

NORTH DEVON COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of North Devon Crematorium Joint Committee held at Crematorium Meeting Room - North Devon Crematorium on Friday, 9th August, 2019 at 2.30 pm

PRESENT: Representing North Devon District Council

Councillors Bulled, Cann, Y.Gubb and Lovering

Representing Torridge District Council

Councillors J.Gubb, Harding and Inch (Chairman)

Officers

Treasurer, Crematorium Manager, Secretary and Accountant

9. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Christie, Pennington, Phillips and Walker and the Head of Operational Services (NDC).

10. TO APPROVE THE CORRECT RECORD OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 5TH JULY 2019 (ATTACHED).

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 5th July 2019 (previously circulated) be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

11. ITEMS BROUGHT FORWARD BY THE CHAIRMAN

There were no matters arising.

12. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Lovering declared an interest in item 6 in relation to the metals recycling charity award scheme and the proposal to include the North Devon Hospital 'Over and Above' Charity as she worked in the maternity unit at the hospital.

13. CREMATORIUM MATTERS.

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

i) Update from last meeting

It was noted:

That North Devon Council was currently evaluating the benefits of solar panels on several buildings. The crematorium would be considered as part of this process and the Joint Committee would be updated as the process developed.

The current cremator equipment company had been asked to provide 'Estimates' for life expectancy and replacement costs of the key equipment to enable a review of the level of the existing fund being built (currently at £100,000 a year).

The figures would be based on total replacement as it was unclear whether a process of progressive upgrading or a radical replacement of all equipment (a different manufacturer or entirely different 'cremation' process) were the most likely course of action in the future.

ii) Staffing

It was noted that the bereavement administrator post had been advertised and interviews would be completed later this month (probably 20th August).

iii) Metals Recycling Charity Award

It was noted that the awards had progressively increased over the last 5 years from about £4,500 to £8,000 at least twice a year.

The current rota was as follows:

Families in Grief
North Devon Children's Holiday Foundation
North Devon Hospice
Cruse
Children's Hospice SW
North Devon Cancer Care Centre Trust

The committee considered the addition of two charities to the rota both strongly bereavement associated.

- The North Devon Hospital 'Over and Above' charity whose aim was to raise funds for a new Bereavement Suite on the labour ward in which to care for women and their families who experience a loss.
- CLARITY a 'North Devon only' mental health charity with centres in Barnstaple and Torrington providing services and support to people experiencing mental health and emotional issues (including bereavement through suicide support). It was staffed entirely by volunteers (including professional therapists) and aim to help people before they harm themselves or others as well as post-bereavement support.

It was RESOLVED:

- A) To add both charities to the Metals recycling award list.
- B) To add the two charities in the order listed above after the Children's Hospice SW (ie North Devon Hospital 'Over and Above' followed by Clarity'

Councillor Lovering wished it recorded that she abstained from voting

vi) Crematorium Figures

The Cremation figures were noted.

vii) Children's Funeral Fund For England

It was noted that North Devon Crematorium (together with all local funeral directors) currently followed the industry norm practice of not charging for funeral services relating to a child up to and including the age of 17. Typically this has included extended services at no cost.

From 23rd July 2019 a Ministry of Justice scheme became available enabling Parents/Crematoria/Burial Authorities/Funeral Directors to reclaim the funeral costs relating to children prior to their 18th birthday, but not 'pre-term babies'. The number of child & stillborn funerals (cremation) a year was stable at about 7 a year.

This raised the issue of whether to claim the new Ministry of Justice payment or to continue to provide the service without charge and without claiming from the new payment Ministry of Justice.

The Committee considered the following three options:

1. Claim the Ministry of Justice fee for all services up to the age of 17.
2. Never claim the Ministry of Justice fee.
3. Charge the Funeral Director for services to enable them to claim under the Ministry of Justice scheme.

It was RESOLVED:

- A) To claim the Ministry of Justice fee for all services up to the age of 17
- B) That the Crematorium Manager monitor the uptake of memorials etc following such services and report thereon at the end of the financial year
- C) That the Crematorium Manager report at the end of the financial year on the amount of monies reclaimed from the Ministry of Justice to enable the Committee to decide where to allocate the additional income
- D) That authority be delegated to the Crematorium Manager to determine whether or not to charge for any additional services in such cases.

14. PERFORMANCE MONITORING QUARTER 1 2019/20.

The Joint Committee considered and noted a report by the Treasurer (previously circulated) regarding the performance for Quarter 1 April to June 2019/20.

Chairman

The meeting ended at 3.09 pm