

## CHILTERN'S CREMATORIUM JOINT COMMITTEE

MEETING 2 JULY 2007

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

*Background Papers (if any) are specified at the end of each item*

#### **1 LIAISON MEETING WITH PERSONS TAKING SERVICES AND FUNERAL DIRECTORS**

*Contact Officer: Charles Howlett (01494) 724263*

- 1.1 Liaison meetings have been held on an annual basis, with the last one in May 2006. At that meeting it was proposed that a further meeting be held in May 2007.
- 1.2 At their meeting on 5 December 2006 (Minute 4 refers), the Joint Committee resolved to defer the date of the meeting until June 2007 because the district elections were being held in May. However, because of the opening and dedication ceremony taking place in early July the officers decided it would be better not to proceed with the Liaison meeting, but defer it to a later date.
- 1.3 Members are asked to consider whether they wish to hold the next Liaison meeting in the autumn 2007 or the following spring.

*Background papers: None*

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#### **2 ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT - VACANCY**

*Contact Officer: Charles Howlett (01494) 724263*

- 2.1 Further to Minute 5 of the meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2007, the position regarding the un-filled vacancy of Assistant Superintendent has now been resolved. A minor review of the staffing establishment was undertaken resulting in the post of Assistant Superintendent and full time Clerical Assistant being deleted. The full time Clerical Assistant who was acting-up to cover some of the duties has been appointed to the new full time post of Senior Administrator, and the temporary Clerical Assistant's post has been made permanent. As a result of these changes the overall staffing cost at the Crematorium has been reduced.
- 2.2 A diagram showing the current staffing establishment at the Crematorium is included as *Appendix 2*.
- 2.3 Previously the Assistant Superintendent's post and remuneration was linked to the occupation of one of two on-site bungalows on a service tenancy basis. The bungalow has now been let to another member of the Crematorium staff

on a service tenancy basis at a reduced rent in return for out of hours “caretaking” duties.

- 2.4 This item is included for information.

*Background Papers: None*

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### **3 CREMATIONS EMISSIONS ABATEMENT**

*Contact Officer: Charles Howlett (01494) 724263*

- 3.1 At its meeting on 5 December 2007, the Joint Committee resolved that delegated authority be given to the officers to appoint a consultant to develop the project to install plant to abate cremation emissions (Minute 7 refers). Officers from Chiltern District Council’s (CDC) Engineer’s Department, assisted by the Superintendent, are now actively engaged in seeking a suitable consultant.
- 3.2 Although UK cremator manufacturers have had varying degrees of experience with cremator filtration in other countries, it is however a new concept to the UK. This situation, coupled with the fact that cremation is a relatively small “industry”, means that finding an “impartial” consultant with the necessary expertise is proving difficult. CDC’s Engineers have identified a number of different elements to the project, as well as the filtration process itself, including building works (which will also need a planning application if an extension is required) and energy recovery, and are currently investigating civil engineering consultancies which would be able to handle all the different aspects of the project under one umbrella. Whilst these companies are obviously familiar with building works and energy recovery it is vital to be certain that they also have the cremator filtration expertise, the very reason why a consultant is being sought in the first place.
- 3.3 Progress is however being made. An interview has recently been held with a company from whom a proposal is currently awaited, an interview with a second company has been arranged and a third possible option is being followed up. It is intended that a consultant will be engaged in the near future.
- 3.4 This report is included for information.

*Background Papers: None*

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### **4 COLLIER AND CATLEY: CLAIM FOR EXTENSION OF TIME**

*Contact Officer: Alan Goodrum (01494) 732001*

- 4.1 Following the signing of a settlement agreement by both parties in September 2006 and a subsequent site meeting which took place in October, it was envisaged that the Contractor would come back with a programme of dates

and timings for the completion of the works (Minute 8 of the meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2006 refers) in time for the opening and dedication ceremony on 7<sup>th</sup> July 2007.

- 4.2 Unfortunately, despite initial encouragement following the October site meeting, since then virtually no progress has been made. The Contractor has never produced a programme of works despite repeated requests by the Architects. There have been a few further site meetings with sub contractors to discuss remedial works, in particular in relation to the new doors which are purportedly now in manufacture, but in practice only one and a half days remedial work has actually been carried out on site.
- 4.3 The officers continue to press the matter with both the Architect and the Contractor. Although officers are reluctant to recommend we re-engage our lawyers, Pinsent Mason, to facilitate some action because of the cost, this option should not be ruled out if the present scale of inactivity persists.
- 4.4 This item is included for information.

*Background Papers: None*

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## **5 COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS 2006**

*Contact Officer: Charles Howlett (01494) 724263*

- 5.1 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 2006 from the 2,984 questionnaires sent out 192 were returned from people who were satisfied (some with added compliments) and 31 from people who were mostly satisfied but including comments about matters they thought could be improved. A brief summary of the responses to the questionnaires are given in *Appendix 5*. During the year 9 complaints were also received.

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

- 5.2 A change was made in response to comments about poor signposting with the addition of still more signs to try to make it clearer that there are two chapels with their own associated car parks. Work was also planned with the aim of improving the effectiveness of the public address system in the Milton Chapel.

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

- 5.3 The following complaints were received:-

*Complaint 1:* About noise from mourners in the Hampden floral tribute courtyard disturbing the next service.

*Response:* Additional soundproofing carried out on the outer exit doors and chapel attendants reminded to ensure the doors are kept shut. Method of

keeping the outer doors closed included in list of remedial building works required.

*Complaint 2:* General untidy appearance caused by various paraphernalia left on memorials in stone memorial garden.

*Response:* Explained that the regulations for the stone memorial garden do enable a degree of “individualism” with regard to tributes left on or near the memorials. Introduced a regime of more regular “clear ups” to remove some of the more dilapidated items and dead flowers.

*Complaint 3:* A service was delayed from starting on time allegedly because the previous funeral overran, and the service was then cut short without singing the last hymn.

*Response:* An investigation revealed that the delayed start was actually because the widower of the deceased, who was frail, needed to use the loo on arrival at the Crematorium. There were then four family tributes during the service, the last of which was over ten minutes long, and consequently the priest conducting the service decided not to sing the last hymn. A letter of apology was however sent to the family.

*Complaint 4:* A hymn was “ruined” because of the organist’s poor playing.

*Response:* The hymn requested was a very unusual one. When the funeral service arrangements were being made the office confirmed to the funeral director that the Crematorium had the music, but in the event it turned out that it was not a suitable version to accompany singing to. A letter of apology for the Crematorium’s mistake was sent to the family.

*Complaint 5:* The “new rules” not allowing dogs into the garden of remembrance (except guide dogs) should be displayed clearly on a sign at the main entrance.

*Response:* A letter was sent explaining that the rule had existed since the Crematorium opened in 1966, and that it is written on two signs at the main entrance.

*Complaint 6:* That the hymn announced from the book on the lectern was on a different page to the books in the pews, and that there were minor word variations in some of the books on the pews.

*Response:* The books in both chapels were carefully examined for inconsistencies but none were found. The only explanation we could think of was that the priest announced the hymn from a personal book he had brought with him instead of from the service details information sheet provided by the Crematorium, although this was not accepted by the complainer. A letter was sent outlining the checks we had made to try to find out what had gone wrong and saying we were sorry that the incident had “utterly ruined” the service.

*Complaint 7:* A light fitting in the new Milton chapel entrance ceiling fell onto a mourner’s head.

*Response:* Fortunately the mourner suffered no more than a bad headache. An incident report was sent to the Health and Safety Practitioner, and an

electrician was engaged immediately to check the offending light fitting and every other similar fitting in the entrance.

*Complaint 8:* A family complained about the length of time it was taking to resolve a problem with a rose bed commemorative plaque and the seeming inability of the office to provide clear information.

*Response:* An investigation revealed that by the time the family started enquiring about the replacement plaque it was actually in the office waiting to be fixed in position, but unfortunately the clerical assistant dealing with the query was unaware of this. The Superintendent accepted responsibility for a breakdown in communication both within the office and to the family concerned. Steps were taken to improve office communications, and to provide better information to families about how soon a memorial can be expected to be in place after it is ordered.

*Complaint 9:* Lack of signposting at the Crematorium

*Response:* See 2 above

5.4 This item is included for information.

*Background Papers:* None

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## 6 CREMATORIUM REGULATIONS

*Contact Officer:* Charles Howlett (01494) 724263

6.1 The Crematorium Regulations were last revised in 1993. A copy of the Regulations is attached as *Appendix 6* showing proposed deletions crossed through and additions highlighted.

### RECOMMENDATION

**That the revised Crematorium Regulations be approved.**

*Background Papers:* None

ITEMS TO BE CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE SESSION – PART 1 OF SCHEDULE 12A TO THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 (PARAGRAPH NUMBERS IN BRACKETS)		
51	Future Strategic Business Plan	Paragraphs 7, 8 & 12