

NORTH EAST SURREY CREMATORIUM BOARD

Minutes of the Meeting held at Civic Offices, St Nicholas Way, Sutton,
on 11th September 2012 at 10.00 am

MEMBERS Merton: Councillors Margaret Brierly*, Philip Jones,
(*absent) Geraldine Stanford*

Sutton: Councillors Malcolm Brown, Stanley Theed, and
Roger Roberts

Wandsworth: Councillors John Farebrother, Claire Clay,
Jenny Browne*, Mike Ryder and Liz Stokes*

OFFICERS

Charles Ward (Clerk)
Mike Hall (Treasurer)
Jean Stevenson (Treasurer)
Peter Robinson (Surveyor)
Tony McDonald (Surveyor)
Sarah Gordon (Minute Taker)

Wandsworth Officers:
Clive Andrews (Bereavement Services Manager)*
Margi Singh (Administration Manager)

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

Councillor Jones queried whether the changes to declarations of interest imposed by the Localism Act applied to the Board as well. The Clerk confirmed that they did.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Ryder, Browne, Stanford and Stokes.

3. MINUTES (12th June 2012 Meeting)

The Chairman noted that there was not a tour of the Crematorium as noted in the Minutes. Some Members did have a look around, however, the weather was not the best for a tour of the gardens.

Councillor Brown confirmed that he did attend the Annual Service of Remembrance. It stated in the Minutes that he was not able to confirm his attendance at the time of the last meeting.

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Resolved: that the Minutes of the meeting held on 12th June 2012 be approved without amendment.

4. REPORT OF THE CLERK

Appointment of Councillor Jenny Browne to replace Councillor Nicola Nardelli.

In noting Councillor Browne's apologies for the meeting, Councillor Clay indicated that there still appeared to be some confusion over whether Councillor Browne was actually a Board Member. The Clerk noted that confirmation of Councillor Browne's appointment had been received from Wandsworth Council's Committee Services.

5. REPORT OF THE SURVEYOR

Before the Surveyor presented his report, Mike Hall, the outgoing Treasurer, introduced Jean Stevenson as his replacement. The outgoing Surveyor, Peter Robinson, introduced Tony McDonald as his replacement and Margi Singh, Administration Manager, who has taken over from Sue Kerwick, Deputy Registrar. Margi is based at the Crematorium.

Councillor Roberts and the Board wished to express their sincere thanks to Mike and Peter and other officers for their long, excellent service, which has helped transform the Board over the past ten years.

It was noted that the meeting was officially their last.

The Chairman then asked everyone to introduce themselves to the newly appointed officers.

5.1 Business Level Activity. The Surveyor reported that business level activity for the first five months of the financial year was 6% higher than for the same period last year.

He noted further that during 2011 the Board's market share did decrease slightly, however, the Board's target was still exceeded.

Other local crematoria's performance varied. Activity was down for some, however, Kingston's performance was considerably higher, which is a reflection of the improvements made to the facility.

The Surveyor confirmed that the Board is still receiving very positive comments on the services offered, especially from Funeral Directors.

Resolved: that this item be received for information.

5.2 Performance Monitoring. This section of the report covered the day-to-day management and operation of the Crematorium by the Wandsworth Council Bereavement Services. The Surveyor brought

two items to the attention of the Board relating to quality control. The first relating to the failure of a valve leading to one cremator being out of action for four working days in June. Service delivery was not affected despite this.

The second issue concerned a complaint about external noise (grass cutting) during a service. Action was not taken quickly enough to stop the noise and apologies had been made to the complainant, the Bereavement Services Manager had taken steps to ensure this does not happen again. The same complainant was also unhappy about the fact that the CD track being played at the beginning of the service was faded out following the seating of all mourners. This is normal practice at the Crematorium, however, the complainant had expected the whole track to be played.

Resolved: that this item be received for information.

- 5.3 **Action Plan – Business Plan.** The Surveyor noted that Appendix 7 to his report was the current Action Plan with the updated items highlighted in bold italics. Appendix 8 set out the proposed actions for 2012/2013 of which a number of items had been brought forward from the previous year.

Resolved: that the proposed Action Plan for 2012/2013 be approved.

- 5.4 **Mercury Abatement.** The Surveyor reminded Members that the Board had agreed to enter into a mercury abatement burden sharing agreement with Wandsworth Council, which needed to come into effect by 31st December 2012. Although agreed in principle, officers had been unable to finalise the agreement as CAMEO, the organisation administering the national burden sharing scheme on behalf of DEFRA, had not yet published the financial details of the scheme. These details are expected to be published in October/November and a report will then be presented to the Board at the December meeting.

Councillor Roberts asked if there would be a consultation period once CAMEO had issued the relevant information regarding fees. The Surveyor explained that he believed CAMEO would conclude who would be joining the scheme and who had spare capacity, they would then fix a rate accordingly. He noted that the proposed local burden sharing between the Board and Wandsworth Council would be more beneficial than joining the national scheme as the Board would not be subject to all the administration fees and charges.

The Surveyor explained further that the Board did previously have the option to abate by just 50%, however, Members wanted to provide a 100% mercury abated crematorium service. No value was placed on selling its spare capacity. He noted that the CAMEO rates could be fairly low.

The Treasurer highlighted the fact that the Board had set its charges to finance the mercury abated cremations and despite this their fees were still very competitive.

Councillor Farebrother pointed out that the Board also generates enough income to redistribute surplus balances to the three constituent authorities.

The Surveyor confirmed that the Board was in very good order.

Resolved: that this item be received for information.

5.5 Repair and Renewal – Routine Works. The Surveyor had no matters to draw Members' attention to for this item.

Resolved: that this item be received for information.

5.6 Repair and Renewal – Capital Works. The Surveyor reported that apart from the slippage of the driveway resurfacing from 2011/12, everything was on track and there were no new matters to be brought to Member's attention.

Resolved: that this item be received for information.

6. REPORT OF THE TREASURER

6.1 Management Agreement – Performance 1st April 2012 to 31st August 2012 against Annual Budget. The Treasurer had nothing particular to report in respect of the statement provided. Gross expenditure was at 30% to date and should be well contained within budget, however, there were outstanding gas bills to settle.

Councillor Roberts noted the importance of having prompt bills for budgeting purposes and asked whether it was worth researching other consortium who would supply prompt bills. The Treasurer explained that the Board purchases its gas through Wandsworth Council's arrangement with the LASER scheme and he could not give an answer as to why the bills were not arriving monthly as they should. He confirmed that he would ask the Energy Management Division at Wandsworth Council for their advice, noting that they were the experts and that using LASER had delivered great savings.

The Treasurer confirmed that estimates would be reviewed at the December Board meeting taking a closer look at gas consumption and recent trends.

The Treasurer noted that Wandsworth Council's bills for outstanding services (£28,000) were still to be invoiced.

Resolved: that this item be received for information.

6.2 Interim Accounts for the Period 1st April 2012 to 31st August 2012.

The Treasurer had nothing particular to highlight. Everything was within the overall approved budget and as a result of the number of cremations being above the estimates, income was better than last year.

Resolved: that this item be received for information.

6.3 Annual Review of Risks. The Treasurer informed the Board that the Risk Report was prepared with input from Chief Officers, Council Officers and Internal Audit at Wandsworth Council. Many of the items listed in the report had no actions proposed. Where an action plan was noted, it would be reviewed throughout the year.

Councillor Roberts asked for clarification of Item 10 of the report (*the exhaustion of land for future cremated remains graves circles*). The Treasurer confirmed that since the last Board meeting the Bereavement Services Manager had identified the boundary of the Board's current land holding and the area for the next cremated remains graves circle.

The Crematorium currently has space for about 4 to 5 years, however, there is a need to consider the options of acquiring land from Wandsworth Council. This is still being looked into.

Councillor Jones queried Item 28 (*pandemic plan*), asking whether the Board had a pandemic plan in place.

The Surveyor confirmed that the Board's plan formed part of Wandsworth Council's pandemic plan. He noted that more details would be sought and the action plan updated accordingly.

6.4 Conclusion of Audit. The Treasurer informed the Board that the Annual Return for 2011/12 had been signed off and returned by the Board's Auditors BDO LLP. It was received after despatch of the agenda for the September meeting, so a full report will be presented at the December meeting. Some minor matters had been highlighted which would be dealt with.

Resolved: that this item be received for information.

7. URGENT ITEMS

The Surveyor informed the Board that the cremation for Tia Sharp, the school girl recently murdered in Croydon, would be held at the Crematorium on Friday 14th September. This may involve high profile press coverage and the Surveyor felt that Members should be made of aware of this.

8. DATES AND VENUES OF MEETINGS FOR 2012/13

Councillor Farebrother queried the date of the Annual Service of Remembrance clashing with the Wimbledon Tennis Final. The Surveyor noted that traditionally the Service had always taken place on the first Sunday in July.

Resolved: that this item be received for information.

The meeting ended at 10.38 am.

Chairman: *CF Clay*

Dated: *11/12/12*2012