

Council appoint former Lord Advocate to investigate Mortonhall

INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATION INTO MORTONHALL CREMATORIUM

Following consideration on 15 January 2013 by the Transport and Environment Committee of the initial findings of the Council's Mortonhall Crematorium Investigation, the Committee agreed to commission an appropriate independent expert to lead and direct a further investigation.

The City of Edinburgh Council has now confirmed that it has commissioned The Right Honourable Dame Elish Angiolini DBE QC to lead the further investigation. Dame Elish is the former Lord Advocate for Scotland and had a long and distinguished career in law before moving in to academia.

It is anticipated that Dame Elish will review the files, conduct further investigation and interviews and draw on such other expert advice as she deems necessary to enable her to reach her own findings. The current review by independent auditors PWC into the Crematorium records will feed into Dame Elish's investigation, as will the policy review activity being led by the Council's Services for Communities directorate in consultation with key stakeholders including SANDS Lothian.

Dame Elish will report to council Chief Executive, Sue Bruce. The findings of the investigation will be reported to the Council's Transport and Environment Committee which is led by Councillor Lesley Hinds.

The precise start date of the investigation will be contingent on clarification from Lothian and Borders Police of the status of complaints made to them in relation to Mortonhall Crematorium to ensure that any police investigation is not impeded.

The council have confirmed that the scope of the further investigation, which may be subject to amendment as the investigation makes progress, is as follows:

- Assess and review the initial findings;
- Review the findings of the audit of crematorium records which is currently underway;
- Assess and review the Council's arrangements for communicating with all parents who have registered an enquiry and who are to receive a full response to their enquiry supported by the relevant documentation;
- Establish whether the evidence from the records audit, the initial findings and any other interviews indicate failures in professional standards and/or management practices;
- Assess and comment on the arrangements to review current policy and practice recommended in the attached report and contribute as necessary;
- Assess and comment on the communication process between Mortonhall, NHS Lothian, funeral directors and bereaved parents;
- Review national guidance and policy and practice in other authorities in order to establish whether guidance within Edinburgh requires to be reviewed and refreshed; and
- Any other relevant matters relating to this scope according to the progress of the independent investigation.

Councillor Hinds said:- "I am very pleased at the appointment

of Dame Elish Angiolini. As a former Lord Advocate, Dame Elish is held in the highest esteem and reflects the authority and experience required to properly investigate this significant and sensitive matter. I look forward to receiving her findings.”