

## CHILTERNS CREMATORIUM JOINT COMMITTEE

MEETING 27<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2015

### OPEN REPORT OF THE CLERK TO THE JOINT COMMITTEE AND THE SUPERINTENDENT

#### UPDATE ON REVIEW OF MEMORIALS

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- 1 At its meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> February 2014 the Joint Committee considered a report on the review of memorials at Chilterns Crematorium. The illustrated report briefly described existing memorials and considered schemes at other crematoria which could be introduced. It also recommended replacing the rose beds with shrubberies due to increasing deer-damage to the roses and the 'tired and outdated' appearance of the 1970's concrete memorial kerbing. It was proposed instead to fix the plaques to stout wooden posts within the shrubberies.
- 2 The Joint Committee agreed to phase out the rose beds and replace them with shrubberies. It was also resolved that details of any proposed new scheme should be the subject of a more detailed report to a future meeting (Minute 17, meeting 12<sup>th</sup> February 2014 refers).

#### **Update on replacing the rose beds with shrubberies**

- 3 The proposal was to change from rose beds to shrubberies over five years. The timing was because of practical considerations and also a question mark over how well the shrubbery scheme would be received by existing plaque holders. If a large number objected then more rose beds would have to be retained until the expiry of the current leases (which are for three or five years).
- 4 In the event the acceptance level has exceeded even the most optimistic expectations, almost certainly aided by the pleasing appearance of the new shrubberies in contrast to the remaining rose beds. Consequently it has been possible (and desirable) to proceed with the changeover more quickly than originally envisaged and the officers are pleased to be able to report that, all things being equal, the process will be substantially complete by summer 2016.

#### **Proposal to introduce an additional stone memorial**

- 5 The memorial review highlighted that nationally more and more ashes are being removed from crematoria rather than scattered in gardens of remembrance. It explained that there are a number of reasons for this, one being that some families wish to have a memorial in specific association with the place of disposal of the cremation ashes e.g. buried in an ashes grave in a cemetery as opposed to surface scattering. But one of the founding concepts of modern cremation was its sustainability through surface scattering, which can continue 'indefinitely', compared to burial which uses land up. Consequently, in common with many crematoria, the Joint Committee has maintained the policy of surface-scatter only from the outset.

- 6 In recent years a method of overcoming this without compromising the 'no burial' principal is the introduction of the above-ground niche or vault. Cremation ashes are enclosed within the vault with a commemorative plaque fixed across the opening. If the family do not wish to renew the lease, the ashes can be removed and returned to them, or scattered in the garden of remembrance, and the vault used again. Legally it has been decreed burial has not taken place as the vault is above-ground and so an exhumation licence is not required to remove the ashes.
- 7 Whilst the above-ground vault may be a relatively new introduction, the concept itself is not new as some of the earliest UK crematoria included large columbaria buildings. For example there are wonderful examples at Woking and Golders Green Crematoria. But these were expensive to build and maintain, and the leases were often sold 'in perpetuity' meaning no further income could be derived from them, and consequently only a relatively small number were built.
- 8 Included as an **Appendix** is a leaflet giving details of the Sanctum 2000 above-ground memorial vault available from our current supplier of stone memorials. The details include a proposed price list and the terms and conditions for their introduction into the garden of remembrance. At the prices recommended the annual financial return over the term of the lease, after deducting the cost of providing the memorial, would be £97.00 for a five year lease, £64.00 for a ten year lease and £50.00 for a twenty year lease; the lower annual return for the longer lease mainly due to the fee being paid for the memorial spread over a longer period.
- 9 At these prices this would be the most expensive memorial at Chilterns Crematorium, but this reflects its relative size and 'complexity'. It also fits well into a price range of memorials at Chilterns, with the least expensive being a two line entry in the Book of Remembrance for £40.32 and a shrubbery memorial plaque for three years for £95.70.
- 10 This memorial can be easily integrated within the existing stone memorial scheme as it is made of the same materials, can be fixed to the same foundation base along the edge of pathways within the garden and, being less than two feet high, will not be obtrusive. The officers' investigations indicate take up of this memorial is good at crematoria where it has been introduced.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

1. **That the Sanctum 2000 above ground memorial vault be introduced into the garden of remembrance.**
2. **That the suggested fees and terms and conditions be approved.**

**Background Papers:** Open Report of the Clerk and Superintendent, Item 5, Meeting 12<sup>th</sup> February 2014