were removed and purchase of native trees to replace the conifers was underway, to maintain the natural habitat.

Councillor K Williams referred to availability on the website, which appeared to be out of date. The Superintendent Registrar apologised and had updated it that morning and would continue to do so on a regular basis.

Agreed:

To remove the use of plastic single use containers.
To reduce the burials from weekly to fortnightly

6 **Meetings for 2018**

The following dates were for 2018 would take place on a Wednesday at 2pm in Committee Room 4:

14 March
13 June
12 September
12 December

Manager's Report

Statistics

Website

In the past 28 days to date, there have been 15537 views of the crematorium web pages.

MEMORIAL SALES

MONTH	VASE BLOCKS	SANCTUM 12	LEASE RENEWALS
January 2018	4	2	5
February 2018	4	1	9

CREMATIONS

	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007
Jan	246	268	240	262	278	220*	254	278	254	283	298	279
Feb	254	258	243	262	254	200*	268	256	226	262	227	239
Mar		299	277	287	241	267	279	249	235	253	218	250
Apr		229	268	245	222	268	237	193	229	222	246	227
May		266	266	230	234	274	270	232	198	204	236	224
Jun		260	264	241	239	218	193*	232	235	206	201	224
Jul		219	211	237	257	211	175*	204	208	205	206	247
Aug		236	244	187	206	183	168*	241	198	191	223	220
Sep		228	228	232	204	194	158*	221	218	204	210	211
Oct		240	224	225	243	234	186*	233	232	225	251	241
Nov		251	239	249	222	226	176*	220	219	212	200	225
Dec		191	244	266	248	200	182*	234	227	238	234	207
	500	2945	2948	2913	2848	2695	2546*	2793	2679	2705	2750	2794

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

There has been a strong recovery in cremation numbers in February, with a figure nearly five above the ten year mean (excluding 2013).

SNOW

During the period of extreme weather at the beginning of March, the crematorium remained fully staffed (including PL, who came back in from leave to help out). Although a small number of funerals were postponed by families and funeral directors, the majority took place as normal. Thanks are due to the gritting team from Torfaen County Borough Council, whose help with snow clearance was invaluable, and to Messrs Arthur Peake & Sons, and Newport City Council's Streetscene section for assisting with transport.

CANCELLATION OF FUNERALS

We continue to have a problem with funeral directors booking service times, then arranging to go elsewhere, but not cancelling the original booking. This is not discovered until the crematorium staff chase up missing paperwork, by which time it is too late for anyone else to use the time slot. This causes unnecessary delays to funerals, especially at busy times.

It is recommended that consideration is given to imposing a cancellation fee, for any funeral cancelled after, for example, 24 hours of the original booking time.