

**Orbitas Bereavement Services Ltd (Orbitas)**  
**Minutes of Board Meeting,**  
**18<sup>th</sup> March 2024 at 09.00**

**Present:**

Cllr Joy Bratherton, Chair	JB
Kevin Melling, Managing Director	KM
Cllr Mark Goldsmith, Director	MG
Paul Goodwin, Director	PG
Tom Shuttleworth, Director	TS
Helen Green, Finance Lead	HG
Mark Darbyshire, COO, Orbitas	MD
Sarah Worthington, Employee Rep South	SW
Melanie Henniker, Director HR & Corp Servs	MH

**Other Attendees:**

Karen Potts, PA (Minutes)	KP
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**Apologies:**

Cllr Michael Gorman (CEC Observer)	MiG
Cllr Lata Anderson, Director	LA

Agenda Item	Item Detail	Actions
<b>07</b>	<p><b>Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interest</b></p> <p>JB welcomed attendees to the meeting and chaired it throughout. She advised that due notice of the meeting had been given and that a quorum was present.</p> <p>No Conflicts of Interest were declared.</p>	
<b>07a</b>	<p><b>Minutes of the last meeting and Matters Arising</b></p> <p>The minutes of the meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> February 2024 were accepted as a true and accurate record.</p> <p><b>Matters Arising</b></p> <p>JB confirmed that the Metals Recycling Scheme Recipients had been agreed to split the donation between two hospices.</p> <p>Natural Burial site in Shavington – JB advised she is attending an Interment of Ashes next week and will update the board in the future. She had been advised that residents feel that this site should not be extended.</p>	
<b>08</b>	<p><b>Operational Report</b></p> <p>MD presented his report which had been circulated to the board prior to the meeting and the following points were highlighted:</p> <p><b>Volumes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 254 cremations in February (104 Crewe, 150 Macclesfield) 4.5% below Orbitas average since 2014/15 (excl. 2020/21).</li> <li>• 2,454 cremations YTD, 4.4% down on Orbitas average since 2014/15 (excl. 2020/21)</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 306 full interments YTD, 10.5% up on previous year. 221 MA1s completed in February.</li> <li>• 2,090 MA1s completed YTD (81% above contract units). FY forecast based on YTD run rate 2,280 units (contract 1,260).</li> <li>• 230 MA1 referrals received in February.</li> <li>• 2,437 referrals received YTD (18.5% up on same period last year)</li> </ul> <p><b>Training</b> update was given that a Bereavement Operative based in Macclesfield, passed his LANTRA Grave Digging and Shoring and Use of Excavator courses and two other members of staff had passed the Use of 360° Excavator course.</p> <p><b>Other News</b> Since early January we have been working with ANSA colleagues to complete some grounds maintenance work in Crewe Cemetery which has been carried out by ANSA operatives. The work has focussed on winter pruning and tidying of the extensive shrub borders in the cemetery, including the Badger Avenue boundary which contains the two main entrances to the cemetery, and edging off internal paths and roads.</p> <p>The work has been carried out to a very high standard and has drawn several compliments from visitors.</p>	
09	<p><b>Review of Governance Framework</b> MG left the meeting at 10.31 but advised he was happy to accept the Governance Framework document presented today.</p> <p>The Governance Framework document was last approved by board in January 2023 and was brought to board for its annual review. The contents are fundamentally the same and updates have been made to reflect the current changes to the Shareholder Agreement.</p> <p><b>Board Resolution – it was resolved to approve the Governance Framework and Appendices as presented today for a further 12 months.</b></p>	
10	<p><b>Health &amp; Safety Policies</b> As per normal practice several Health and Safety policies and procedures were presented to the board for review and approval. MD confirmed that there were very few changes, and all were existing policies which have been brought to the board previously.</p> <p>TS asked do “Guidance notes need to be approved by the board”. KM advised the board would not normally make any changes to the guidance notes as these are based on best practise within the industry. MD advised there are some areas where there are no actual policies only the guidance notes therefore the board would not see sight of these unless they came to the board. A discussion took place around the guidance notes and the decision was taken that unless there was no policy in place, they did not need to be presented to the board, but it would best practise to minute the guidance notes had been refreshed at the same time as the policy had been submitted to board. MD advised that all policies are available on SharePoint.</p> <p><b>Board Resolution – it was resolved to approve the LOLER Quick Reference Guide, Portable Electrical Equipment Guidance Note, PUWER Guidance Note, Display Screen Equipment Guidance Note and Policy as presented.</b></p>	

<p><b>11</b></p>	<p><b>H R Policies</b></p> <p>MH presented the following two policies for the board’s consideration which had been circulated prior to the meeting.</p> <p><b>Recruitment Policy and Procedure</b> - last review August 2021</p> <p>Two changes to the existing policy were proposed, namely that the Company introduces testing of new employees within their probationary period. This will be communicated to all potential employees throughout the recruitment process and induction. MH then engaged in brief discussion around the proposal.</p> <p><b>Board Resolution – it was resolved to approve the Recruitment Policy as presented.</b></p> <p><b>Management of Violence and Aggression Policy</b></p> <p>This policy reflects that the company does not tolerate instances of work-related violence, including verbal abuse. It also outlines the procedure that will be followed, should such an incident occur.</p> <p>The proposal is to remove the requirement of a separate register and to incorporate all incidents to be recorded on the PRIME system. Designated member of staff has access to this system.</p> <p><b>Board Resolution – it was resolved to approve the Management of Violence and Aggression Policy as presented.</b></p>	
<p><b>12</b></p>	<p><b>Employee Representative Matters</b></p> <p>SW advised the employees have no matters to raise at this time.</p> <p>JB asked SW to pass on her personal thanks to a member of staff who was particularly helpful with an interment.</p>	
<p><b>13</b></p>	<p><b>Any Other Business</b></p> <p>JB raised a number of issues with Crewe Cemeteries that have recently been drawn to her attention.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meadow Brook - General appearance of the ground around the graves which has been a result of the amount of rainfall over recent months. MD advised we need the ground to dry out so we can look at how we can improve drainage. Possibility of additional paths, look to see if drainage be incorporated and would need to fit into the cemetery plans to ensure drainage is correct.</li> <li>• Issues that have been raised in relation to memorialisation’s on graves. Unauthorised memorials are clearly part of the actions for the cemetery strategy. Commissioners has requested a paper on a pilot scheme to in parts of the cemetery to remove unauthorised memorials.</li> <li>• Residents previously advised there are no plots within Crewe Cemetery yet now there are new plots being provided. MD advised that there is a piece of work currently been undertaken to review this.</li> <li>• JB requested an urgent meeting to take place onsite with the commissioners to address issues.</li> </ul> <p>JB advised that a Facebook page has been set up in relation to Meadow Brook Cemetery. TS advised that he has forwarded the email to the Environmental Commissioner team</p>	

	and alerted the comms team for any complaints that we may receive. TS will arrange a meeting to discuss this further with relevant people. <b>Action TS.</b>	<b>TS</b>
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**The Meeting closed at  
Next Board Meeting: 22 April 2024 at 11.00**