

Orbitas Bereavement Services Ltd (Orbitas)
Minutes of Board Meeting,
22nd May 2023 at 10.00

Present:

Cllr Joy Bratherton, Chair	JB
Cllr Mark Goldsmith, Director	MG
Cllr Lata Anderson, Director	LA
Cllr David Brown (CE Observer)	DB
Kevin Melling, Managing Director	KM
Mark Darbyshire, COO, Orbitas	MD
Helen Green, Finance Business Partner	HG
Melanie Henniker, Director HR & Corporate Service	MH

Other Attendees:

Karen Potts, PA to MD (Minutes)	KP
Sarah Worthington, Employee Rep South	SW
Nivi Muthukumar, Grant Thornton Auditors	NM

Apologies:

None

Agenda Item	Item Detail	Actions
01	<p>Welcome to all participants, Apologies and Declarations of Conflict of Interest Cllr Joy Bratherton chaired the meeting; she reported that due notice had been given and that a quorum was present. There were no declarations of conflicts of interest.</p>	
02	<p>Minutes of last Meeting The minutes of the board meeting on 24th April 2023 were accepted as being a true and accurate record.</p> <p>Matters Arising Three new members of staff appointed – all 3 have started 2 at Crewe 1 within the handy persons team and 1 has started at Macclesfield.</p> <p>MD gave an update on the mobile units; we are still waiting for a letter of confirmation from the planning department that planning is not required. MD confirmed he has received the landlord consent letter. MD is to arrange a meeting with the providers at Nantwich to ensure they can deliver the size of unit required.</p>	
03	<p>Audit Plan – Grant Thornton Audit report was circulated to the board members prior to the meeting.</p> <p>NM discussed the report and advised on the revised auditing standards and key changes and the impact these would have on the audit.</p> <p>NM advised their approach to the concept of materiality is fundamental to the preparation of the financial statements and the audit process and applies not only to the monetary misstatements but also to disclosure requirements and adherence to acceptable accounting practice and applicable law.</p>	

	<p>Going concern</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The directors are required to assess the suitability of the going concern assumption in their preparation of the financial statements and include suitable disclosures in respect of going concern in the financial statements <p>Timeline has been discussed with Orbitas Finance team.</p> <p>JB thanked NM for the presentation and as always, a detailed report.</p> <p>HG advised on the standard report Journal process and that the finance team are working with the Auditors. KM advised that Orbitas has made improvements with their stock take process based on previous findings.</p> <p>KM confirmed there were no litigation claims or incidents of fraud to report.</p> <p>KM asked NM as directors are there any the current issues generally in the wider world that they should be aware of. NM advised generally the concerns are the utility costs and the cost of living. There is also a greater focus on the environment and company disclosures around this area along with IT systems and their controls. This covers both Cyber Security and the systems which produce the reports for the auditors to ensure they are robust, accurate and reliable.</p> <p>LA left the meeting at 10.30 NM left the meeting at 11.30</p>	
04	<p>End of Year Directors' Report to 31/3/2023</p> <p>The End of Year report for 31/03/2023 was circulated to the board members prior to the meeting.</p> <p>KM presented the report, and the following areas were discussed.</p> <p>Page 5 Accident and Incident Statistics</p> <p>A discussion took place in relation to the relatively low number of incidents/near misses reported. There was a discussion around how employees are encouraged to report these and to understand they will not be chastised for doing so. It was agreed that further highlighting that the information allows us to be proactive in preventing accidents would be useful. MD confirmed all staff continue to be refreshed on the Health and Safety policies and attend Toolbox Training.</p> <p>Page 8 Corporate Social Responsibility</p> <p>Friends of the Cemetery Groups</p> <p>JB advised that the group in Sandbach works well but we do need to develop the group for Crewe. MD advised the Crewe Manager has been working to develop the Crewe group and they have identified a person who is interesting in getting this up and running with the help of his team. MD to invite the Crewe Manager to present this at the next board meeting and for MD to produce a detailed email prior to the meeting. Action MD</p> <p>Metal recycling</p> <p>MD advised the nominated charity should receive payment this week. He will follow this up and arrange a photo opportunity with JB. Action MD</p>	<p>MD</p> <p>MD</p>

	<p>Crematorium Operations KM acknowledged the significant reductions of the gas consumption at both cemeteries highlighting that there is more opportunity at Crewe to reduce than Macclesfield. Initiative was originally from Orbitas, and they encouraged CE to participate. Further reductions are possible with modification for both sites, but this is dependent on securing the funding from CE.</p> <p>Handypersons Team Conversations took place around advertising this service to the elderly and vulnerable. Flyers are in the process of being printed. MD to check on how many are to be printed and share with Board Members who offered to help circulate. Action MD</p> <p>KM advised that this is an excellent service we provide and advised that it is important to adopt a phased approach to distribution of the leaflet to ensure we can deliver the service in a timely manner.</p> <p>Page 9: MD to amend “Achieved company net profit of £73k with rebate to CE of £434k” This relates to the surplce rebated back to CE</p> <p>Page 10: The death rate has increased to pre covid levels. Leakage is within the 30% contract agreement. We are still waiting for the release of 2022 figures from other providers to assess their impact on Orbitas.</p>	MD
05	<p>Employee Representative matters SW requested and update in relation to the requested regrading of grade 4 jobs. MH advised that a panel had been set up which will include representatives from HR, Trade Union and management and will take place early June. If the request is agreed back pay would be either the date the application or 1st of April 2023.</p> <p>SW asked what the timescale is for this year’s pay rise offer. MH advised that all Unions have rejected the offer therefor it is out to ballet which closes the end of July 2023 If there is any industrial action, it is unlikely to be before August/September 2023. Any agreed pay rise will be backdated to April 2023.</p> <p>SW asked if there was any update on the Coppenhall Cemetery in relation to the services we provide. MD advised that CE had established that the church was not formally closed in its entirety. This is due to two areas of expansion which have moved the boundary lines. JB advised that this church is part of the cemetery’s strategy. MD will check with Paul Brightwell for an update. Action MD.</p> <p>JB asked how the team moral was at Crewe. SW advised there was a dip in morale due to two members being dismissed which has added some pressure on the skills set within the team. However, she added that two agency staff have been recruited and the two permanent positions have been advertised.</p>	MD
06	<p>Any Other Business JB raised an issue which is currently on Facebook in relation to access to the Sandbach public conveniences. MD advised keys have been provided to the Care Force Team along with Friends of Sandbach. MD advised for those registered disabled they can request RADAR Key (which is named after the charity - The Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation, that founded it which no longer exists and was designed to make sure that people needing to use disabled toilets could do so at all times.)</p>	

	KM advised that CE made the decision to close public conveniences around 2011/2012. MD to check with the Council on the policy in relation to public conveniences. Action MD	MD
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The Meeting closed at 11.45
Next Board Meeting: TBC