

# MINUTES OF RUGBY AND DAVENTRY CREMATORIUM JOINT COMMITTEE

23 APRIL 2019

## PRESENT:

**Members of the Committee:** Councillor Ms Robbins (Rugby Borough Council)  
Councillor Robertson (Daventry District Council)

**Officers:** Dan Green (Head of Environment and Public Realm)  
Lisa Handy (Bereavement Services Manager)  
Ruth Barnett (Principal Accountant)  
Linn Ashmore (Democratic Services Officer) - Rugby Borough Council

## 22. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 September 2018 were approved and signed.

## 23. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received from Councillor Mrs Lomax, Simon Bowers and Julie Lewis (Daventry District Council) and Lisa Marshall (Rugby Borough Council).

## 24. OPERATIONAL UPDATE

The Bereavement Services Manager gave the Committee a verbal update on operational matters including funeral poverty. The key points made included:

### *Funeral Poverty*

Since the last meeting on 8 January a specification had been prepared for the Rainsbrook Funeral Service. Due to the amount involved there was no requirement to carry out a full tender process, but sealed bids would be requested.

All local funeral directors had been contacted and invited to tender for the contract.

There would be no means testing and the funeral would be available to everyone.

The service would not differ from other services held at the crematorium but would be more affordable. The basic package would include a simple oak veneer coffin, hearse, music and the service and minister. There would be an option to include extra cars or flowers at additional cost.

Offering the option of an affordable service would not affect the number of cremations or the income stream of the crematorium as the cost remained the

same regardless of the type of service. Evidence suggested that the fees remained competitive compared to other local authorities.

It was noted that there was no requirement to pay an environment levy as it was intended that the cremations would be 100% abated.

### *Operational Update*

A new kerbed area for the scattering of ashes was being created. There were three memorial types available and this would be an additional affordable memorial option for families.

The crematorium was performing well and more new funeral directors were being attracted. The new facility at Hinckley, which would be local authority operated, would impact on some facilities but it was not expected to affect Rainsbrook. The crematorium at Nuneaton was operated by Dignity and the fees were due to increase.

A submission for the Green Flag award scheme had been made and it was hoped the crematorium would repeat its past success.

A new screen had been purchased for the Avon Chapel.

Committee members were reminded that they were welcome to visit the facility.

**RESOLVED THAT** – a report on the level on the outcome of the tendering process for the Rainsbrook Funeral Service and level of interest received be brought to the Joint Committee at its next meeting.

## **25. 2018/19 YEAR-END FINANCE REPORT**

The Joint Committee considered a report concerning the 2018/19 year-end finance report.

It was reported that the budget set at the beginning of the 2018/19 financial year was on target with a small overall surplus of £1,600. The year-on-year growth reflected the improved performance.

The budget for vehicle running and repair costs had been set higher than required and had been reduced as part of the 2019/20 budget setting process. It was noted that a new vehicle was still awaited, and the impact on capital would be transferred to next year's budget.

Additional expenditure had been spent on a new music system for the Avon Chapel to provide remote access. The previous system had been moved to the Drayton Chapel. It was anticipated that the additional expenditure would be recouped through the nominal charge made for slide shows.

Work would continue on the new kerb memorial area. The cost of the work was expected to be around £35-£40,000 taken from revenue contributions in 2019/20. As this wasn't budgeted for in 2019/20 and would present a pressure, officers recommend the need to finance this through any over performance during next year and this would be monitored to provide an update at each quarter.

There had been an additional £23,400 compared to budget for cremations. There had been 940 cremations compared to an estimated target of 910 which reflected the increase seen in the market share.

Memorial sales had not achieved the level expected. A number of memorial trees and benches had been taken. The trees had been popular, but it was not possible to plant more. Families were given a ten-year lease at a cost of £400 and at the end of the period the family could renew the lease or have the plaque returned. The new kerb memorial area would be offered as an alternative and it was hoped these would prove to be popular.

The Tree of Life was modern and was not as popular as living trees. The fee for this could be reviewed.

An income of £3,383 had been received through the Cameo scheme. However, as more scheme members move towards 100% abatement that income would diminish.

There was a need to consider setting funds aside for the medium-term future and identify what capital costs may be needed to cover repairs and maintenance. Some form of reinvestment strategy could be created to set out how to make and apply that provision.

It was agreed that this topic should be raised at the next Crematorium Operation Board meeting to allow officers from Daventry District Council to take part in discussions, and a report be brought back to the Joint Committee.

It was anticipated that the new memorial area could achieve a significant income stream from the sales of ten-year leases. With sound financial planning it could be possible for the crematorium to become self-sufficient in the longer term.

Officers would work together on the next budget setting round. Care was needed to ensure that the current high level of service continued.

The Joint Committee reviewed the approved budgets for 2019/20. Significant growth in income had been seen since the opening of the crematorium which was reflected in the latest figures.

There had been a dip in the number of cremations during February and March which reflected the national picture.

#### **RESOLVED THAT –**

- (1) the Joint Committee's year-end position for 2018/19 be noted;
- (2) the transfer of £3,383 into the Cameo reserve be approved;
- (3) the transfer of £10,000 to the Cremator Replacement Reserve be approved;
- (4) the 2018/19 slippage on the capital budget be carried forward to 2019/20;  
and
- (5) a report on the medium-term financial strategy be brought back to the Joint Committee at its next meeting.

#### **26. CAR PARK EXPANSION**

The Joint Committee considered a report concerning the issues arising from large funerals and the challenges this presented for car parking at Rainsbrook Crematorium. The Joint Committee considered the following options:

- Full development of a permanent car park – to replicate the existing provision and provide parking for an additional 50 vehicles. To complete phase 2 to include lighting, electrics and landscaping would cost approximately £180,000.

- Development of an overflow car park with temporary surfacing – for use on occasions when the current car park was full and would be constructed to a lower specification. This would cost approximately £41,000 but periodic resurfacing would be required.

Concerns were raised that there may be health and safety issues caused by uneven surfaces and the lack of lighting, particularly in the winter months.

- Continue with the current car parking provision – this also impacts on general visitors and the situation could worsen as more visitors attend the site.

Members raised concerns that not taking action or opting for a temporary surface could result in negative feedback from visitors and damage the reputation of the crematorium.

**RESOLVED THAT** – Option A outlined in the report for the development of a permanent car park be approved, subject to agreement and costings with officers from Daventry District Council and approval for additional capital spending by SMT/Cabinet within Rugby Borough Council.

## **27. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was agreed that the next meeting of the Joint Committee be held at 10.00am on Monday 29 July 2019, and a schedule of meeting dates for the remainder of the year be brought to the next meeting for approval.

**CHAIRMAN**