

## CHILTERN'S CREMATORIUM JOINT COMMITTEE

MEETING 15<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2017

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

#### **13. COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS 2016**

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13.1 Service provision questionnaires are sent to the applicant for cremation for all cremations carried out. The majority of compliments, comments and complaints received come from this source. In 2016 from the 3,514 questionnaires sent out 129 were returned from people who were satisfied (some with added compliments) and 19 from people who were mostly satisfied but including comments about matters they thought could be improved. During the year 7 substantial complaints were received (compared to 9 the previous year). **'Substantial'** is defined as either having been submitted in writing or, if verbal, considered being of sufficient gravity to warrant a reply from the Superintendent. A summary of the questionnaire analysis is included as

#### **Appendix 1.**

#### **Changes proposed/made as result of comments**

13.2 The issue of car parking has been discussed at previous Joint Committee meetings. It has been decided to wait until Aylesbury Crematorium opens to see if the consequent decrease in the number of funerals taking place at Amersham relieves the congestion before considering what (if any) substantive action could be taken to relieve the parking situation. Surprisingly in 2016 only three written comments about lack of parking space were received, but the grounds maintenance staff have become increasingly proficient in spotting cars building up before there is a problem and then directing car parking to minimise any issues like cars or driveways getting blocked.

13.3 The main reason for the number of comments about having to wait too long before being able to have a funeral was due to the Milton chapel being closed for nearly six weeks whilst a second new floor was laid (to correct a latent defect reported on as a separate item). Also, as reported before, the long delays due to the

planning challenges by the Westerleigh Group to the CCJC's crematorium being built at Aylesbury has had a negative impact at Amersham which is now too busy at times. However the crematorium now being built at Watermead by Westerleigh is due to open in summer 2017 which should help to improve the situation.

13.4 Concerning any potential issues with the operating of the loop systems (see complaint 3&4 below) although a sound system engineer found both loops to be working satisfactorily he recommended some changes to the microphone arrangements in the Milton chapel which were implemented.

### **Actions taken in response to substantial complaints**

13.5 The following substantial complaints were received:-

*Complaint 1:* An applicant complained about a number of issues relating to a DVD recording of a webcast of a funeral service, including the length of time between the funeral and receipt of the DVD (usually about a month but in this instance seven weeks) and the quality of the recording.

*Response:* It transpired the main reason for the delay was the Christmas post between the supplier and the Crematorium and then on to the recipient. Concerning the quality of the recording, enquiries to Wesleymedia revealed that the need to optimise the ability of nearly all computer connections to accept the webcast feed takes priority over the opportunity which arises from it of a recording; but this is something Wesley are aware of and are looking to improve in the future (although there would be a cost). A letter of explanation and apology for the delay was sent.

*Complaint 2:* A civil funeral celebrant complained about the arrangements for booking music at Chilterns Crematorium 'compared to other crematoriums,' but on making enquiries it transpired that there had been a misunderstanding on the celebrant's part about what she thought was a new system which was in fact the longstanding arrangements brought together (for clarity!) on a new form.

*Response:* Through an exchange of emails the matter was amicably resolved.

*Complaint 3&4:* Two complaints were received about not being able to hear on the chapel loop systems properly; one relating to the Milton chapel and one not specified.

*Response:* The loop systems are regularly tested by the chapel attendants and the testing device showed both loop systems to be working normally. However, in view of the comments the Superintendent decided to call in the sound system engineer to check both loops. Letters were sent to both complainers thanking them for alerting us to a potential problem and apologising for any potential shortcomings on our part for their poor experience.

*Complaint 5:* A husband complained about a letter inviting him to renew his wife's memorial plaque which gave the latest date for payment which was sooner than the date of the letter!

*Response:* This was the result of a glitch with the new computerised administration system which went live on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016. A letter of explanation and apology was sent.

*Complaint 6:* A person wrote in saying that the new policy of publishing the funeral diary on the crematorium website was an open invitation to criminals to burgle empty homes and mail shot companies to bombard the bereaved with mail concerning house clearance, debt relief, probate, etc.

*Response:* With the new computerised administration system the crematorium can now display a public view bookings diary on the website to assist people enquiring about the date and time of a funeral they wish to attend. This facility is also helpful for local florists planning floral tribute deliveries and families arranging a funeral to see availability. An increasing number of crematoria are providing this facility to improve customer service. However, there is an option at the time of making a booking for this information not to be publicised. The Superintendent sent a letter of explanation.

*Complaint 7:* A complaint was received about music at a funeral not being played as requested and it not being possible to record the service.

*Response:* The Superintendent made enquiries and established that the music on the request form was what was played, but the specific instructions about playing one piece for long enough to hear all the words wasn't on the form and it was not possible to establish whether this information had been given to the chapel attendant verbally on the day of the funeral. It is always difficult to get to the bottom of what went wrong on these occasions, especially some time after the event when the people involved genuinely cannot remember. Funerals can be recorded, but this is down to funeral directors explaining this to families when funerals are being arranged. A letter of apology was sent for any part we may have played in the music not being correct.

13.6 At the meeting in February 2016, when the complaints were reported, it was noted that nearly half of them were about repeated problems with technology associated with Wesleymedia's equipment, in particular cameras affecting the webcast facility. In view of the potential reputational implications of these problems it was resolved that a letter should be sent to Wesleymedia from the Chairman (Minute 20, Meeting 4<sup>th</sup> February 2016 refers). However, in the event it transpired that part of the issue was the interaction between the electrical wiring and other equipment in the music rooms which was eventually resolved and consequently the letter was not sent.

13.7 This report is included for information.

***Background Papers:*** None