

Orbitas Bereavement Services Ltd (Orbitas)
Minutes of Board Meeting,
15th February 2023, 10.00

Present:

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

Other Attendees:

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

Cllr David Brown (CE Observer)	DB
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Agenda Item	Notes	Action
1.	<p>Welcome to all participants, Apologies and Declarations of Conflict of Interest</p> <p>JB welcomed attendees, she confirmed that due notice of the meeting had been given and that a quorum was present. There were no declarations of conflict of interest.</p>	
2	<p>Minutes of the Last Meeting</p> <p>The Minutes from the meeting held on 19th January 2023 were accepted as a true and accurate record.</p> <p>Matters Arising</p> <p>All actions completed</p>	
3.	<p>Directors' Report Q3</p> <p>MD presented the report for Q3 [to 31 December 2022]. He advised that it had been a busy time for training due to a relatively large number of new employees joining the Company.</p> <p>Regarding accident and incident reporting, he advised that there had been a couple of near misses reported during the period but no accidents. In future reports he will be recording any unstable ground conditions associated with burials whether employees were or were not in the vicinity and will be bringing a paper back to board in due course regarding grave depths and best practice re grave digging.</p>	

	<p>Employee absence data from the Unit 4 system is still not available; MH advised that although the data would make the process easier, sickness is still being managed closely by Orbitas managers and the HR Business Partner.</p> <p>Key Performance Indicators per the contract continue to be met.</p> <p>The number of MA1s completed is well ahead of last year’s totals. LA asked if these extra jobs are being completed by the same number of people. MD clarified that there was a new recruit to the team in October, but the true impact of this will be evident in the Q4 report.</p>	
4	<p>Employee Representative Matters</p> <p>AG reported that there is currently poor internet connectivity at Macclesfield which affects several areas of operation. Poor weather conditions make it worse. Action MD to report to ICT and ask them to investigate and resolve. LA gave some basic details re what could possibly be causing the issues. It was explained that CEC are responsible for the connectivity, and they need to resolve the problems.</p> <p>AG asked for an update re the proposed welfare facilities at Alderley Edge and Nantwich. KM advised that the eco units that were originally identified weren’t fit for purpose. Alternatives have subsequently been identified which are better in size and layout and meet green credentials. He explained that he will circulate costs and bidder details for future board approval. There is a 12-to-16-week lead time from the order being placed, so from a finance perspective the cost will be spent in next year’s trading period, and we will need to consider how it is financed – as a one-off cost or depreciated over a longer period.</p> <p>KM will send through layouts to AG for discussion and will communicate quotes to the board for consideration and approval at the next meeting. Action KM</p> <p>Groundwork will need to be done to prepare for the arrival of the units and there will also be a potential access issue to resolve at the Alderley Edge site. KM will discuss the digging out works with AG and agree whether they can be done by Orbitas, or we will need to employ outside contractors.</p> <p>AG left the meeting</p>	<p>MD</p> <p>KM</p>
5	<p>HR Policy & Procedure</p> <p>MH presented her report about the Leave and Time off policy and procedure. She explained that this brings together a lot of different time off policies into one place. The policies were inherited from the Council, and this is the first time they have been thoroughly reviewed. Several small changes were proposed as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual leave – The policy has been amended to reflect the 2022 NJC national pay deal which included an increase of 1 days’ annual leave, effective from 1 April 2023. This has been applied to all employees of Orbitas. • Election duties – this was a provision of the Local Authority policy and has been removed. • Volunteer leave – this is new provision for Orbitas but brings the Company in line with the Council and other ASDVs where it has been in place since 2019. It provides for up to 2 days paid leave subject to certain criteria which MH outlined. 	

	<p>MG queried the use of the word ‘elective’ surgery and there was a short discussion about the difference between some voluntary procedures which may result in an improvement to an employee’s health, and others which may be for cosmetic purposes only (accepting that in some cases there may also be a link to improved mental health conditions). MH agreed to look at potential other terminology for the word ‘elective’. Action MH</p> <p>LA welcomed the concept of volunteer days. She asked if there was a list of registered groups that Orbitas holds which would automatically be approved. MH responded that it is difficult to be prescriptive in listing specific organisations, and there are some organisations and types of voluntary work that are not categorised as charitable organisations. Instead, the policy tries to make it clear that there needs to be a benefit to the Company as well as the individual and events should be within the borough of Cheshire East. There are also criteria listed that would rule out certain activities e.g., if they might bring the Company into disrepute. Ultimately, the Company reserves the right to refuse if an activity doesn’t meet criteria.</p> <p>LA pointed out that such activities can also be team-building events and advised that she would be happy to organise a volunteer event through an organised group that she has connections to involving gardening should there be any interest.</p> <p>Board Resolution – it was resolved to approve the Leave and Time off policy and procedure subject to clarification around the wording re elective surgery as described above.</p>	MH
6	<p>Confirmation re Metals Recycling Scheme Recipients – March</p> <p>MD asked for clarification as to what had been agreed as the payment will be due next month. KM reported that on checking the November minutes it stated that full benefit should be for the Papyrus charity on this occasion.</p> <p>JB advised that she has been in touch with Papyrus to confirm they will be recipients in March and there is an open invitation to visit to see what they do. There will be a photo opportunity to present the cheque in Warrington.</p> <p>Board resolution – it was confirmed unanimously that the March 2023 Metals Recycling Scheme Recipients are Papyrus.</p>	
7	<p>AOB</p> <p>Handyperson service. LA gave background details about the email received with questions around the service. KM confirmed this has been resolved. He explained that we have a limited availability of resources and a dilemma that if we advertise the service, we get more queries than we can meet which then results in disappointment for residents.</p> <p>Car Parking at Crewe JB mentioned that space is limited, and questions are being asked about staff cars being parked in the area by the Crematorium and not on the staff car park. LA attended a service at Macclesfield for a funeral and fed back that the staff were brilliant. Car parking</p>	

	<p>was not as good as signage was not in place and a 'Way Out' sign was needed. T added that disabled signage was still needed at Crewe.</p> <p>KM remarked that this was valuable feedback as sometimes when we are on site each day it's difficult to see the issues. We will look at this in the short-term Action MD. Longer term should the rebranding exercise proceed, this will involve new signage.</p> <p>Bereavement Managers to attend future board meetings JT suggested that LS and/or CH should attend future board meetings to discuss their roles and any hot topics with the wider board. All agreed this would be welcomed. Action KM</p>	<p>MD</p> <p>KM</p>
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The meeting closed at 11.20 a.m.

Next board meeting to be held on 23rd March 2023 at 9 a.m.