

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

---

COMMITTEE	Audit, Risk and Scrutiny
DATE	22 February 2018
REPORT TITLE	Audit of Aberdeen Crematorium by the Federation of Burial and Cremation Authorities
REPORT NUMBER	CHI/18/001
LEAD OFFICER	Fraser Bell
REPORT AUTHOR	Graham Keith

---

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT:-**

- 1.1 At its meeting on 1 November 2016, the Communities, Housing and Infrastructure Committee resolved to commission a 'Critical Friend' Audit by an external crematoria industry body and to present the resulting report to the Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Committee.
- 1.2 This report provides the Committee with the attached 'critical friend' audit report carried out by the Federation of Burial and Cremation Authorities (FBCA) on 27 November 2017.

**2. RECOMMENDATION(S)**

- 2.1 It is recommended that Committee notes the audit report.

**3. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES / OTHER HEADINGS AS APPROPRIATE**

- 3.1 On 1 November 2016, the Communities, Housing and Infrastructure Committee approved a suite of compliance measures with the aim of improving arrangements at the Aberdeen Crematorium. One of these assurance measures was the commissioning of a 'Critical Friend' Audit every 2 years or as instructed by the Communities, Housing and Infrastructure Committee. The audit is to be conducted by an external industry body e.g. Federation of Burial and Cremation Authorities (FBCA) to ensure all processes and procedures meet current best practice, codes of practice and legislation. The audit report should then be presented to the Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Committee.
- 3.2 The FBCA Audit report is attached as Appendix 1.

#### **4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

#### **5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

#### **6. MANAGEMENT OF RISK**

- 6.1 No risks have been identified in this report.

#### **7. IMPACT SECTION**

##### **7.1 Economy**

- 7.1.1 There is no economical impact arising from this report.

##### **7.2 People**

- 7.2.1 The auditor's observations are that the Council "is delivering an excellent service to the bereaved".

##### **7.3 Place**

- 7.3.1 There are no direct implications on 'Place' arising from this report.

##### **7.4 Technology**

- 7.4.1 There is no direct implications on 'Technology' arising from the this report.

#### **8. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 8.1 Aberdeen City Council Report to Communities, Housing and Infrastructure Committee Aberdeen Crematorium Performance Indicators (CHI/16/251)  
<http://committees.aberdeencity.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=503&MIId=3877&Ver=4>

#### **9. APPENDICES (if applicable)**

- 9.1 Appendix 1 - BJD/FBCA Report – Aberdeen Crematorium 28-11-2017

## **10. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS**

Graham Keith  
Performance and Development Manager  
[gkeith@aberdeencity.gov.uk](mailto:gkeith@aberdeencity.gov.uk)  
Tel: 01224 387633

## **HEAD OF SERVICE DETAILS**

Mark Reilly  
Head of Public Infrastructure and Environment  
[mareilly@aberdeencity.gov.uk](mailto:mareilly@aberdeencity.gov.uk)  
01224 523096

**THE FEDERATION OF BURIAL  
AND CREMATION AUTHORITIES**  
41, Salisbury Road, Carshalton,  
Surrey. SM5 3HA  
Tel: 02920766418  
Email: [fbcasec@btconnect.com](mailto:fbcasec@btconnect.com)



Technical Coordinator: Brendan J Day

28<sup>th</sup> November 2017

## **ABERDEEN CREMATORIUM**

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

**1.1** The author of this report is Brendan J Day, Technical Coordinator of the Federation of Burial and Cremation Authorities. My career in local authority Bereavement Services lasted from 1980 to 2017, with responsibilities including crematoria, cemeteries, Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages, Coroners and responsibility for commercial transformation in Legal, Governance, Bereavement and Procurement services. I am a Fellow of the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management and hold an MBA in Public Services Management.

**1.2** Mr Graham Keith who is the Performance and Development Manager for the City Council, contacted the FBCA and requested an independent audit of the procedures in place at Aberdeen Crematorium. I agreed to carry out the audit.

**1.4** Prior to my visit I had sight of the report carried out by Mr Rick Powell, Secretary and Executive Officer of the FBCA, dated the 12<sup>th</sup> October 2015, Operational Procedures at Aberdeen Crematorium and a completed Critical Friend Audit Report.

**1.5** On the 27<sup>th</sup> November 2017 I visited Aberdeen Crematorium and spent time with Graham Keith and Angus Beacom, the Crematorium Manager. I was also provided with a guided tour of the facility by David Stevenson, during which time I took the opportunity to speak with a number of members of staff.

### **2.0 THE CODE OF CREMATION PRACTICE AND OTHER RELEVANT GUIDANCE**

**2.1** The Code of Cremation Practice issued by the Federation of Burial and Cremation Authorities is recognised as setting the industry ethical standard for cremation. It provides the bereaved with reassurance that the cremation of their loved one is being conducted in an entirely appropriate manner. Adherence to the Code of Cremation Practice also gives the Cremation Authority the assurance that it is providing the best possible service to the bereaved within nationally agreed guidelines.

The Code of Cremation Practice first issued in 1946 by the Federation is periodically updated and revised. It is essential for the maintenance of standards at crematoria and the observance of the Code is an obligation of membership of the Federation.

The Code is a clear and concise statement of policy. Since its inception there have been a number of minor amendments to the Code and it has remained the principal ethical standard for crematoria operation, supplementing legislative requirements, providing practical guidance and reflecting the public's expectations of sensitivity and commitment to the needs of the bereaved. It is a truly corporate document serving the needs of the bereaved and the Cremation Authority at the same time.

### **3.0 OPERATIONAL DETAILS**

**The following information relates to observations made whilst with staff at Aberdeen Crematorium and carrying out inspections of operational equipment and documentation.**

#### **3.1 Staffing**

The crematorium manual staffing levels at Aberdeen Crematorium are sufficient to provide a satisfactory level of service delivery to the bereaved and to satisfy health and safety and ethical requirements.

All staff operating the cremation equipment on site are certificated in accordance with the requirements of the crematorium's Environmental Permit issued by the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA). The staff duties carried out by the team include those of chapel attendant and cremator technician and there is sufficient support and relief cover to maintain flexibility of service delivery. These duties are carried out on a rotational basis by the team to ensure service continuity.

#### **3.2 Cremation Equipment**

The crematory is equipped with four cremators manufactured by Facultatieve Technologies Ltd, with all four cremators operating through purpose designed mercury abatement and filtration plant. The high speed cremulator used on site is designed to reduce the calcinated bone remains to a fine consistency considered suitable for either release to a family or for dispersal in the crematorium grounds, whilst separating any metals that may still be present within the remains.

#### **3.3 Cremation Paperwork**

The cremation paperwork, as per the previous audit, is received, checked and processed by Bereavement Service's staff based at Marischal College, a confirmation sheet is produced each afternoon by Bereavement Service's staff and faxed to the Crematorium. This sheet lists the next day's cremations and confirms that all paperwork has been received and checked and that the cremations can proceed in accordance with the list. A senior member of crematorium staff will access the Burial and Cremation Administration System (BACAS) and print the following documentation:

- Yellow Instruction (Identification) Cards
- Floral Tribute Cards
- Daily Operator Detail Sheets
- Certificates of Cremation
- 2 sets of Identification Labels
- Chapel Lists

The paperwork is then processed as per the previous audit.

#### **4.0 Observations**

**4.1 Staff:** The Cremation Technicians and Chapel Attendants at Aberdeen Crematorium appeared to be well trained, to have a caring demeanour and an awareness of the sensitivity of the service that is being provided by the Cremation Authority. During the day in which the observations were carried out at Aberdeen Crematorium there was close attention paid to the staff behaviour and performance in the crematory. During this time in depth conversations were also held with Graham Keith, Angus Beacom and David Stevenson to ensure that the observations were meaningful and to avoid misinterpretation.

**4.2 Code of Cremation Practice:** During the period of the review there were no perceived breaches of the Code of Cremation Practice and the team displayed a good understanding of the ethical requirements for providing this most sensitive of services. The version of the Code of Cremation Practice displayed was the most up to date issued in 2017.

**4.3 Effective Use of Equipment:** The operating technician was observed to work within ethical guidelines and appeared to have a good understanding of the need to exercise economic control of the cremators to avoid significant financial implications for the cremation authority when machines were pre-heated and then not used, or kept on standby “just in case”.

**4.4 Cremation of Foetal Remains:** During the period of the observations, there were no cremations of foetal remains. However, I was given a detailed explanation of the process by David Stevenson including the use the specifically designed fetal programme available within the software package on the Facultatieve machines, the purpose designed baby cremation trays, lid, ashes recovery tray/funnel and containers. The health and safety precautions taken during the charging of the cremations and the processes were explained to me and I was shown the personal protective equipment (PPE) supplied to the staff, for use during the process.

**4.5 Cremation And Ancillary Equipment:** During the period of the observations the cremators and filtration equipment were in proper working order. It is important that the staff are encouraged to report faults and malfunctions to their manager and it is equally important for the manager to understand the importance of these failures, some of which can create emissions to air, either inside or outside of the building.

**4.6 Operational Instructions:** During conversations with the Cremator Technician, it became clear that he has a good understanding of the operational requirements of the equipment in use and was aware of the various software settings available within the computer programme to facilitate the proper use of the equipment under various circumstances.

**4.7 Risk Assessments, COSHH Assessments and Safe Working Practices:** As part of the observation process, the Crematorium Manager was asked for the most up to date copies of any Risk Assessments that had been carried out and copies of any Safe Working Practices that had been produced. Risk Assessments and copies of other relevant documents were made available to the author in hard copy during the observations.

**4.8 Disposal of Cremated Remains/Ashes:** The practices currently in place at Aberdeen Crematorium regarding the methodology and recording of the disposal or dispersal of cremated remains/ashes appeared to be in accordance with accepted UK standards.

**4.9 Cremation Paperwork:** During the observations the examples of cremation paperwork were chosen at random and inspected. The documentation was in accordance with the process notes and accurately completed in all respects.

In conclusion, from my observations and the documentary evidence provided I am satisfied that Aberdeen City Council is delivering an excellent service to the bereaved. The current proposals to modernise the building and transfer the cremation administration to the crematorium demonstrates the ongoing commitment of the authority to local bereaved families.

**Brendan J. Day**  
Technical Coordinator