

# Agenda



## Greater Gwent Cremation Joint Committee

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Date: Monday, 12 October 2020

Time: 10.00 am

Venue: Virtual on Teams

To: Councillors Councillor R Jeavons (Chair), D Davies, R Clark, S Evans, K Williams, Pratt, J Simmonds, J Taylor, Meredith, Moore and S Tom

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Item	Wards Affected
1	<u>Apologies for Absence</u>
2	<u>Declarations of Interest</u>
3	<u>Minutes of the Previous Meeting</u>
4	<u>Appointment of a New Chair for the Joint Committee</u>
5	<u>Budget Monitoring Report 2020 (Pages 3 - 6)</u>
6	<u>Amended Final Accounts Oct 2020 (Pages 7 - 12)</u>
7	<u>Facilities Management</u> To receive an oral update from the Newport Norse representative
8	<u>Funeral Director's Report</u> To consider any issues raised by local Funeral Directors
9	<u>Letter to Greater Gwent Joint Committee (Pages 13 - 14)</u>
10	<u>Manager's Report (Pages 15 - 18)</u>
11	<u>Webcast of Meeting</u> To view the webcast click on the link below

<https://youtu.be/iUTmJRjucnU>

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Date of Issue: 30 September 2020





# Report

## Greater Gwent Crematorium Joint Committee

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### Part 1

Date: Monday 12<sup>th</sup> October 2020

**Subject** Budget Monitoring Report 2020/21

**Purpose** To consider the budget monitoring position for 2020/21 to date

**Author** Joanne Hazlewood

**Ward** General

**Summary** To provide the Committee with up to date budget monitoring data and summary analysis

**Proposal** The Committee is asked to consider the current budget position

**Action by** Head of Finance

**Timetable** Immediate

**Signed**

## Background

### Financial Summary

	<b>FY Budget</b>	<b>Actual to 28 Sep</b>	<b>Forecast</b>	<b>Variance to Budget</b>
<b>Total INCOME</b>	<b>(2,003,438)</b>	<b>(825,595)</b>	<b>(1,855,000)</b>	<b>148,438</b>
<b>Employees</b>	327,587	157,928	320,000	(7,587)
<b>-COVID related</b>		673		
<b>Premises</b>	342,226	290,049	342,226	0
<b>-COVID related</b>		36,977		
<b>Transport</b>	1,010	237	500	(510)
<b>Supplies &amp; Services</b>	180,205	49,132	163,000	(17,205)
<b>Capital Financing</b>	53,161	0	53,161	0
<b>Total EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>904,189</b>	<b>497,346</b>	<b>878,887</b>	<b>25,302</b>
<b>(SURPLUS) / DEFICIT</b>	<b>(1,099,249)</b>	<b>(328,249)</b>	<b>(976,113)</b>	<b>123,136</b>
<b>Less Budgeted Distribution</b>	<b>950,000</b>		<b>950,000</b>	
<b>Increase to Balances</b>	<b>149,249</b>		<b>26,113</b>	

### COVID related expenditure

**Employees: overtime** **673.00**

#### **Premises:**

-Wesley Media supply and install new webcast services 1,054.50  
Total cost £2,108.99, claimed 50%

-Facultatieve Technologies full re-tubing of cremator boiler 35,772.00  
Total cost £53,272, claimed difference between total re-tubing cost and the cost of repair works, estimated at £17,500

<b>TOTAL RECLAIMED FROM WELSH GOVT</b>
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<b>37,650.00</b>
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## Risks

Risk	Impact of Risk if it occurs* (H/M/L)	Probability of risk occurring (H/M/L)	What is the Council doing or what has it done to avoid the risk or reduce its effect	Who is responsible for dealing with the risk?
Further decline in cremation numbers	H	M	Update/improve the facilities to be more competitive with private crematoria	Head of Finance

## Links to Council Policies and Priorities

The overall aim of this budget monitoring is to ensure the efficient and effective running of the crematorium, making best use of resources, to provide the delivery of the crematorium services and provide a distribution of surpluses to constituent authorities

### Options Available and considered

To note the current budget monitoring position, and to review in more detail, when the draft budgets are presented at the next meeting

### Preferred Option and Why

To review in more detail, when draft budget options are presented at the next meeting

## Comments of Chief Financial Officer

## Comments of Monitoring Officer

## Comments of Head of People and Business Change

There are no HR or People and Business Change related matters arising from this report

## Comments of Cabinet Member

## Local issues

Not applicable

## Scrutiny Committees

Not applicable

## Equalities Impact Assessment and the Equalities Act 2010

Not applicable

## Children and Families (Wales) Measure

Not applicable

**Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**

Not applicable

**Crime and Disorder Act 1998**

Not applicable

**Consultation**

Not applicable

**Background Papers**

Not applicable

Dated: 29 September, 2020



# Report

## Greater Gwent Crematorium Joint Committee

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### Part 1

Date: Monday 12<sup>th</sup> October 2020

**Subject** Draft Accounts Report 2019/20

**Purpose** To approve the draft accounts for 2019/20, prior to audit

**Author** Joanne Hazlewood

**Ward** General

**Summary** The Committee is required to approve the annual return prior to External Audit completing their audit.

-If there are no amendments required, no further action is required by the Committee  
 -If there are amendments, External Audit will report to Committee requesting amendment of the annual return, and will require re-approval, at a formal meeting, and a signature by the Chair of the Committee.

Appendix:

Appendix 1 Annual Return 2019/20  
 Appendix 2 Summary out-turn analysis

**Proposal**

1. Members are asked to receive and approve the draft accounts position
2. Members are asked to approve the remaining 20% distribution to constituent authorities
3. Chair of Committee to provide electronic signature on annual return statement

**Action by** Head of Finance

**Timetable** Draft annual return to be approved by Committee, prior to Audit.

This report was prepared after consultation with:

- Head of Finance

**Signed**

## **Background**

### **Context**

At the last Committee meeting held in November, the projected out-turn was £44k in deficit. This was mainly due to the downfall in income levels, and the increasing premises related costs, due to essential cremator repairs/maintenance. As a result of this report, the Committee agreed to withhold 20% of the budgeted distribution, until year end out-turn had been finalised, to establish the required draw on reserves, if necessary.

The draft out-turn position, is showing a surplus of £137,929, and the variance analysis shown in Appendix 2, highlights that the reason for this was increased income levels. This was only slightly offset by additional utilities costs.

### **Risks**

n/a

### **Links to Council Policies and Priorities**

The overall aim of the recommendation is to ensure that reserve levels can continue to support the delivery of the Cremation service, and protect the financial health of the Committee.

### **Options Available and considered**

The out-turn position shows that the surplus will cover the remaining 20% distribution, and will increase balances by £137,929, to a total of £1,374,275 going forward into 20/21.

The Committee has the following options available:

- a) Approve the remaining distribution of 20% (£190,000) to Constituent Authorities, and the increase to balances of £137,929
- b) Agree an additional distribution of the surplus £137,929

### **Preferred Option and Why**

The preferred option is to pay the remaining 20% distribution, and increase the balances held by the Committee, to enable the programme of essential works to be undertaken in 20/21.

### **Comments of Chief Financial Officer**

The surplus has exceeded budget requirements and therefore the distribution to Councils will be made in line with the budget target. This means that the 20% balance held back will now be paid to constituent Councils.

The reserves are at a very healthy amount and it is recommended that the Committee ensures that the essential developments required to improve 'the offer' is implemented as soon as possible and paid from



this. Increased local competition from other crematoriums requires the offer here to be as good as it can be to maintain business levels.

### **Comments of Monitoring Officer**

The Monitoring Officer has approved the report for consideration by Committee.

### **Comments of Head of People and Business Change**

There are no HR or People and Business Change related matters arising from this report.

### **Comments of Cabinet Member**

The Cabinet Member is has approved the report and supports the preferred option as outlined in the report

### **Scrutiny Committees**

n/a

### **Equalities Impact Assessment and the Equalities Act 2010**

n/a

### **Children and Families (Wales) Measure**

n/a

### **Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**

n/a

### **Crime and Disorder Act 1998**

n/a

## APPENDIX 1 – Accounting statements 2019-20

Name of body: **GWENT CREMATION COMMITTEE**

	Year ending		Notes and guidance for compilers
	31 March 2019 (£)	31 March 2020 (£)	
<b>Statement of income and expenditure/receipts and payments</b>			
1. Balances brought forward	2,512,485	1,236,346	Total balances and reserves at the beginning of the year as recorded in the financial records. Must agree to line 7 of the previous year.
2. (+) Income from local taxation/levy	0	0	Total amount of income received/receivable in the year from local taxation (precept) or levy/contribution from principal bodies.
3. (+) Total other receipts	1,777,108	2,052,561	Total income or receipts recorded in the cashbook minus amounts included in line 2. Includes support, discretionary and revenue grants.
4. (-) Staff costs	309,549	321,349	Total expenditure or payments made to and on behalf of all employees. Include salaries and wages, PAYE and NI (employees and employers), pension contributions and related expenses eg. termination costs.
5. (-) Loan interest/capital repayments	5,000	5,000	Total expenditure or payments of capital and interest made during the year on external borrowing (if any).
6. (-) Total other payments	2,738,698	1,588,283	Total expenditure or payments as recorded in the cashbook minus staff costs (line 4) and loan interest/capital repayments (line 5).
7. (=) Balances carried forward	1,236,346	1,374,275	Total balances and reserves at the end of the year. Must equal (1+2+3) – (4+5+6).
<b>Statement of balances</b>			
8. (+) Debtors and stock balances	108,723	253,545	<b>Income and expenditure accounts only:</b> Enter the value of debts owed to the body and stock balances held at the year-end.
9. (+) Total cash and investments	1,675,672	1,261,449	<b>All accounts:</b> The sum of all current and deposit bank accounts, cash holdings and investments held at 31 March. This must agree with the reconciled cashbook balance as per the bank reconciliation.
10. (-) Creditors	548,050	140,719	<b>Income and expenditure accounts only:</b> Enter the value of monies owed by the body (except borrowing) at the year-end.
11. (=) Balances carried forward	1,236,346	1,374,275	<b>Total balances should equal line 7 above:</b> Enter the total of (8+9-10).
12. Total fixed assets and long-term assets	2,307,326	2,307,326	The asset and investment register value of all fixed assets and any other long-term assets held as at 31 March.
13. Total borrowing	478,445	425,284	The outstanding capital balance as at 31 March of all loans from third parties (including PWLB).

### Committee approval and certification

The Committee is responsible for the preparation of the accounting statements in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2014 and for the preparation of the Annual Governance Statement.

<p><b>Certification by the RFO</b></p> <p>I certify that the accounting statements contained in this Annual Return presents fairly the financial position of the Committee and its income and expenditure, or properly presents receipts and payments, as the case may be, for the year ended 31 March 2020.</p>	<p><b>Approval by the Committee</b></p> <p>I confirm that these accounting statements and Annual Governance Statement were approved by the Committee under minute reference:</p>
	<p><b>Date of meeting: 12/10/2020</b></p> <p><b>Minute reference:</b></p>
<b>RFO signature:</b>	<b>Chair of meeting signature:</b>
<b>Name:</b> Meirion Rushworth	<b>Name:</b>
<b>Date:</b> 12/10/2020	<b>Date:</b> 12/10/2020

**Committee re-approval and re-certification (only required if the annual return has been amended at audit)**

<p><b>Certification by the RFO</b></p> <p>I certify that the accounting statements contained in this Annual Return presents fairly the financial position of the Committee, and its income and expenditure, or properly presents receipts and payments, as the case may be, for the year ended 31 March 2020.</p>	<p><b>Approval by the Committee</b></p> <p>I confirm that these accounting statements and Annual Governance Statement were approved by the Committee under minute reference:</p>
<b>RFO signature:</b>	<b>Chair of meeting signature:</b>
<b>Name:</b> Meirion Rushworth	<b>Name:</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>Date:</b>

Dated: 27<sup>th</sup> May 2020

**APPENDIX 2 –OUT-TURN SUMMARY ANALYSIS**

	Approved Estimate 2019/20 £	Forecasted Out turn NOVEMBER COMMITTEE £	ACTUAL OUT TURN 2019/20 £	Variance  Actual v Budget	Variance  Actual v Nov forecast
<b>INCOME</b>	<b>-1,878,274</b>	<b>-1,850,090</b>	<b>-2,052,561</b>	<b>-174,287</b>	<b>-202,471</b>
Employees	321,146	316,515	321,349	203	4,834
Premises	335,217	426,057	439,372	104,155	13,315
Transport	1,000	781	436	-564	-345
Supplies & Services	179,757	148,277	150,314	-29,443	2,037
Capital Financing	53,161	53,161	53,161	0	0
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>890,281</b>	<b>944,791</b>	<b>964,632</b>	<b>74,351</b>	<b>19,841</b>
<b>(SURPLUS)/DEFICIT</b>	<b>-987,993</b>	<b>-905,299</b>	<b>-1,087,929</b>	<b>-99,936</b>	<b>-182,630</b>
Budgeted Distribution	950,000	950,000	950,000	950,000	950,000
Additional (Surplus)/Deficit to Balances	<b>-37,993</b>	<b>44,701</b>	<b>-137,929</b>	<b>-99,936</b>	<b>-182,630</b>

<b>Reserves Balances</b>	
b/f into 2019/20	<b>-1,236,346</b>
surplus in 2019/20	<b>-137,929</b>
c/f into 2020/21	<b>-1,374,275</b>

28 August 2020

Ladies and Gentlemen, Councillors of the Greater Gwent Cremation Joint Committee.

I am writing in follow up to my earlier correspondence dated June 2020, which was to make the strongest possible complaint concerning your policy, introduced in 2001, regarding the interment of human remains at Croesyceiliog, whereby family members were no longer allowed to attend.

1. According to the minutes of the 2001 meeting, the reason given for change of policy was, principally, staffing cost (although land usage has also since been mentioned to me). While such issues are, naturally, due consideration, there are ways in which Gwent Crematorium management can put this right whilst also satisfying their arising pragmatic concerns.
2. There is already a cost involved to the families (£90) for Remains Interment and my suggestion would be reinstate the service and increase the charge accordingly. Families will either pay it or not, but at least they will then have the choice and this is the key: choice.
3. Neighbouring cemeteries in Cardiff and Swansea, offer attended Remains Interments using a time-managed system (as you already have in place with memorial plaques); and as Remains Interments occupy only a small parcel of land, this small plot is sustainable and reusable over time.
4. In my previous correspondence I explained how significant being present at the interment of our father's ashes means to us. Although this is not a normal day-to-day topic of conversation, and usually only broached when faced with the situation, with one notable exception the consensus has been unanimous; one of disbelief and astonishment that the option to attend is denied us.
5. People deal with grief in different ways, but only one person out of the many I have spoken with on the subject, said that the funeral was the time to say goodbye and that the final act of ashes interment held little or no significance (to him). Interestingly, that person was Mr Paul Dundon, Manager of Gwent Crematorium. I was shocked to hear of his opinion, which he iterated was a personal one.
6. The loss of our mother on 23 July 1992 was both sudden and unexpected, and our family was thrown into deep, inconsolable grief; my father was devastated but over time managed to learn to live with losing the love of his life, Mair Morgan from New Tredegar. The funeral was a complete blur to me and to my sister, such was our grief and although there were no instructions as to her wishes, we knew without doubt that she must return to Wales as her final resting place. The attendance of the interment of her ashes at Croesyceiliog was, therefore, to our family, *even more* significant than her actual funeral (which took place at Ayr Crematorium in Scotland). We took great comfort, therefore, from that short final interment of ashes ritual when we returned her remains to her beloved Wales. Please do not underestimate the importance of this ritual, which helped us enormously with closure.
7. In 2001 a policy was introduced whereby families were no longer allowed to attend Remains Interments; a policy which it seems is unusual, and indeed which some current Committee Councillors and Council Officials were unaware of. Almost 20 years have passed since the policy's inception and the world has changed; people are now more involved with decision-making, they have different expectations and participate in making important life choices.
8. Organisations and Authorities are, therefore, expected to facilitate choice and provide options and service. To satisfy such expectations, Gwent Crematorium has commendably produced a comprehensive "Charter for the Bereaved" in accordance with the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management. The Charter covers many things and, notably and

nobly, invites suggested improvements. In your own words it states “We exist to provide a service to you.”

9. Also, under the heading “Caring for the Community”, it is stated that “All cremation and burial facilities shall be managed with competence and efficiency, to ensure that the **entire bereavement experience** occurs without error or insensitivity, and meets the religious, secular, ethnic and cultural needs of the bereaved.” Fine words and bold intentions, however, there is a gap and it needs to be closed to prevent other families having to go through the same painful process that we have experienced.
10. It seems appropriate therefore that Gwent Crematorium should review their services for families and either revert to how Remains Interments were previously performed, based on my experience in 1992, or introduce an additional service to your Charter so that families who lay their loved ones’ ashes to rest at Creoisyceiliog are not disadvantaged. It is apparent that a section of ‘the bereaved’ are being discriminated against, ergo: families like mine, who are prohibited from attending the Remains Interment. This, I believe, is partly because of the way the interment is carried out, i.e. a mass burial of several batches of human remains which all go into the same plot together, every second Tuesday, with no family members present. This unceremonious practice, although expedient for the Crematorium, seems both distasteful and disrespectful. It is a means to an end; not necessarily a principled or ethical one.
11. My family and I feel strongly that this practice must be changed at the earliest possible opportunity. In our opinion, and that of many people who I have consulted, it is simply wrong to continue to impose a blanket ban on family inclusion during any form of funereal act, especially based on the expediency of staffing. I would go further, and suggest that the practice is contravening the Human Rights Act of 1998, specifically Article 9, Freedom of Thought, Conscience and Religion and also Article 14, Prohibition of Discrimination. I would respectfully suggest that these Human Rights should be taken into account.
12. In my correspondence in June, I asked for special permission to be granted in order that my sister and I (plus spouses) could attend the interment of my father’s ashes. That request is now reluctantly withdrawn as we feel that in order to fully satisfy my late father’s wishes, we cannot delay the interment due to time sensitivity, and intend to have the ashes interred on Tuesday 22 September. We have grudgingly resigned ourselves to accepting the process as is, although we are far from happy about it.

Finally, I would like to thank Councillor Stenner and those Officials responsible for tabling this matter, and would ask that all concerned carefully consider and fully understand the ramifications of the current policy, with its denial of access and attendance.

In my family’s case, the shock and disbelief that we could not attend has been a very painful addition to our grief. Please find a way to amend your policy. We feel very strongly that we have been denied a Rite of Passage.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Catherine Nolan  
18 Midland Road  
Royston  
South Yorkshire S71 4QP  
[Catherine.nolan2009@yahoo.com](mailto:Catherine.nolan2009@yahoo.com) Tel: 07885560088

## Manager's Report

### Statistics

#### Website

In the past 28 days to date, there have been approximately 21000 views of the crematorium web pages.

#### MEMORIAL SALES

MONTH	VASE BLOCKS	SANCTUM VAULTS	LEASE RENEWALS – vase blocks	LEASE RENEWALS - vaults
NOVEMBER	1	2	4	3
DECEMBER	0	2	3	1
JANUARY	5	1	5	0
FEBRUARY	0	1	13	0
MARCH	2	0	5	1
APRIL	0	0	3	0
MAY	1	2	3	4
JUNE	3	1	16	0
JULY	3	2	6	0
AUGUST	4	3	7	0
SEPTEMBER	3	1	8	0

#### CREMATIONS

	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008
Jan	211	233	246	268	240	262	278	220*	254	278	254	283	298
Feb	197	211	254	258	243	262	254	200*	268	256	226	262	227
Mar	196	204	230	299	277	287	241	267	279	249	235	253	218
Apr	223	178	237	229	268	245	222	268	237	193	229	222	246
May	240	195	219	266	266	230	234	274	270	232	198	204	236
Jun	140	150	164	260	264	241	239	218	193*	232	235	206	201
Jul	91	212	186	219	211	237	257	211	175*	204	208	205	206
Aug	98	165	176	236	244	187	206	183	168*	241	198	191	223
Sep	149	181	173	228	228	232	204	194	158*	221	218	204	210
Oct		206	193	240	224	225	243	234	186*	233	232	225	251
Nov		169	190	251	239	249	222	226	176*	220	219	212	200
Dec		197	166	191	244	266	248	200	182*	234	227	238	234
		<b>2301</b>	<b>2434</b>	<b>2945</b>	<b>2948</b>	<b>2913</b>	<b>2848</b>	<b>2695</b>	<b>2546*</b>	<b>2793</b>	<b>2679</b>	<b>2705</b>	<b>2750</b>

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

## **INTERMENT OF CREMATED REMAINS**

A request has been made by a user to re-consider the arrangements for the interment of cremated remains.

### **Current situation**

The interment of cremated remains is done on a fortnightly basis, with all the remains from that period being interred communally in the lawned garden of remembrance. Prior to a committee decision on 24 January 2018, this was done weekly. The change was designed to use less land for interments, to help ensure the long term future of the gardens, and in line with the Cremation Society motto "Save the Land for the Living".

### **Historical situation**

Before 2001, there was a no cost option for families to be present during the interment of remains by appointment. Following a report by the Acting Superintendent on 23 March 2001, this option was removed. The context was that each attended interment was taking as much available burial space as a normal week's unattended interment, and that it was taking up valuable staff resources.

The current complaint was the first received since 2001. It is noted that the complainant has subsequently brought the remains to the crematorium for an unattended interment.

### **Recommendation**

It is recommended that the current arrangements for the interment of cremated remains stay unchanged.

## **DIRECT CREMATIONS**

Direct cremations are unattended funerals which generally take place at the beginning or end of the day, at a significantly reduced cost. The demand for these services has been increasing across the country for a number of years and there has been a surge of interest during the current pandemic.

Our nearest competitor offers this service at a cost of £450. Funeral directors have told me that potential clients are using our competitors based on price, although many would rather the cremation takes place at Gwent Crematorium.

It is anticipated that the Competition and Marketing Authority report into the funeral industry will recommend or mandate cremation authorities to offer direct cremations in the near future.

### **Recommendation**

It is recommended that direct cremations are offered at Gwent Crematorium at a cost which price matches our competitors.





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