

MANSFIELD AND DISTRICT JOINT CREMATORIUM COMMITTEE

22 FEBRUARY 2021

OPERATIONS UPDATE REPORT

1. SUMMARY

1.1 This report seeks to provide an update on staff and current operational issues.

2. STAFFING

2.1 Interviews for the new Crematorium and Cemeteries Manager and Director took place on Wednesday, 3 February 2021 and a conditional offer has been made to the successful candidate.

2.2 There is currently no sickness as the two Technicians who were off on long term sick have both now returned, with one currently on a phased return.

2.3 A start date will be agreed for the new manager once all the appropriate paperwork has been received and approved. There will be a period of handover for them with Julie Snowdon who has provided temporary cover over the last seven months to ensure a smooth transition.

3. COVID-19

3.1 The number of funerals have increased with the majority of services still being booked in the Thoresby Chapel due to the higher capacity and ability for web casting, but numbers are increasing in Newstead Chapel as well.

3.2 The majority of available slots are either early morning or Saturday's, which funeral directors are telling us families do not want, however, due to the number of services being booked there has been a small increase in bookings for the early and late slots over the last week.

3.3 On the 17th / 18th February Newstead Chapel will be fitted with web casting and tribute streaming so we are anticipating that bookings for this chapel will start to increase, relieving the pressure on Thoresby Chapel and reducing the timescale that mourners are having to wait for a service.

3.4 The staff continue to work in a Covid secure way, maintaining bubbles where possible and adhering to additional measures when this is not possible due to staff numbers. They remain flexible and committed to ensuring that services are not affected and are operated in a safe manner.

- 3.5 They continue to work outside as much as possible with the available resources to keep the grounds in good condition and are just planning spring bedding and new borders at the main entrance.
- 3.6 Witnessed strewing's continue in line with the latest government guidance on permitted numbers of attendance.
- 3.7 The Book of Remembrance has continued to remain open Monday to Friday through the second lockdown due to the safety measures that have been implemented to reduce the risk to staff and visitors. However, the floral hall remains closed to visitors, other than service attendees.
- 3.8 Face coverings in public areas are still requirement for both staff and visitors, in line with MDC procedures / government guidelines and QR Track & Trace codes are in place at all entrances as well as hand sanitiser and appropriate signage.
- 3.9 Over the last couple of weeks we have been experiencing issues with some funeral directors trying to push the Covid rules that have been implemented to keep staff, mourners and funeral directors safe. We have spoken to several funeral directors about our concerns and specific issues, but the infringements are increasing.
- 3.10 It is a concern that now a Mansfield funeral director has received a £10,000 Covid fine, they will try to ensure that they have all of their documentation in place and will try to pass the onus back to the Crematorium & Cemeteries.
- 3.11 Therefore, to ensure that we are doing everything in our power as a venue manager to ensure that all services are conducted in a safe and lawful manner a telephone meeting has been arranged for the 2nd February with the Police to discuss our concerns and options.
- 3.12 Following the telephone meeting, a site visit was made on the 4th February with the Police and Environmental Health, to review footage of a funeral with several breaches of the rules by a funeral director.
- 3.13 They agreed that we should send out a further copy of the venue rules and ask funeral directors to sign them and return for our records. Install more signage at the entrances to the chapels and building, as well as on the lectern and vestries with bullet points of the rules for mourners, funeral directors, ministers and celebrants. In addition to this we have also installed a rope barrier in front of the catafalque to prevent mourners from touching and kissing the coffins.

- 3.14 We agreed that we need to invite the funeral director in to view the footage of the funeral with the breaches and reiterate their responsibility.
- 3.15 In addition to this we are going to issue a letter for the funeral director to give to families at the time of booking containing the rules and ask them to sign to confirm receipt. This document must be returned to the Crematorium with the funeral paperwork.
- 3.16 When these actions have been taken they are satisfied that we have done everything in our power to ensure that we are Covid compliant. If funeral directors do not follow the rules then the onus will be placed on them for any breaches.

4. NEW PROPOSALS

- 4.1 We are still working on the review of the internet and phone supplier contracts, the original account manager has left and our IT manager has just made contact with the new one with a view to push this forward in the near future.
- 4.2 The Obitus self-serve module went live on the 5th January allowing funeral directors to book their own web casting, tributes and music saving the admin team a significant amount of time thus allowing them to concentrate on enhancing their skills and knowledge base. So far there have been very few issues with funeral directors but when they have had a problem the team are talking them through what they need to do.
- 4.3 Once the new manager is in place we will then look at re-tendering the BACAS system which again will include a self-serve function for funeral directors.

5. COPPER ROOF WORKS

- 5.1 Unfortunately on the 23rd December it was necessary to have the copper roof re-sheeted for Health & Safety reasons. The staff had been working in poor conditions for quite some time with water ingress coming into the crematory area. Those conditions deteriorated significantly just before Christmas which meant that there was water coming into that area in multiple places and was becoming a dangerous hazard to staff working in a hot area and who would have been within their rights to refuse to work in those conditions.

- 5.2 It had also affected the fire alarm as water was going into the smash glass boxes and setting off the fire alarm, which had to be by-passed to avoid disrupting services.
- 5.3 Unfortunately conditions deteriorated to the point that the roof had to be re-sheeted as a matter of urgency to reduce the risk of an accident and to avoid the water ingress causing damage to other equipment.
- 5.4 The cost of these works was £727.00 and took place on the 23rd December and has successfully eliminated the ingress of water with the crematory remaining dry.
- 5.5 The roofing contractor installed the scaffolding on the Crematorium roof on the 30th January and the copper roof replacement works will take place over the next three weekends to minimise disruption to services.
- 5.6 The total cost of the work is £56,844.00, £31,622.43 has been claimed from the council's insurers and the balance of £25,221.57 will be paid through re-alignment of existing Crematorium budgets.
- 5.7 This work will ensure that there are no further issues with ingress of water in that area.

6 CREMATION DATA

6.1 The number of cremations carried out between 1 November 2020 and 31 January 2021 is 670, which is an increase of (3.08%) compared to 650 over the same period in 2019/2020.

6.2 The table below shows the last 5 year annual throughput totals per area.

	Ashfield	Mansfield	Newark	Out of Area	Total
Nov 20 - Jan 21	240	293	24	113	670
Nov 19 - Jan 20	229	280	38	103	650
Nov 18 - Jan 19	216	214	40	85	555
Nov 17 - Jan 18	223	265	48	116	652
Nov 16 - Jan 17	201	251	60	180	692

Appendix 1 shows the number of cremations and the percentage split between Ashfield District Council, Mansfield District Council, Newark & Sherwood District Council and 'Outside the Joint Committee Area' between November 20 and January 21.

6.3 The budgeted number of cremations for 2020/21 was 2,100, which was amended due to the impact of Covid-19 and increased number of cremations to 2,430. This figure has been reduced slightly to 2,400 to reflect the dip in number of cremations in October.

6.4 The throughput figures will continue to be reviewed monthly and any further changes will be reflected in the budgetary forecasts.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 That members note the report.