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MERTON AND SUTTON JOINT CEMETERY BOARD
25 JUNE 2019

(2.00 pm - 3.00 pm)

PRESENT Councillor Agatha Mary Akyigyina, Councillor Stan Anderson,
Councillor Simon McGrath and Councillor David Williams,
Councillor Vince Galligan

ALSO PRESENT Zoe Church - Treasurer
Howard Joy - Surveyor
Doug Napier – Client Side Manager
Lisa Jewell - Clerk

1 ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR FOR 2019-2020 (Agenda Item)

The Clerk asked Board Members to propose and second a Chair from LBM and a Vice Chair from LBS.

As Councillor Vincent Galligan was the only LBS Councillor present at the meeting, as a Substitute for Councillor Jean Crossby, he was nominated and seconded for the role of Vice Chair.

RESOLVED

Councillor Agatha Akyigyina OBE of London Borough of Merton was elected Chair for 2019/20

And

Councillor Vincent Galligan of London Borough of Sutton was elected Vice Chair for 2019/20

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillors Jean Crossby, Nick Draper and Annie Moral.

Councillor Drew Heffernan was not present at the meeting.

Councillor Vincent Galligan attended as Substitute Member for Councillor Jean Crossby.

The Cemetery Manger sent his apologies to the meeting

3 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST (Agenda Item 2)

There were no declarations of pecuniary interest.

4 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (Agenda Item 3)

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 26 February 2019 were agreed as an accurate record.

5 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE REPORT (Agenda Item 4)

The Treasurer presented her report on the Annual Governance Statement. This report explains that the Annual Governance Statement is a statutory requirement, and that the Merton And Sutton Joint Cemetery Board relies on the processes of Merton Council to produce a AGS that complies with the relevant regulations. She highlighted the review of the roles and responsibilities of Board Officers as a specific areas of governance that has been reviewed.

RESOLVED

The Board noted and Agreed the Annual Governance Statement

6 ABSTRACT OF ACCOUNTS 2018/19 (Agenda Item 5)

The Treasurer presented her report on the Draft Abstract of Accounts 2018/19.

The Board discussed the valuation and depreciation figures contained in the report and annexes, and noted the following:

- Valuations are made on 'Historic Costs' which are the costs items were purchased for less the depreciation.
- Appendix F shows the breakdown of land costs and charges.
- The Largest item on the asset register is the leasing out of the cemetery extension. This land had to be decontaminated before it could be used, and the money for this was borrowed from both LBS and LBM and is being paid back over 25 years. The depreciation each year is the amount of loan being paid back

In reply to questions from the Board asked questions about the Pension Fund and the Boards liability, the Treasurer made comments including:

- This is a mature fund and the liability is that there are no full time members any longer only 3 part time . At the moment there has to be a contribution of £37000
- Triannual revaluation of the pension fund will be reviewed by the Board to monitor the deficit in funding liability. This revaluation is due to be undertaken in 2019/20
- The current part-time staff paying into the fund are keeping it viable, it is not to our advantage to not have any staff paying in
- One would expect liability to increase with interest rate rises. Draw from pension fund goes up with inflation and interest rates rises.

RESOLVED

The Board Agreed to:

- A. Receive and approve the Draft Abstract of Accounts for 2018-19
- B. Approve the Annual Audit Return for 2018-19
- C. Approve the revised revenue estimates for 2019/20 at Appendix H
- D. Review and Agree the Risk Register as at June 2019

7 COMPARISON OF BURIAL CHARGES (Agenda Item 6)

The Client Side-Manager presented his report that provided the Board with the additional information they had requested at the Board meeting on 26 February 2019. This information attempted to compare the burial charges across neighbouring boroughs. He asked the Board to note that it is not easy to make a direct comparison but generally the MSJC prices are good and roughly in the middle of the range. The Treasurer asked the Board to note that prices have not increased since that start of the Contract with idverde.

Board Members asked Officers if they knew why the Burial numbers at the Cemetery were down this year, but Officers replied that it was difficult to predict, but the mild winter may have had some affect.

The Board noted that Cremation is substantially cheaper and that it is chosen by more families.

Board Members made points including:

- It is a mistake to hold prices down, and this proposed increase of 2.5% is in line with inflation and is acceptable. It is better to make gradual increases now rather than have a big increase in the future
- It is better to have this increase now rather than fall behind. We are not planning to make a large surplus, just enough to maintain the Cemetery into the future and pay off loans
- Don't believe that this increase would put people off from using the Cemetery
- The Chair asked the Board to note that although she understood the reasons for the increase she was still uncomfortable with the increase.

The Treasurer asked the Board to note that the decision has to be made by Merton as the Board is legally a 'Schedule to the Contract'.

The Board agreed the recommendations

RESOLVED

That the Board:

- A. Note the comparative Fees and Charges information requested at the meeting on 26 February 2019.
- B. Approves Recommendation 6, carried over from Agenda Item 4 on 26 February 2019 - That Merton Council be asked to consider price increases of up to 2.5% for 2019/20 for burial services

8 CONTRACTOR REPORT (Agenda Item 7)

The Board noted the report of the idverde Cemetery Manager, presented in his absence by the Client Side Manager.

The Board noted the ongoing issue of bin provision in the Cemetery, that had been fully discussed at previous meeting. The Client side manager confirmed that the provision and emptying of bins is the responsibility of the contractor. The Board requested the Client side manager to discuss and resolve this issue with idverde.

The Board noted the issues of grave owners extending the size of their grave garden size. The Board asked what is done about this, and noted that it is usually dealt with on an individual basis by asking families to comply.

Board members said that they had received emails from two grave owners complaining about the condition of the graves. One had now been resolved. The second one was the result of ground heave and the bearer beam. The Board requested that the Client Side Manager discuss the individual problem of the fallen headstone with idverde.

RESOLVED

1. The Board reviewed and noted the content of the Report
2. The Board requested the following actions:
 - i. That the Client side manager discuss and resolve the issue of cemetery bins with idverde.
 - ii. The Client Side Manager to discuss the individual problem of the fallen headstone with idverde.

9 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).

10 REPORT OF CLIENT SIDE MANAGER (Agenda Item 9)

The Board received a verbal report from the Client Side Manager, with input from the Board's Surveyor regarding ongoing issues of interest to the Board. The Board noted progress on these issues but requested further updates at future meetings.