

CPG for Funerals and Bereavement

18 October 2017

Conference Room B

Annual Meeting Minutes

In Attendance:

Mark Isherwood AM (Chair)
Russell George AM
Nigel Lymn Rose (NAFD)

James Tovey (SAIF Charter)
Janette Bourne (Cruse)
Jean Letton (BASW)

Gordon Swan (Golden Charter)
Philip Blatchly (NAFD)
David Beamer (Secretary)

Item 1: Apologies

Darren Millar AM
Janet Finch-Saunders AM
Lorraine Barrett (Humanist
Celebrant)
Martin Birch (Cardiff City Council)

Simon Thomas AM
Paul Davies AM
Neil Hamilton AM
Mandie Lavin (NAFD)
Jeremy Field (NAFD)

Cary's Moseley (EBPCPW)
Kim Bird (About the Funeral)
Paul Harding (Marie Curie)
Andrew Davies (Dignity)

Item 2: Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the last meeting were approved.

Item 3: Election of Officers

The following officers were elected:

Mark Isherwood AM (Chair)
David Beamer (Secretary)

Item 4: Update

The Secretary informed the Group that Roy Folland had decided to retire from the Group. The Chair asked to put on record the Group's appreciation of Roy's contribution to work of the Group and asked for the Group's thanks and best wishes to be passed on to him. A letter will be prepared in due course to thank him formally.

The Secretary notified the Chair that the misspelling of Jean Letton's surname in a previous meeting's minutes had been notified to the Table Office for correction.

The Secretary thanked Philip Blatchly for his assistance with the letter to Vaughan Gething AM re Green Form delays.

Item 5: Bereavement Support Payments (presentation from Janette Bourne, Cruse Bereavement Care)

Janette Bourne delivered a speech on Bereavement Support Payments (BSPs). Her speech outlined the campaign work that had been undertaken to seek to improve BSPs prior to their introduction and the key changes that BSPs offered to bereaved people.

Ms Bourne discussed the Fair Funerals campaign launched on 17 October 2017 and its call for the Government to increase the funeral fund to cover basic funeral costs to stop grieving families getting into debt.

The Chair asked for the taskforce to be notified of the Group's willingness to provide assistance if required. Ms Bourne agreed to contact Debbie Kerslake on behalf of the Group to relay this offer and ask for the Group to be kept updated on its latest campaigns.

Item 6: Death Certification Reforms

The Group discussed death certification reforms planned for England and Wales, and the delays caused in making progress as a result of the General Election. Nigel Lymn Rose discussed that there had been no meetings with the funeral sector or bereavement groups since February 2017.

The Chair agreed to write to the UK Department of Health to seek clarity on death certification reforms and include the importance of consulting with the funeral sector and bereavement groups when developing policy.

Item 7: Social Fund / Funeral Affordability

The Group discussed recent Scottish Government proposals including the 10 point plan announced on 8 August 2017. The Chair requested that the plan be sent to the relevant Welsh Government Minister to identify which of the 10 items was in the gift of the Welsh Government and which ones were supported to reduce funeral poverty.

Gordon Swan outlined a number of civil servant changes in Scotland.

Nigel Lymn Rose offered to send to Debbie Kerslake the relevant statutory instrument for the social fund that needs to be updated.

A discussion was held on the provision of credit by funeral directors to help bereaved people pay for funerals due to the £700 cap on other funeral expenses. Jean Letton stated that paying for a funeral for those on benefits was a huge issue including the inability to apply for Social Fund support until after a funeral had taken place.

The Chair requested a letter to be sent to the Bank of England asking for clarity; he also requested that letters be sent to ABCUL and Responsible Finance Cymru to seek their views on credit provision to pay for a funeral and request their attendance at a future meeting.

Item 8: Coroners' Provision in Wales

At previous meetings of the Group, concerns have been raised at the level of Coroners support in Wales.

Philip Blatchly stated that the Newport Coroner was retiring in January.

It was agreed to await the response from the Chief Coroner to the Chair's letter before taking further action and to chase this up in the meantime if there is further delay.

Item 9: Coroners' removals – use of zero based tenders

Concerns have been raised at past meetings of the Group about the use by Coroners of zero based tenders for the removal of deceased people on behalf of the Coroner.

The letter sent to the Chief Coroner also referred to zero based tenders and the Group looked forward to a response in due course.

Item 10: AOB

No items.

Item 11: Date of next meeting

The date of the next meeting was to be confirmed.