

Bretby Crematorium Joint Committee

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THE BRETBY CREMATORIUM JOINT COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Meeting of the Bretby Crematorium Scrutiny Panel held at Bretby Crematorium on Wednesday 23 May 2001.

PRESENT

for East Staffordshire Borough Council

Councillor Ms. A. White (Chairman)
Councillor J. E. Galbraith
Councillor Mrs. E. J. Staples

for South Derbyshire District Council

Councillor Mrs. J. Mead
Councillor R. W. Southern

An apology for absence was received from Councillor P Haynes

Also Present

Mr. P. G. Davies (Clerk to the Scrutiny Panel)
Mr. N. French (Senior Crematorium Officer)
Ms. R. McGoldrick (Customer Services Officer – South Derbyshire District Council)

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND HOUSING ACT 1989 – MEMBERSHIP OF THE SCRUTINY PANEL

In accordance with the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, the Clerk advised that Councillor Mrs. J. Mead had replaced Councillor W. Dunn on the Scrutiny Panel.

MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Scrutiny Panel held on 11 April 2001 were approved and signed as a correct record.

REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE SCRUTINY PANEL

(a) Progress on Best Value Review

The Senior Crematorium Officer reported that, following consultation with the Chairman of the Joint Committee, a meeting with local Funeral Directors and Clergy had been arranged for 12 June 2001 at 7.00pm at Bretby Crematorium. The meeting would provide an opportunity for the Scrutiny Panel to consult with service co-providers.

The Scrutiny Panel noted that in advance of the meeting a consultation document was being sent to Funeral Directors and the Clergy with a request that they return it with their comments by 8 June 2001. The returns would be analysed and discussed at the meeting on 12 June 2001.

(b) Visits to Loughborough and Stafford Crematoria

Members reported back on their visits to these two crematoria on 15 May 2001. The Senior Crematorium Officer circulated a report on income and expenditure for both Loughborough and Stafford.

The Scrutiny Panel acknowledged the benefits of providing a Family Room where bereaved relatives could finalise funeral arrangements.

The Senior Crematorium Officer undertook to investigate whether it would be possible to provide memorials in cemeteries within East Staffordshire and South Derbyshire for those cremated at Bretby.

The Scrutiny Panel acknowledged the flexibility of the staff at Bretby and, in particular, the fact that the Cremator Operators sometimes carried out grounds maintenance work.

Resolved:

- (1) That in the final report reference be made to the following:
 - (a) the provision of a Family Room for bereaved relatives; and
 - (b) an acknowledgement of the excellent service and calibre of the staff employed at Bretby and the flexibility they show in carrying out their duties;
 - (c) that the Senior Crematorium Officer report back on the possibility of providing memorials in cemeteries within East Staffordshire and South Derbyshire.

(c) **Survey Analysis**

The Scrutiny Panel received, for information, the latest survey analysis from questionnaire replies received from the Applicant for Cremation (usually the main mourner).

(d) **Delegated Decisions**

The Scrutiny Panel noted delegated decisions made in respect of the following:

2/01 – Charges for use of organ and organist
3/01 – Welfare Funerals

No comments were made on the decisions.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Resolved:

That the next formal meeting of the Scrutiny Panel be held on Wednesday, 18 July 2001 at 3.00 p.m. at Bretby Crematorium (**this date was subsequently changed to 9 July 2001**).

Chairman.

Consultation replies from Funeral Directors (standard print) & Clergy (bold print)

	V.poor	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent
What is your overall impression of Bretby Crematorium?				2 / 2	2 / 5
How helpful & courteous do you find the Crematorium staff?				2 / 1	2 / 6
What do you think of the standard of music?					
Organ			1 / 1	2 / 5	1
CD/Tapes				3 / 5	1 / 2
What do you think of the appearance of:					
Chapels			1	3 / 4	3
Waiting-rooms/vestries			1 / 1	1 / 4	1 / 2
Office			1	1 / 5	1
Floral Court		1	1	2 / 6	
Grounds				2 / 2	2 / 5
What do you think of the choice of memorial?			1	1 / 1	1 / 1
The Crematorium fees are approximately 20% of total funeral costs. For the service you receive at Bretby do you feel that this represents value for money?			1	3 / 2	4

Comments:

With the trend for families to have the whole funeral service at the Crematorium, the chapel on occasion is too small for the number of people attending.

The floral court benefits from being under cover and thus enables the family and friends to view floral tributes in the dry. However, due to the design of the floral court this makes it very dark. Both of the above points reflect design problems with the building and do not reflect on the care and condition of these places by the crematorium staff.

The grounds are maintained in excellent condition by the staff. However, it must be disturbing for families when certain parts of the grounds are waterlogged. This has been a particular problem during the winter/spring 2000/01. The Crematorium staff cope very well with these difficult conditions and, again, this is a drainage problem and not due to lack of care or maintenance.

The Crematorium benefits from being constructed in open woodland and not in a cemetery and thus not being surrounded by memorials, the Book of Remembrance being the only record. Of late trees have been dedicated to specific people which is good, but will this cause problems with families when the supply of trees has run out?

Certainly one of the best crematoria in the area and the best run.

We like to think we are all part of a 'team'.

We think it's a shame that the public have to pay for an organ if they do not want one.

The floral courts are nice until you look up.

The public very often say how nice the grounds look.

Carnarvon Chapel is excellent but Anglesey Chapel had a musky smell to it when I visited. This is possibly because the chapel is not used as often as the Carnarvon.

Other crematoria set out room for plaques on walls or engraved kerbsets around the paths in the grounds.

I feel a more strict approach on timing of services as ministers do tend to overrun their 25 minute allocation and funerals sometimes arrive late because they know we have some leeway with the 45 minute booking times.

CDs/Tapes: Performance & cooperation of the staff is excellent & much appreciated.

The ministers' vestry for the Anglesey is adequate & offers good facilities (tea, coffee available) Some people might find the photocopier & storage cupboard a bit intrusive – but they do not bother me!

I have much respected the way that your staff receive family & friends who come to a funeral, showing them into the chapel or waiting-room as appropriate. I hope this practice will continue. (Has it reduced, in the last 2/3 years?)

Can anything at all be done to speed the exit of the congregation after a particularly well-attended service? Could funeral directors position the chief mourners further from the exit from the floral hall? If they continue to place them near the exit, the time taken to clear the chapel will be lengthy.

Although I rarely officiate at Bretby – whenever I do – I find the empathetic atmosphere, the helpfulness of everyone, and the time allowed between services makes it a pleasure.

People have often commented to me on how Bretby Crematorium is a 'comfortable' place to be, both for funerals and for subsequent visits.

I have always found an excellent response to any points I have raised.

Is there any way of keeping the door from the vestry clear? When the waiting-room is full, it is very difficult to open that door without hitting someone.

One problem that arises quite often is the buzz of conversation which carries from the waiting-room as the cortege is assembling. Is there any way of communicating the need for silence (which will obtain a response) when the cortege arrives at the chapel?

Clergy are not generally happy about the absence of an attendant in chapel during services. It is felt that such a person needs to be available throughout, even though they are not often called upon.

Whilst I think there is plenty of space between services, again others have commented about feeling uncomfortable being a party coming in whilst those from a previous funeral are going out.

Occasionally the organist will be too ambitious for the singing abilities of the mourners (but not recently)

The CD equipment reproduces well what the family has chosen. I don't always like what the family has chosen!

The plan for the organists to tidy the chapel between services should be reviewed after a few months to check they have sufficient time to practise any tricky requests.

I have never felt rushed at Bretby.

Well cared for and not as off-putting as some places I know!

The staff are always helpful.

Some organists have played a few hymns with many verses on the slow side a few times – that puts pressure on time-keeping. I think you need to watch that one. You need organists with a good tempo.

I would prefer some floral tributes moved away from the exit door – this morning I nearly trod on one arrangement whilst putting my book on the shelf. When it is dark I think we could do with a bit more lighting. With large congregations the floral court is quickly overcrowded.

I think it is time for the window frames to be redecorated - varnish/paint on the outside is flaking.

Can you come up with a less embarrassing route back to the vestry after the service – after saying goodbye recently it was either back through chapel into a large group of mourners in the waiting-room or on the drive where the hearse was in view.