

Orbitas Bereavement Services Ltd (Orbitas)
Minutes of Board Meeting,
8th September 2022, 9.00am, via Teams

Present:

Kevin Melling, Managing Director	KM
Cllr Joy Bratherton, Chair	JB
Cllr Lata Anderson, Director	LA
Cllr Mark Goldsmith, Director	MG
Mark Darbyshire, COO, Orbitas	MD
Helen Green, Finance Business Partner	HG
Melanie Henniker, Director HR & Corporate Service	MH
Sarah Worthington, Employee Rep South	SW

Other Attendees:

Megan Bowyer, PA to Group MD (Minutes)	MB
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Apologies:

None

Agenda Item	Notes	Action
1.	<p>Welcome to all participants, Apologies and Declarations of Interest</p> <p>JB reported that due notice of the meeting had been given and that a quorum was present. She chaired the meeting throughout. There were no declarations of interest.</p>	
2.	<p>2.1 Minutes of Last Meetings and Matters Arising</p> <p>The Minutes from the board meeting on 21 July 2022 were accepted as a true and accurate record.</p> <p>2.2 Matters Arising Nantwich Cemetery – MD reported that the work on the turning circle is still ongoing. The Contractor and the Council are aware, and we are awaiting their response. Action MD to monitor and escalate via KM if necessary.</p>	MD
3	<p>Directors' Quarterly Report</p> <p>Training MD highlighted training carried out in Q1. He confirmed that there is a schedule of Health and Safety training planned for Q2 and Q3. Professional training is also continuing. Consideration is also being given to the 'Step-Up' programme. Action MD to work with HR to consider a 'Step-Up' programme.</p> <p>One minor accident was reported during the quarter.</p>	MD

	<p>Absence data is still not available from Unit 4. However, manual monitoring is being undertaken. Access to data has improved although there are still no statistics to share.</p> <p>Corporate Social Responsibility – this has been updated to show that the Orbitas Funeral has now ceased. KM asked that the page is refreshed in line with the Council’s current aims and objectives. Action MD</p> <p>MA1s – the numbers were down in the first quarter but have now caught up and are expected to exceed the annual forecast. The Council have been informed of the revised forecast. MD to monitor and report back.</p> <p>MD noticed an error on the report regarding the fully rechargeable jobs– he will correct the report. Action MD</p> <p>JB asked how many exhumations there had been in CE cemeteries in the last six months. SW confirmed none; the last exhumation was November 2020.</p> <p>Bereavement Monitoring – Redacted due to commercial sensitivities. Action MD to perform further data analysis</p> <p>Covid Memorial Garden this was built in Crewe Cemetery in partnership with the Town Council. JB asked who is responsible for maintaining the garden and benches. MD advised Orbitas will maintain the garden, but the benches are the responsibility of Crewe Town Council.</p>	<p>MD</p> <p>MD</p> <p>MD</p>
<p>4</p>	<p>Progress Update on establishment of Friends of Cemeteries groups A first informal meeting for Friends of Crewe Cemetery has been arranged at Crewe on 15th September. MD explained that there were two main aims for the meeting – (i) give people an idea of what’s involved in terms of roles and responsibilities, and (ii) what types of activities are likely.</p> <p>We intend to establish if we are in a position to set up the group immediately after the meeting, or alternatively arrange a few volunteer days, so we don’t lose interested volunteers. Bulb planting would be an initial activity.</p> <p>It was agreed to revisit progress at the next board meeting</p>	
<p>5</p>	<p>Update on Charity recipients regarding Metals Recycling Scheme JB advised that following the last meeting she got in touch with SOBs (Crewe) who confirmed that fund raising was not currently being pursued. Contact was also made with Papyrus which is a teenage suicide prevention organisation based in Warrington and spoke to a fundraiser who was very open to come and speak to the board about what they do. This includes podcasts for young people with suicidal thoughts. They appear to be a suitable charity to engage with together with the End of Life Partnership (EoLP).</p> <p>MD commented that as a team Orbitas are very keen to be involved in a charity that supports suicide prevention.</p>	

	<p>After discussion it was agreed we should invite a Papyrus representative and an EoLP representative to a future board meeting. JB advised she has an interview to become a Trustee with EoLP so if she is successful, she will step back from any future engagement associated with EoLP and declare an interest.</p> <p>Action MD to invite Papyrus and EoLP to October/November board meetings</p> <p>Board resolution - Subject to the presentations by the two charities it was agreed that the next ICCM charity recipients should be Papyrus and EoLP. The board will review again in Spring 2023.</p>	<p>MD</p>
<p>6</p>	<p>Employee Representative Matters</p> <p>SW reported that the only matter she had to raise was about the pay offer and timescales from Unions which will mean that the earliest any increases would hit pay packets would be December, backdated to April. JB understood the frustration and reminded everyone that this is a national pay agreement and not something that the board can influence.</p> <p>MH confirmed it is a national agreement and each union has a different date for end of ballots - Unite 14/9, Unison 19/9, GMB 21/9.</p> <p>MG asked what percentage the proposal would add to the wage bill – HG advised that this is something that is being worked on centrally by the Council. , but the percentage is not available. MD estimated it would be circa 7%. KM noted that the extra days holiday proposal would also be challenging for operational activities in Orbitas.</p> <p>There was a brief discussion around the timings of any payments and the impact on individual employees.</p>	
<p>7</p>	<p>Violence and Aggression Policy</p> <p>MH recapped that this was brought to the board due to a recent incident with a member of the public at Macclesfield. There had been previous incidents with the same person who is verbally aggressive and known in the area. Of particular concern was employees potentially putting themselves at risk.</p> <p>On the occasion in question, the person refused to leave the office. One employee refused to deal with him, and another employee put themselves at risk by trying to get him to leave.</p> <p>We reported the incident to the Police, and we are putting in place refresher training on how to deal with such incidents, in addition to the policy.</p> <p>MH asked whether board members were happy that the policy covers the situation now they have had time to review it. JB confirmed she was happy with the policy and that the training should be a rolling programme.</p> <p>KM advised that additionally we have been reviewing security systems and office layouts. MD has been making progress and he advised of some of the</p>	

	improvements that have already been made and others that are still being considered including to the customer area at Macclesfield.	
8	<p>Orbitas Rebranding Plans</p> <p>KM explained the background to the rebranding which is driven by the Council and was a condition of the contract renewal.</p> <p>CEC have put together a Comms plan with a timescale and this was shared. They have commissioned a marketing company to come up with some brand ideas and will share these when available. One of the first tasks to be undertaken is a review of the Orbitas website where some content will move to the CE site.</p> <p>MG asked does the Council want to spend such potentially large sums of money at this time and does the Council understand the full impact of their decision? KM confirmed the Council (the Commissioner), are keen to progress, although over a longer period than originally envisaged so that existing stocks are used up and not wasted. MG requested that this be challenged further in view of the current economic conditions being experienced.</p> <p>Action KM to discuss with the Commissioner to highlight the concerns that are being raised.</p>	KM
9.	<p>Employee Briefings at Macclesfield and Crewe</p> <p>The first of two events was due to take place at Macclesfield on 9th September and arrangements were discussed. KM will lead at both events, and all agreed that it was a great opportunity to engage with employees. The Board members haven't been on site for some time due to Covid and change of personnel and this will give everybody the opportunity to introduce themselves. Interim results from the staff survey were shared to provide some background on how staff are feeling and one of the areas for improvement was highlighted as accessibility to and visibility of the board.</p>	
10	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>10.1 Email from a resident re FOI Compliance</p> <p>MG advised he had received an email on this subject from a local resident. KM advised that ASDVs need to apply similar measures to that of local authorities re Publication schemes under the Freedom of Information Act and that this was highlighted by the resident. KM advised that the issues have been addressed and a response to the resident will be issued under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act.</p> <p>10.2 Sandbach Tree of Light</p> <p>MD asked for ratification by board members of a decision taken by JB due to time pressures. This was in relation to the Sandbach Tree of Light ceremony which is held annually at Christmas in Sandbach cemetery with support from Orbitas. Sandbach Partnership organised this last year but are not in a position to do so this</p>	

	<p>year. The Friends of Sandbach Cemetery expressed a willingness to take over this year and have requested a grant from Sandbach Town Council to do so, which required backing from Orbitas. JB confirmed that Orbitas would be willing to work with the Friends of Group and the application has been submitted for funding. The Chair's decision was ratified by the remaining board members and funding will be allocated as per 2021 agreement with the exclusion of any works undertaken by the former electrical team.</p>	
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For information, the Sandbach event is held on the first Thursday of December and the Crewe event on the first Friday in December. Orbitas does not provide support for any other events in the Borough.

The meeting closed at 10.45 a.m. Next meeting to be held on 20th October 2022 at 10 a.m.