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MERTON AND SUTTON JOINT CEMETERY BOARD
22 FEBRUARY 2022

(2.00 pm - 2.45 pm)

PRESENT Councillors Councillor David Williams (in the Chair),
Councillor Drew Heffernan, Councillor Steve Cook,
Councillor Agatha Mary Akyigyina, Councillor Nick Draper and
Councillor Stephen Alambritis

ALSO PRESENT Zoe Church (Head of Business Planning) and John Bosley
(Assistant Director Public Space Contracts and Commissioning)
and Richard Seedhouse (Democratic Services Officer)

ATTENDING

REMOTELY Zoe Church (Head of Business Planning)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Moral and Bokhari.

2 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST (Agenda Item 2)

There were no declarations of pecuniary interest.

3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (Agenda Item 3)

Paragraph 2 of Item 8, on p3 of the previous minutes should read "In response to questions from members, the Assistant Director Public Space assured members that officers would be writing to grave owners, would rectify the service's cost to make them safe and would engage with grave owners during that time with any unsafe memorials."

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of 22 June 2021 were agreed as amended above.

4 CONTRACTOR REPORT (Agenda Item 5)

The contractor reported that works were underway to prepare the cemetery for Mothers' Day. Covid restrictions in the chapel meant that families were able to operate music through a Bluetooth speaker.

Health and Safety works were ongoing, Any headstones in Section M which had failed tests had now been rectified and work was ongoing in Section C.

In response to questions the Contractor confirmed that the Bluetooth speak would remain in the chapel as a permanent fixture and that the previous issues around headstones had been resolved.

RESOLVED: That the Committee reviewed the information and noted the content of the report.

5 CLIENT REPORT (Agenda Item 6)

The Assistant Director Public Spaces presented the Client report to update on progress since the last meeting of the Committee. Although Covid restrictions had interfered with progress, a lot of infrastructure issues had been resolved. In partnership with facilities management, works on sections M, F, X, MX and BX had been completed and section MU would be completed within this year. The Department will present a breakdown of programme expenditure from the capital budget at the June meeting.

In response to questions the Assistant Director confirmed that headstones would be fixed in place with steel rods and that the fencing for the recycling centre would be part of next year's work plan.

RESOLVED:

A. That the Committee noted the continued positive work being undertaken by both the service provider's (Idverde) cemeteries management team and client officer team for the continued delivery of excellent services throughout the pandemic recovery period.

B. That the Committee noted and fed back on the programme of works for 2021/22.

C. That the Committee noted the next programme of works to remedy the headstones made safe by being laid down in Section MU.

6 BUDGET MONITORING 2021-22 AND REVENUE ESTIMATES 2022/23 (Agenda Item 4)

The Head of Financial Strategy and Capital presented the reports, noting in particular increased fees of 2.5%. In response to questions, the Assistant Director Public Spaces confirmed that an increase in fees now would prevent a spike in increases in later years. The risk of not increasing in line with inflation would mean that works would cost more than the service is able to recover in revenues. We also need to ensure that our rates for non-borough residents are not lower than the basic rates in neighbouring boroughs for their residents. There is a real risk that only increasing by 2.5% this year could lead to a requirement to increase fees by as much as 10% in a future year in order to catch up with inflation. An increase of 5% would cushion any requirement for a further increase next year.

The Head of Financial Strategy and Capital confirmed that last year's price increase of 1.5% was the first increase since 2017.

The Head of Financial Strategy and Capital confirmed that there would not be an advantage in repaying a loan early as it would limit the use of the money once received.

The Board voted to increase fees by 5% from 1 April 2022.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Board noted the current budgetary position for 2021/22 based on the end of January 2022 shown in Columns 1 to 5 of Appendix A
2. That the Board approved the Revenue Estimates for 2022/23 shown in Column 6 of Appendix A
3. That the precepts for the financial year ended 31 March 2023 be set at zero.
4. That the Board approved a price increase of 5% on Fees and Charges from 1 April 2022 as detailed in the revised Appendix H attached to these minutes (Revised Appendix H1 is also attached)
5. That the Board reviewed and approved the Risk Management Strategy and Risk Register (as at January 2022) attached as Appendix I