

Orbitas Bereavement Services Ltd (Orbitas)
Minutes of Board Meeting,
20th December 2023 at 13.00

Present:

Cllr Joy Bratherton, Chair	JB
Cllr Lata Anderson, Director	LA
Cllr Mark Goldsmith, Director	MG
Kevin Melling, Managing Director	KM
Paul Goodwin, Director	PG
Tom Shuttleworth, Director	TS
Helen Green, Finance Lead	HG
Mark Darbyshire, COO, Orbitas	MD
Cllr Michael Gorman (CEC Observer)	MiG
Anthony Gosling, Employee Rep North	SW
Melanie Henniker, Director HR & Corp Servs	MH

Other Attendees:

Megan Bowyer, PA (Minutes)	MB
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Apologies:

Agenda Item	Item Detail	Actions
06	<p>Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interest</p> <p>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.</p> <p>TS advised that he had no conflicts of interest to declare in this meeting, but due to his role as a Senior Officer in the Council there may be matters relating in particular to Commissioning that could cause conflict of interest.</p> <p>PG referred to his statement at the last meeting where he informed Board members that he was Head of Finance and Deputy Chief Finance Officer (Deputy S151 Officer) at Cheshire East Council, and that in addition to the Council corporate management aspects of those roles he also manages all Council Finance Service teams, including the team providing accountancy and financial management services to the Company. In addition, he was involved in the original appointment of Grant Thornton as company auditors and would be involved in any future re-procurement of external audit services. In the event of any conflicts of interest as a consequence of these roles he noted that he would declare such conflicts in this and future meetings, as necessary.</p>	
06a	<p>Minutes of the last meeting and Matters Arising</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting on 23 November 2023 were accepted as a true and accurate record.</p> <p>Matters Arising</p> <p>Papyrus response – MD will contact JB separately re arrangements. Action MD</p> <p>Notices re Sundial work at Crewe Cemetery - MD confirmed that notices re the sundial will be erected on site from 21st December 2023 until Mothers’ Day in early March 2024 and that this should capture the majority of visitors and give them an awareness of what we will be doing.</p>	MD

<p>07</p>	<p>Operational Report</p> <p>MD presented the report which had previously been distributed to attendees.</p> <p>Deaths have been fairly low of late and the ytd figure is 3.4% down – in future he will add this information for context.</p> <p>Interments had risen by over 20% compared with the same period last year, so there had been a lot more grave- digging for the teams. Although cremations were down, burial activity was significantly up.</p> <p>MA1s – one handyman employee had been off sick for whole of month, so the team had been operating under pressure but still managed to achieve a large number of jobs. Total number of referrals for the month was 292, which was 16% up on 2022 showing the increase in demand for the service. Full year forecast is for completion of 2,200 jobs against the contracted figure of 1260; we continue to see very significant increases on a year-on-year basis. We will need to discuss with Adult Commissioning what that means for the future and if it is a sustained increase as if the trend continues it will be a significant challenge for the Handyman team. TS commented that it would be very useful to see the trends across ytd and compared with this time last year in future reports. Action MD to add.</p> <p>TS also asked if there was a reason for the increase in interments as that was a significant amount. MD responded by advising that over the last 10 years burials have been gradually decreasing and this goes against the trend. There is no data published within the sector although we could reach out to colleagues in neighbouring areas to ask them if they have experienced a similar trend lately. It may just indicate that a greater proportion favoured burial over cremation. JB mentioned that in the last two months Funeral Directors in Crewe and Nantwich have all commented on the increased number of church-based services – generally speaking they are burials. MD will prepare trend data for next month so there is context against the numbers. Action MD</p> <p>Training – most of the planned training has been completed for this financial year apart from some grave digging in March. A ‘Grief’ first aider has now completed training.</p> <p>People – A newly appointed administrator at Macclesfield has left and we have recruited again and identified a candidate to start in the new year.</p> <p>Changes to telephony – MD highlighted an initiative to improve efficiency led by CH. This means the admin team is now working through MS Teams on desktops rather than telephone handsets. The change has been rolled out in Macclesfield and is now being implemented at Crewe.</p>	<p>MD</p> <p>MD</p>
<p>08</p>	<p>Employee Representative Matters</p> <p>AG advised that he had asked his colleagues at Macclesfield for any issues but there was nothing to report. He added that he had just been informed that the new starter in the admin team at Macclesfield (mentioned above) has agreed a start date of 29 December.</p>	
<p>09</p>	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>None</p>	

The Meeting closed at 14.30.
Next Board Meeting: 22 January 2024 at 09.00

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