

**Orbitas Bereavement Services Ltd (Orbitas)**  
**Minutes of Board Meeting,**  
**19<sup>th</sup> October 2023 at 09.00**

**Present:**

Cllr Joy Bratherton, Chair	JB
Cllr Lata Anderson, Director	LA
Cllr Mark Goldsmith, Director	MG
Kevin Melling, Managing Director	KM
Helen Green, Finance Lead	HG
Mark Darbyshire, COO, Orbitas	MD
Cllr Michael Gorman (CEC Observer)	MiG
Anthony Gosling, Employee Rep North	AG

**Other Attendees:**

Megan Bowyer, PA (Minutes)	MB
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**Apologies:**

Melanie Henniker, Director HR & Corporate Services	MH
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Agenda Item	Item Detail	Actions
<b>01</b>	<p><b>Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interest</b>            JB welcomed attendees to the meeting, she advised that due notice had been given and a quorum was present. She declared the meeting open and chaired it throughout. Apologies were accepted.</p>	
<b>02</b>	<p><b>Minutes of the last meeting and Matters Arising</b>            The minutes of the meeting on 21 September 2023 were accepted as a true and accurate record.</p> <p><b>Matters Arising</b>            JB advised that she hadn't met <b>Papyrus</b> at the recent conference she had attended and asked MD to contact them to arrange a catch-up. <b>Action MD</b></p> <p><b>Sundial</b> work at Crewe Cemetery – MD advised that the sundial is working, and he will bring a comprehensive paper to the next board meeting setting out proposals for development of the area where it is located.</p> <p><b>TV screens</b> – MD advised that a site review meeting is being arranged with Wesley for both Macclesfield and Crewe to see what else can be offered as there have been developments and there may be other things we can do to improve audio visuals. JB asked to be kept in the loop about when they are visiting. <b>Action MD</b></p> <p><b>Vacancies</b> – LA asked if these are now being advertised on the staff noticeboards as discussed. MD confirmed there is one vacancy at the moment, and he will double-check. <b>Action MD</b></p>	<p style="text-align: right;"><b>MD</b></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>MD</b></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>MD</b></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>MD</b></p>

03	<p><b>EoLP Bereavement Awareness Training Pilot</b></p> <p>MD advised that we were due to attend this pilot training event on 9<sup>th</sup> October, but it was postponed due to lack of numbers. We are awaiting new dates and will make sure that people take part.</p> <p>KM commented that this is directed at any company so it may be that Ansa and AES and other supplier companies could also attend. JB agreed and suggested that we could contact EoLP to put on a specific event for us.</p> <p>LA agreed that if we have enough people, we could get a date that suits us and it seems to be a positive initiative that would be valuable. <b>Action MD</b> to pursue in conjunction with HR.</p>	MD
04	<p><b>Directors Q2 Strategic Report</b></p> <p>MD presented the report and updated as follows:</p> <p><b>Training</b> – a variety of formal training has taken place together with a specific training initiative for line managers which is ongoing. KM stated that a few years ago the training budget was increased – is it now sufficient? MD responded that because there have been a large number of new employees the training budget has been fully utilised in onboarding courses. If staff turnover reduces, then the budget could be redirected. After discussion KM concluded that it would need to remain at the same level for the next 3 years as there will be refresher training coming on board.</p> <p><b>Accidents and Incidents</b> – reported more consistently and in a timely manner. Nothing major happened and no RIDDOR reportable accidents. KM mentioned that it would be helpful to add a column specifically for RIDDOR in future – <b>Action MD</b></p> <p><b>Near Misses</b> – we are encouraging more reporting so we can nip things in the bud before they turn into accidents.</p> <p>LA asked what would be classed as a ‘near miss’, MD explained that many are to do with grave collapses which didn’t cause any harm to people or equipment. We have explored alternative methods of working to reduce grave collapses and by monitoring we can check this is working positively.</p> <p>LA suggested that it may be worth a reminder in the next newsletter to highlight this as a priority. <b>Action MD</b></p> <p><b>Sickness Absence</b> – this increased on the previous year but it’s due to a couple of long-term absences as short-term absence is actually reducing. Due to the small size of the team this has had an adverse effect on the data.</p> <p><b>Corporate Social Responsibility</b> – updates were required in terms of policy re bedding plants, friends’ groups being established and the bereavement group which we are managing plus the good work we are doing with EoLP and Papyrus charities. <b>Action MD</b></p> <p><b>Performance/KPIs</b> – handypersons work is continually increasing from last year both MA1s and private work for residents.</p> <p>There was a detailed discussion about the percentage of deaths registered in Cheshire East and the leakage rate. It was agreed that the actions identified at the workshop earlier in the year should be revisited. KM confirmed that this was the starting point to discuss with the wider team and for inclusion in the Orbitas businessplan.</p> <p><b>Health and Safety Policies</b> – some are overdue for review. MD confirmed that our H&amp;S colleague has been doing so and the relevant policies will be brought to the next board meeting.</p> <p><b>Crewe Cemetery Pond</b> – the renovation continues, and some pictures were shared. There have been very positive comments from cemetery visitors on the work.</p>	MD               MD

05	<p><b>H&amp; S Policy – Control of Noise at Work</b></p> <p>This is a new policy. Our operational employees are exposed to noise, and we provide appropriate PPE. There is reference to prolonged exposure to noise and this is an area we need to check to make sure it is within guidelines.</p> <p>KM considered this a valuable piece of work which is in line with industry practice. The next stage is to disseminate to the rest of the team and make sure it's adopted via toolbox talks, operational practice etc. He supported adoption of the policy.</p> <p>AG was asked to publicise this policy and encourage employees to remember to wear ear protectors etc. He confirmed he would do so.</p> <p><b>Board resolution – it was resolved to adopt the Control of Noise at Work policy as presented.</b></p>	
06	<p><b>Employee Representative Matters</b></p> <p>AG raised the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Cemetery Office at Macclesfield, when there is poor weather, they are having trouble accessing Epitaph (the software system used for AES). MD confirmed that the connectivity issues are due to updates on the CEC system and it's a matter of contacting ICT to report and they will then restore access. So far this has solved the issues.</li> <li>2. Welfare update at Alderley Edge – AG has requested a temporary measure if it's not going to be resolved quickly. MD has contacted the supplier and is sorting out delivery options to get the unit through the arch – width 10ft by 9ft 6in. Things are therefore proceeding. KM interjected to say that if it is going to be several weeks before delivery and installation AG needs to sort out a temporary facility in the short term to meet the needs of our employees. MD will try to keep the gap as short as possible.</li> <li>3. Gothic chapel at Macclesfield – although we thought this had been addressed, there is no power supply currently and this is needed to provide background heating and prevent the spread of damp. MD advised that a call has been logged with property services.</li> </ol>	
07	<p><b>Any Other Business</b></p> <p><b>None</b></p>	

**The Meeting closed at 09.57.  
Next Board Meeting: 23 November 2023 at 09.00**