

West Herts Crematorium Joint Committee

26 June 2023

Minutes

Present

Cllr David Major (Chair)	Three Rivers District Council
Cllr Terry Douris (Vice Chair)	Dacorum Borough Council
Cllr Aga Dychton	Watford Borough Council
Cllr Anthony Rowlands	St Albans District Council
Cllr Helen Green	Hertsmere Borough Council

In attendance

Jo Wagstaffe	Treasurer
Donna Nolan	Clerk
Joyce Pollaya	Project Manager
Steve Farrer	Assistant Finance Manager, Three Rivers District Council

Part A

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from David Bass, the surveyor.

2. Dates of future meetings

It was noted that the draft Joint Committee Agreement had not yet been agreed by the Monitoring Officers and Chief Executives of the constituent councils, but that the Clerk would seek to diarise a provisional meeting in late July/early August.

3. Minutes

The Chair raised a concern regarding the previous discussion about changing the locations of the meetings. He suggested that it would be advantageous to have meetings at the new Crematorium, which was agreed.

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 February 2022 were otherwise agreed.

4. Matters arising

It was agreed that the telephone numbers in the appendices to the West Herts Crematorium Risk Register and Business Continuity Arrangements would be transferred to Part B of the agenda.

The Crematorium Manager declared an interest in the Treasurer's Report, Part D (under other items).

5. **Manager's report**

The Crematorium Manager presented her report. During discussions, questions were raised regarding other public open days for the Hemel Hempstead Crematorium. The Manager explained that it was intended to have public open days, particularly for the local community who had an interest in the development.

During discussions it was confirmed that the annual remembrance service would take place on 9 July 2023 at 3pm.

RESOLVED –

that the Joint Committee:

1. notes the staffing for Hemel Hempstead Crematorium
2. notes the conclusion of the cremator commissioning and training
3. notes the successful funeral director and celebrant open days
4. notes the plans for the annual open-air Service of Remembrance on 9 July 2023
5. notes the update on emission test results
6. notes that the cremation figures had increased.

6. **Treasurer's report**

The Joint Committee received the report of the Treasurer which set out the Final Outturn report for 2022/23, the draft Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31st March 2023 and the Annual Return for 2022/23. In addition to the annual statement, the Treasurer had also prepared a full statement of accounts, which was not subject to audit, and an outturn report for members' information.

Steve Farrer provided additional details in relation to the Final Outturn report and noted that the draft Statement of Accounts did not include up to date pensions data, as details were awaited from Hertfordshire County Council.

The Joint Committee considered its responsibility for ensuring that there was a sound system of internal control, including the preparation of the accounting statements. Items were reviewed in turn and the Joint Committee confirmed its approval to each.

RESOLVED –

that the Joint Committee:

1. approves the Final Outturn Report for 2022/23
2. approves the 2022/23 Statement of Accounts
3. approves the 2022/23 Annual Return, specifically the Annual Governance Statement for 2022/23 and Accounting Statements for 2022/23.

Treasurer's report – other items

The Joint Committee received the report of the Treasurer which included an updated Treasury Management and Investment Strategy, the Risk Register and Business

Continuity Plan, the ICT Strategy and the Audit Action Plan.

There was also a discussion about bank reconciliation and debtors. The Treasurer highlighted that the audit had classified its review as reasonable, indicating a sound system of governance, risk management and control.

The Crematorium Manager left the meeting, and the Joint Committee discussed the houses available for rent on the West Herts Crematorium site, three of which were rented by West Herts Crematorium staff. It was noted that staff paid rent for the houses via deductions to their monthly salary. Consumer Price Inflation (CPI) rent increases had historically been applied. This was now significantly out of step with salary increases as CPI was currently 9.24%.

RESOLVED –

that the Joint Committee:

1. approves the updated Treasury Management and Investment Strategy
 2. approves the Risk Register and Business Continuity Plan
 3. notes the Audit Action Plan
 4. agrees that the rent increases would be capped at 5.41% for one year, with a review in January 2024 as part of the budget strategy
 5. approves the updated ICT Strategy.
7. **Exclusion of press and public – the Chairman to move:**

It was resolved that the public and press be excluded from the meeting during the following items of business on the grounds that it is likely to involve disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972; as defined in Schedule 12A to the Act as set out hereafter.

Part B

8. **Surveyor's report**

The Chair referred to the cracking of cloister beams and noted that the Consultant Engineer had concluded it was not detrimental to structural stability.

The Joint Committee considered the Surveyor's Report, and the update on "Special Items" and "Contractual Annual Maintenance" items.

RESOLVED –

that the Joint Committee notes the report

9. **New Crematorium update report**

The Project Manager provided a comprehensive update report on the progress to construct a new crematorium in Hemel Hempstead and the plans in place for it to become operational.

She explained that a planning pre-condition required discharge before the new crematorium could operate. In addition, the Joint Committee was advised that a Transition Plan and Management and Maintenance Plan was being produced.

The Treasurer updated the Joint Committee on the financial position relating to the project.

RESOLVED –

that the Joint Committee:

1. notes the report
2. approves an additional £50,000 to be funded from reserves, in addition to the 2022/23 underspend, to complete the project
3. agrees an official opening date in September
4. agrees that UKPN would be contacted on behalf of the Joint Committee.

10. Joint Committee Agreement

The Clerk provided an overview of progress on the Joint Committee Agreement and Agreement for Services. It was reported that Anthony Collins solicitors continued to work with the Monitoring Officers from the constituent councils. The Treasurer advised the Joint Committee that it had been agreed to review the financial business case with the Section 151 Officers from the constituent councils.

The Clerk reiterated that a meeting would be convened when the draft Joint Committee Agreement was agreed by the Monitoring Officers and Chief Executives of the constituent councils.

RESOLVED –

that the Joint Committee notes:

1. the update of the Clerk
2. that the Joint Committee will reconvene when the legal documentation is completed for final approval by the Joint Committee and partner councils.

11. AOB

Councillor Douris advised that he would remain the representative for Dacorum Borough Council until the Hemel Hempstead Crematorium was opened.

Chair _____