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North Devon Council
Brynsworthy Environment Centre
Barnstaple
North Devon EX31 3NP

K. Miles.
Chief Executive.

NORTH DEVON CREMATORIUM JOINT COMMITTEE

A meeting of the North Devon Crematorium Joint Committee will be held in the Crematorium Meeting Room - North Devon Crematorium on **FRIDAY, 9TH JUNE, 2023 at 2.30 pm.**

Members of the North Devon Crematorium Joint Committee

Representing North Devon Council

Councillors Cann, Denton, Haworth-Booth, P. Leaver, Lovering, Renshaw and Walker

Representing Torridge District Council

Councillors Christie, Gubb, Harding, Inch and Johns

AGENDA

1. Appointment of Chair 2023/24
(Torridge District Council Member).
2. Apologies for Absence
3. Appointment of Vice Chair 2023/24
(North Devon Council Member).
4. To approve the correct record of the minutes of the meeting held on 3rd February 2023 (Pages 5 - 10)
(attached)
 - (a) Matters Arising
5. Items brought forward which, in the opinion of the Chair, should be considered by the meeting as a matter of urgency
6. Declarations of Interest
7. To agree the agenda between Part 'A' and Part 'B' (Confidential Restricted Information)

PART 'A'

8. **Crematorium Matters** (Pages 11 - 12)

Report by the Crematorium Manager (attached).

9. **Outturn Report 2022/23** (Pages 13 - 16)

Report by Treasurer (attached).

10. **To note that the next Crematorium Joint Committee meeting will be on Friday 4th August 2023 at 2.30 pm**

PART 'B' (CONFIDENTIAL RESTRICTED INFORMATION)

Nil.

If you have any enquiries about this agenda, please contact Corporate and Community Services, telephone 01271 388253

NOTE: Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

In addition to any document specifically mentioned, reports included in this Agenda will have been prepared with reference to any or all of the following:

1. All relevant statutory provisions.
2. All relevant Government circulars and ministerial advice.
3. All relevant adopted policies of the Council.
4. Capital Works Programme.
5. Current Estimates.
6. Standing Orders
7. Consultants' opinion and advice.
8. Published works relevant to the subject of the report.



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1. The recording must be overt (clearly visible to anyone at the meeting) and must not disrupt proceedings. The Council will put signs up at any meeting where we know recording is taking place.
2. The Chair of the meeting has absolute discretion to stop or suspend recording if, in their opinion, continuing to do so would prejudice proceedings at the meeting or if the person recording is in breach of these rules.
3. We will ask for recording to stop if the meeting goes into 'part B' where the public is excluded for confidentiality reasons. In such a case, the person recording should leave the room ensuring all recording equipment is switched off.
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NORTH DEVON COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of North Devon Crematorium Joint Committee held in the Crematorium Meeting Room - North Devon Crematorium on Friday, 3rd February 2023 at 2.30 pm

PRESENT: Representing North Devon District Council

Councillors Bulled, Cann, Davis, Y. Gubb, Phillips and Walker (Chair)

Representing Torridge District Council

Councillors J. Gubb, Hurley and Pennington

Officers:

J Mann Head of Planning, Housing and Health and Bereavement (Crematorium) Manager, Secretary, Treasurer and Accountant

25. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies were received.

26. TO APPROVE THE CORRECT RECORD OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 4TH NOVEMBER 2022

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 4th November 2022 (previously circulated) be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

27. MATTERS ARISING

Matters Arising. There were no matters arising.

28. ITEMS BROUGHT FORWARD BY THE CHAIR

There were no items of urgency.

29. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest declared.

30. CREMATORIUM MATTERS

The Joint Committee considered a report by the Crematorium Manager (previously circulated).

i) Metals Recycling Charity Award

It was noted:

That Over and Above had been nominated for a 'one-off award' in accordance with the Joint Committee's decision in November 2022. Thereafter, North Devon Hospice would be the next nominee in line with the current rota:

North Devon Hospice
Cruse
Children's Hospice SW
Families in Grief

ii) Crematorium Figures

The Cremation figures were noted. It was also noted that the January figure was 179 and that to date 165 had been booked for February.

It was also noted that the current increase in the death rate, which had been nationally reported, had resulted in North Devon Crematorium temporarily offering additional service times (lunchtime and 8am), together with the ability to change the type of direct and short services to full services.

iii) Vandalism Damage (including additional incidents)

It was noted that Devon & Cornwall Police had been unable to progress the roofing/skylight damage investigation to a prosecution due to conflicting accounts from those interviewed.

Burglary & theft – Overnight Thursday 8th December 2022. A suspect smashed the reception side door and entered the offices. This triggered the alarm and on the arrival of the security company the suspect made off with a stolen coat, first aid kit and a laptop. He was arrested nearby by police and all property was recovered unharmed. He has been referred to the Crown prosecution Service (CPS) to consider whether to prosecute.

Theft of £4,000 of plastic boards - Monday 9th January 2023. The manager saw two suspects with a pick-up who had almost completed loading the crematorium property. He challenged them, recording the incident on a mobile phone, seized their vehicle keys, made the suspects unload their vehicle and called the police. One suspect made off before their arrival but the other (van driver) was arrested and has been referred to the CPS for consideration whether to charge. All property recovered.

The Joint Committee recorded its thanks to the Crematorium Manager for his efforts and diligence in going over and above his duties to reduce the consequences of these incidents.

iv) Phase B Works (Garage/Memorial Room)

It was noted that three compliant tenders had been received, none of which were accepted. Two appeared to be speculative as they were over double the pre-tender estimate and one failed on competence (evidence only of low value, simple projects). The project was put out for tenders again and 4 tenders received. The lowest tender received was however, over budget (report tabled). Changes had however been identified to reduce the cost – reduced scope for the car park works and anticipated drainage savings. The revised project cost was £546,450. The projected shortfall was £162,183.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the lowest revised compliant tender quote of be accepted.
- b) That the shortfall be funded from the Budget Management Reserve and Equipment Replacement Reserve.

v) Medical Referee

It was noted that the National implementation of the Medical Examiner role had been set for 1st April 2023. No further information had been provided.

vi) Direct Cremations

It was noted that due to the increase in funeral costs, together with the impact of the pandemic, had led to a significant increase in the use of ‘direct cremations’, a low-cost cremation where traditionally there is no service and no mourners attend. Specialist ‘direct cremation’ companies had seen their businesses grow and it was now common for deceased to be collected in large ambulances from the South West to be cremated at a site in Andover. Ashes are then returned weeks later. This was a very industrial process.

In response several South West crematoria had reportedly reacted by operating as a collective, offering low-cost direct cremations, sometimes below their published prices. North Devon Crematorium’s current direct cremation fee was £550 and enquiries indicated that the service was available for as little as £275 elsewhere in the South West, half our fee. This had led to deceased being transported away from this area to be cremated elsewhere.

Two neighbouring crematoria had published their 2023 direct-cremation fees with significant published reductions to £450 & £475.

In 2022 we had carried out 133 direct cremations – 8% of our total cremations.

Surrounding crematoria’s figures showed they all carried out 15 – 23% direct cremations, with those numbers likely to increase.

In view of the above the joint committee views were sought regarding reducing the published cost of a ‘direct cremation’ to just below surrounding crematoria’s published fee, but with a £100 reduction for North Devon and Torridge residents. It was suggested that the fees be £450 & £350 (residents) respectively.

The benefits and risks were outlined.

It was RESOLVED that the cost of a direct cremation be reduced to £450 with a discount of £100 for residents of North Devon and Torrington to £350.

vii) Memorial Sales On-Line

It was noted that Nationally sales of memorials had steadily declined, a trend that had not slowed despite significant upgrades to the memorial gardens.

Currently all sales were conducted face-to-face or via email with no option to view, process and purchase completely on-line. We have been offered the option to trial a system of on-line memorials to individuals which incorporated bereavement support, viewing the service media and also purchasing memorials directly through a website.

The trial would be for one year and at a reduced cost (as below) which would allow an evaluation of the potential.

Trial (the first 12 months):

- **A one-off setup cost** - Waived
- **An annual service charge** – £1,800
- **A per-service charge** - Waived
- **A marketing commission** - 10% of average sale value
- **A sales commission** - 5% of actual sale value
- **A credit card transaction fee** – merchant fee at cost

Thereafter:

- **A one-off setup cost** (est. £1,500 to £3,000) – to cover or contribute to the cost of professional photography and configuration of your personalised website
- **An annual service charge** (est. £1,800) – to cover the overhead of running a maintaining the core software and services
- **A per-service charge** (est. £2.50 per deceased) – to cover the cost of hosting the personalised website for each deceased person for 3 years
- **A marketing commission** (est. 10% of average sale value) – a ‘success fee’ for us when someone makes an enquiry (but may do rest of transaction offline in-person) and/or buys something through the website
- **A sales commission** (est. 5% of actual sale value) – a ‘success fee’ for us when someone buys something through the website
- **A credit card transaction fee** - but this only replaces a transaction cost that already exists)

This would represent a significant enhancement to the existing service and bring the ability to purchase memorials via a website, making the service more accessible. It was hoped that the website would grow to enable personal tributes and access to other supporting services.

Access to the facility would be via a scannable QR code printed on the ashes casket making it optional and extremely easy to view.

RESOLVED that an online Memorial Sales Service be trialled for 1 year at the reduced costs outlined above.

31. PERFORMANCE MONITORING QUARTER 3 2022/23

The Joint Committee noted a report by the Treasurer (previously circulated) regarding the performance for quarter 3 April to December 2022/2023.

It was noted that the predicted deficit maybe due to the increase in cremations become a surplus at the end of the year.

32. 2023/24 BUDGET, FEES AND CHARGES

The Joint Committee considered and noted a report by the Treasurer (previously circulated) regarding the budget, fees and charges for 2023/2024.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the basic Cremation charge for 2023/24 of £810 be approved as detailed in paragraph 4.4 of the report.
- (ii) That the 2023/24 budget as set out in paragraph 4.1 of the report be approved.
- (iii) That the fees and charges for 2023/24 as detailed in paragraph 4.6 and appendix 2 be approved.
- (iv) That the distribution of surpluses for 2022/23 of £416,230 to the constituent authorities: £249,740 to North Devon Council and £166,490 to Torridge District Council be approve.
- (v) That the transfer of £100,000 to the Equipment Replacement Reserve be approved.

Chair

The meeting ended at 3.40 pm

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Friday 9th June 2023

Crematorium Matters – Manager’s Report

Staffing

The part-time bereavement administrator vacancy has been filled with the new team member joining us on 24th April 2023.

Metals Recycling Charity Award

Over and Above (bereavement family room) have been awarded £12,000. North Devon Hospice will be the next nominee in line with the current rota:

North Devon Hospice
Cruse
Children’s Hospice SW
Families in Grief

Cremation Figures

	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024
April	125	139	163	117	150	121	174	124	133	150
May	135	118	126	138	136	137	136	103	146	156
June	123	143	125	129	127	127	126	110	134	
July	106	111	126	142	133	128	136	123	110	
Aug	100	109	114	120	106	118	118	116	133	
Sept	122	127	121	127	106	114	121	131	138	
Oct	125	140	127	137	132	129	120	119	122	
Nov	120	108	157	135	127	115	149	131	132	
Dec	120	128	123	131	119	113	141	128	135	
Jan	142	131	158	182	169	147	176	140	179	
Feb	154	136	137	175	143	133	136	123	178	
Mar	157	151	162	164	145	143	141	159	171	
Total	1529	1541	1639	1697	1593	1525	1674	1507	1711	

Phase B Works (Garage Store/Memorial Room)

Three compliant tenders were received with a significant variance in costs. Prime Build South West were awarded the tender at a cost of £366,375 (£439,650 including VAT). Additional costs (consultancy, design, planning etc.) bring to total figure to about £500,000 including VAT. The currently available project funds are approximately £384,000 including VAT with any shortfall previously agreed by the Joint Committee as being covered by existing crematorium reserves.

Medical Referee

The current situation where a Medical Referee (GP) authorises each cremation (funded by the crematorium) is due to be replaced with a National implementation of the Medical Examiner role. The implementation date has now been set for 1st April 2024, later than the earlier guided date. As funds had only been set aside for a 6-month period there will be a shortfall of about 50% in that budget allocation.

Direct Cremations

The Joint Committee agreed to reduce costs for direct cremations from 1st April significantly, from £550 to £350 for North Devon/Torrige residents.

The relevant cremation numbers for the 2-months of operation are:

Direct Cremations	2022	2023
April	12	24
May	6	23
Total	18	47

Additional Projects

- Public Wi-Fi access hardware has been installed throughout the site. The internet installation is pending. This will bring benefits to visitors and provide operational resilience in the event of a failure of the council system.
- The installation of a hot drink and snack machine has been agreed and is pending installation. This has been arranged on a zero fee basis for the crematorium, funded by any operating profit the supplier receives.



North Devon Crematorium Joint Committee

Report Date: 9th June 2023

Topic: Crematorium Outturn 2022/2023

Report by: Treasurer

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. This report presents the Outturn figures for the financial year 2022/23.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1. It is recommended that the Outturn Report 2022/2023 be noted.

2.2. It is recommended that the Reserves and Balances contained in 5.1 be approved.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1. To inform Members of the actual financial performance for 2022/23.

4. REPORT

4.1. A summary of the revenue expenditure and income for the year is shown below together with the original budget and forecast as at 31st December. The actual for 2021/22 is also shown for information.

	2021/22 Actual	2022/23 Original Budget	2022/23 Forecast as at 31 st December	2022/23 Actual
Premises	183,384	188,370	249,206	234,120
Transport	221	750	171	166
Supplies and Services	182,839	215,500	214,956	205,159
Support & Employees	308,286	332,130	326,047	316,985
Total Expenditure	674,730	736,750	790,380	756,430
Fees & Charges	1,151,906	1,163,150	1,219,254	1,348,546
Sales	74,495	85,680	74,647	76,537
Interest	225	650	2,838	5,511
CAMEO*	4,202	3,500	3,883	3,883
Miscellaneous	2,593	0	0	0
Total Income	1,233,421	1,252,980	1,300,622	1,434,477
Cont Equip Replace Res	100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000
Distribution NDC	249,740	249,740	249,740	249,740
Distribution TDC	166,490	166,490	166,490	166,490
Surplus/(Deficit)	42,461	0	(5,988)	161,817

*Crematoria Abatement of Mercury Emissions Organisation



4.2. Expenditure is £20k higher than the original budget but £34k lower than projected at Qtr 3. Income is £181k higher than original budget and £134k higher than projected at Qtr 3. The reasons for higher expenditure costs relate to increased utility costs and have been reported previously on the quarterly budget monitoring reports. The reason for the lower expenditure costs than reported at Qtr 3 is due to some works not being completed prior to the end of March as anticipated and some budget underspends. Income was significantly higher than the original budget and the Qtr 3 projections, this was due to the exceptionally high number of services in Qtr 4, this follows the increase in the national death rate during this period. The budget allowed for 1,525 cremations for the year which equates to 127 per month. However, the figures for January, February and March were 179, 178 and 171 respectively.

The outturn position is a surplus of £161,817. This surplus has been transferred to the Capital Funding Reserve £115,817 and the General Reserve £46,000. This should leave sufficient in the Capital Funding Reserve to fund the Phase B project and also increase the General Reserve which has not been increased for several years.

4.3. During 2022/23 there has been some preliminary capital spend for the Phase B scheme (demolition of the garages etc) totalling £16.5k.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

5.1. Reserves & Balances are detailed in the table below.

The Capital Funding Reserve was set up to accumulate funds for capital projects at the Crematorium. The balance will be available for Phase B (Garage/Memorial Hall).

The Equipment Replacement Reserve was set up to build up funds to replace the cremators and filtration equipment at the end of their useful life, and also to provide the funding for hearth replacements and cremator re-lining when required. It is anticipated that there will be sufficient funds available when required but this will be continually monitored.

The Budget Management Reserve was created last year to help mitigate some of the increased fuel costs in 2022/23. The 2022/23 budget was set early in the year before the full impacts of inflation, energy costs etc were



known and not factored into the budget. However, due to the increase in the number of services and the delay in some of the costs these funds have not been required in 2022/23. It is recommended to retain the funds in this reserve for the time being to help to mitigate any increased costs that may arise, including the delay in the introduction of the revised medical referee scheme.

The Working Balance has been increased to £146,000, which should be sufficient taking into account of the financial risks associated with operating the Crematorium.

	Capital Funding Reserve	Equipment Replacement Reserve	Budget Management Reserve	General Reserve
Opening Balance 1 st April 22	384,267	595,480	42,461	100,000
Contribution in year	0	100,000	0	0
Capital Spend 2022/23	(16,591)	0	0	0
2022/23 Revenue Surplus	115,816	0	0	46,000
Closing Balance 31st March 23	483,492	695,480	42,461	146,000

6. EQUALITIES ASSESSMENT

6.1. There are no equality implications anticipated as a result of this report. An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed

7. ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

7.1. There are not any environmental implications as a result of this report, as the purpose of this report is to update members of the financial activity of the North Devon Crematorium Joint Committee for the 2022/2023 financial year.

8. CONSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

8.1. The North Devon Council and Torrige District Council Joint Crematorium Committee Agreement.

9. STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY

This report contains no confidential information or exempt information under the provisions of Schedule 12A of 1972 Act.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.



11. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

The North Devon Council and Torrige District Council Corporate Priorities have been considered in the drafting of the report.

12. STATEMENT OF INTERNAL ADVICE

The author (below) confirms that advice has been taken from all appropriate Councillors and Officers: Author Mark Knight Crematorium Accountant; Date 19th May 2023