

Agenda Item 4

All minutes are draft until agreed at the next meeting of the committee/panel. To find out the date of the next meeting please check the calendar of events at your local library or online at www.merton.gov.uk/committee.

MERTON AND SUTTON JOINT CEMETERY BOARD
10 FEBRUARY 2021
(2.00 pm - 2.56 pm)

PRESENT Councillor Drew Heffernan (in the Chair),
Councillor David Williams (Vice-Chair),
Councillor Agatha Mary Akyigyina,
Councillor Stephen Alambritis, Councillor Steve Cook,
Councillor Nick Draper, Councillor Simon McGrath and
Councillor Annie Moral

IN ATTENDANCE John Bosley (Assistant Director Public Space Contracts and
Commissioning), Zoe Church (Head of Business Planning),
Louise Fleming (Democracy Services), Howard Joy (Property
Management and Review Manager, ENVR), Farzana Mughal
(Democracy Services) and Mark Robinson (Cemeteries Manager
and Registrar)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

There was no apologies for absence.

2 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST (Agenda Item 2)

There were no declarations of interest.

3 MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS HELD ON 11 FEBRUARY AND 23 JUNE 2020 (Agenda Item 3)

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meetings held on 11th February and 23rd June, 2021 were agreed as accurate record.

4 BUDGET MONITORING 2020/21 AND REVENUE ESTIMATES 2021/22 (Agenda Item 4)

The Treasurer presented the Budget Monitoring Report for 2020/21 and Revenue Estimates 2021/22 report, which outlined the projected outturn for 2020/21 based on the budgetary monitoring to 31st December, 2020.

It was explained that the total projected outturn for 2020/21 was lower than previous years. Members were drawn to Appendix A, outlining the Forecast Outturn and Variance for 2020/21.

Members were reminded that following the last meeting in June 2020, the Board requested that the Council repay the loan early in respect of the cemetery extension. Members were informed that following discussions with both Merton and Sutton's Section 151 Officers the preference would be to draw down from reserves up to £1

million as this would provide constituent authorities with most flexibility. Members' attention was drawn to the Common Fund Balances detailing the proposed repayment of reserves and the three possible options.

In response to a Member's question, clarity was sought that both Merton and Sutton Councils agreed to draw down on reserves up to £1 million which would potentially leave an estimated £200,000 in the Board reserves.

RESOLVED that

- 1. the current budgetary position for 2019/20 based on the end of December 2020 shown in Columns 1 to 6 of Appendix A, be noted;**
- 2. the Revenue Estimates for 2021/21 shown in Column 7 of Appendix A, be approved;**
- 3. the precepts for the financial year ended 31st March, 2021 be set at zero;**
- 4. the repayment of reserves detailed in paragraph 3.2, options 1 and 2, up to £800,000 be approved, and that the option progressed will be determined by the Section 151 Officers of Merton and Sutton;**
- 5. a price increase of 1.5% on Fees and Charges in the next financial year 2021/22, be approved;**
- 6. the Board establishes its next meeting as early as possible in June 2021 to ensure that approved information is included in Merton's Accounts and information is despatched to Merton's External Auditors as soon as possible;**
- 7. the Risk Management Strategy and Risk Register (as at January 2021) attached as Appendix I, be approved; and**
- 8. an additional fee of £40.00 per chapel service is levied from customers, this is the calculated cost of cleansing and disinfecting the chapel between each service, due to Covid-19 pandemic, be approved.**

5 CONTRACTOR REPORT (Agenda Item 5)

The Cemeteries Manager and Registrar presented the Contractor's report, and in doing so, outlined the activities from May 2020 to December 2020.

The following points were highlighted:

- idverde requested replacement of the existing bins to wheelie bins be considered;
- new bearer beams were urgently required on the existing general Muslim section BX;
- roads and footpath were in need of repairing;

- the Muslim section BX was running out of space for graves and new beams were required on KX.

In response to Members' questions, the following points were highlighted:

- during the pandemic and in recent weeks approximately 10 Muslim burials a week were taking place;
- the Board raised concerns on the ongoing issues in relation to the concrete headstone foundation beams and expressed that a comprehensive plan was required. Furthermore, Members requested an update to when further works would be undertaken with regards to the bearer beams.

The Board acknowledged all the hard work from staff during the unprecedented challenges due to Covid-19 pandemic and recognised the profound effect this was having on the communities.

RESOLVED that

- 1. the content of the report be noted;**
- 2. a written report to be provided to the Board by 26th February, 2021 of when the works would be carried out in relation to the bearer beams; and**
- 3. an interim report to be presented to the Board, detailing the work activities, in particular, an update of the work with regards to the bearer beams at the next meeting of the Board in June, 2021.**

6 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC (Agenda Item 6)

7 TO AGREE THE EXEMPT MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING (Agenda Item 7)

RESOLVED: That the exempt minutes of the meeting held on 23rd June, 2021 were agreed as an accurate record.

8 CLIENT REPORT (Agenda Item 8)

The Assistant Director of Public Space Contracts and Commissioning presented the Client Report, and in doing so, outlined the current work undertaken during this period.

The following points were highlighted:

- the memorial safety testing programme, including the bearer beam work being undertaken;
- Members' attention was drawn to section 2.4.3, table 2 of the report which outlined the available and future planned plots within the London Borough of Merton.

- the excellent work with partnership was acknowledged in delivering the service during the difficult challenges faced;
- Safety Training was undertaken by both idverde Staff and LBM Client Team;
- it was recognised that the repair of the bearer beams was a priority. Progress on programmed works was stalled in 2020 due to the impacts of Covid-19 and the importance of prioritising front-line services. Furthermore, Members reiterated the health and safety importance with regards to the ongoing memorial safety testing programme.

In response to a Member's question, it was clarified that the roll out of Covid-19 vaccination had been offered to all staff.

On behalf of both London Borough of Merton and London Borough of Sutton, the Chair concluded the meeting by thanking everyone for their hard work and contributions.

RESOLVED that

- 1. the Committee note the positive work undertaken by the service provider's (ideverde) Cemeteries Management Team and the Clint Officer Team for the continued delivery of excellent service throughout the current pandemic; and**
- 2. the contents of the report be noted.**