

# Agenda Item 3

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## MERTON AND SUTTON JOINT CEMETERY BOARD

5 JUNE 2018

(2.00 pm - 3.20 pm)

PRESENT Councillor Stan Anderson, Councillor Nick Draper,  
Councillor Drew Heffernan, Councillor Simon McGrath and  
Councillor Annie Moral, Councillor Vincent Galligan

ALSO PRESENT Zoe Church – Treasurer to the Board  
Howard Joy – Surveyor to the Board  
Lisa Jewell – Clerk to the Board  
Mark Robinson – Registrar to the Board  
Russ Kirk – id verde Contracts Manager

### 1 ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR FOR 2018-19 (Agenda Item 1)

RESOLVED

Councillor Annie Moral of London Borough of Sutton was elected Chair for 2018/19

And

Councillor Nick Draper of London Borough of Merton was elected Vice Chair for 2018/19

### 2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Jean Crossby, Councillor Agatha Akingyina, and Councillor David Williams

Doug Napier, Client Side Manager sent his apologies

### 3 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST (Agenda Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

### 4 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (Agenda Item 4)

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 20 February 2018 were agreed as an accurate record.

### 5 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE REPORT (Agenda Item 5)

The treasurer presented her report on the Annual Governance Statement, and drew Members attention to asset valuation work to be undertaken during the financial 2018-19 the results of which will be fed into next year's abstract of accounts. The Treasurer explained that the new contract has led to a review of the roles and

responsibilities of Board Officers. The Board were pleased to see idverde Officers at the meeting and to receive their performance report as part of the meeting.

## RESOLVED

That the Annual Governance Statement was noted and agreed

### 6 ABSTRACT OF ACCOUNTS 2017-18 (Agenda Item 6)

The Treasurer to the Board presented her report on the Abstract of Accounts 2017-18. She explained that the accounts had been checked by the Merton internal accounts team and know following the Chair's sign off, would be submitted to the External Auditors, no comments were made on the last Audit. She stated that the internal audit team had asked for a valuation process of the Board's assets to be completed for next years accounts.

The Treasurer asked the Board to note that during 2017/18 the main variations were linked to added income and revised management administration charges. The Board also noted that special projects now appear on the balance sheet; bearer beam, purchase, replacement of boiler and works to the toilet block. The works to the toilet block have been rolled forward.

The Treasurer presented the appendices to her report including the risk register. Members asked about the risk from a pandemic, and noted that the Merton and Sutton Joint Cemetery was a designated site for mass burials if a pandemic should occur. The Treasurer stated that as the new contract becomes embedded then the associated risks can be reduced.

The Treasurer explained the situation regarding the Board's pension scheme. The fund is mature, that is more people are retired from the Board and deferred pensioners than are contributing to the scheme, and the scheme is an admitted body to the Surrey County Council scheme. It is not advised to close the scheme as it would then reduce in value (due to a cessation valuation), but there are only 3 current contributing part-time staff; the three part time board officers. The Board noted that further information regarding the former and deferred staff had been requested from Surrey County Council This pension fund is the Board's liability. A copy of the report considering the last Actuarial Valuation was provided to Board Members.

Board members asked questions about the staffing of the Board and noted that a variance in the accounts was caused by the Board's only full-time member of staff being transferred under TUPE to idverde.

Board members asked about burial figures and noted that in recent years the figures varied between 212 in 2012 and 262 in 2016 per year, but that in the 1990s this was over 400 burial per year. However there are currently less staff at the cemetery and no burial is turned away. The Treasurer stated that business model requires interest from reserves to provide sufficient income to maintain the cemetery in perpetuity when the land is fully utilised for burial purposes.

The Treasurer stated that price comparisons between local cemeteries had not been carried out recently, but the Client side manager would be asked to carry out such a comparison.

Members asked for further information regarding the Board's insurance cover.

The Board agreed the recommendations in the report but noted that a correction was required in recommendation D, such that 2017 was changed to 2018. The Board did subsequently set the date of this meeting to 20 November 2018.

## RESOLVED

- A. To receive and approve the Draft Abstract of Accounts for 2017-18
- B. To approve the Annual Audit Return for 2017-18
- C. To approve the revised revenue estimates for 2018/19 at Appendix H
- D. To arrange an autumn 2018 meeting to review the operation of the contract and further review the budgetary position
- E. Review and Agree the Risk Register as at June 2018

## 7 PERFORMANCE REPORT FROM CONTRACTOR (Agenda Item 7)

The Board received the Performance Report from idverde. Members noted the issues that appeared in the complaints section of the report, Members did not think that it was acceptable that bins were overflowing, the toilet block was potentially unsafe and that grass cuttings were being blown over graves

The complaints were discussed:

**Bins:** Members were concerned about overflowing bins. Russ Kirk reported that the problem is that people try to dispose of wreaths that are too big for the current bins. Idverde propose to put larger bins in the Cemetery so that all waste can be disposed of. There would be fewer of these larger bins and they would be visually more sympathetic. They are being trialled in other cemeteries and appear to be working and helping people to correctly dispose of their waste. The bins are transferred to Beddington Lanes, so wreaths could be recycled.

**Toilet Block:** The Board were very concerned to hear about the condition of the toilet block and how parts of the ceiling had fallen down. The Treasurer assured Members that the board had set aside money to refurbish this toilet block. Members did not feel that the current situation was acceptable and asked officers to deal with this situation and to ensure the toilet block was safe. The Treasurer assured the Board that if the block was unsafe it would be locked.

**Bearer Beams:** Members noted that these are concrete slabs that effectively form the foundation for the headstones on the graves and that the Board is responsible for purchasing them.

Ahmadiyya Burials: The Board were concerned that the Ahmadiyya community felt that the service had declined at the cemetery, it was noted that Muslim burial must happen within a short timescale, and asked Russ Kirk to investigate.

Funeral arrived with no booking: The Board noted that this funeral been held even with no booking, and the lack of a booking was the fault of the funeral director. Members felt that this should be compliment not a complaint, in that Cemetery Staff had managed to accommodate this funeral with no prior notice.

Grass Cutting: Russ Kirk confirmed that the grass cutting schedule has been difficult this year owing to bad weather early in the season followed by excessive growth, but he agreed that the cut grass should be collected and not just blown onto the graves

The Board asked that idverde provide a similar report for all future Board meetings and asked if in future that could have burial statistics in the report.

#### 8 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC (Agenda Item 8)

RESOLVED: That the public are excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following report(s) on the grounds that it is (they are) exempt from disclosure for the reasons stated in the report(s).

#### 9 EXEMPT MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (Agenda Item 9)

The Board asked about the comments reported in the exempt minutes of 20 February 2018 regarding the Boards Pension Fund situation, and noted that the Treasurer will again try to get the required information from the Surrey Pensions service.

RESOLVED

The Exempt Minutes of the Meeting on 20 February 2018 were agreed as a true record.

#### 10 REPORT OF THE CLIENT SIDE MANAGER (Agenda Item 10)

As the Client Side Manager was not present at the meeting this report was postponed until the next meeting of the Board.

Board Officers present gave some background to some of the current issues.