

Transport Committee recommend independent investigation into Mortonhall



Edinburgh Council have agreed this morning to commission an independent report into practices at Mortonhall Crematorium. This follows the recent discovery that perhaps 150 families in the city may have been led to believe that there were no ashes available following the cremation of their babies.

The Chief Executive, Sue Bruce, spoke to the meeting about the report produced in her name, and explained that the reason to bring the initial findings to the council right now was an effort to move things along as quickly as possible in relation to such a sensitive matter. Auditors PWC have already been appointed to look at the records at the crematorium, and it is their findings which will be acted upon. A suitable independent person will be recruited to “direct any further enquiries required”.

The investigator will have to work along with funeral directors and other bodies to ensure that the facts are uncovered. There is a possibility that this will impact upon wider practice across Scotland too, and for that reason the Scottish Government is being kept informed.

Ms Bruce said:-“The right thing to do is to appoint an independent person to carry out the investigation. I have had initial discussions about this.”

Councillor Nick Gardner asked what kind of skills the person might have to have, and Councillor Joanna Mowat asked about the possibility of The Scottish Government carrying out an enquiry as well as that to be initiated by the council.

Councillor Mowat said:-“How does that impact on the discussion here this morning? Is it a wider issue than Mortonhall?”

Ms Bruce replied to councillors that the scope of the investigation will be decided at this meeting today, but that there is merit in having the further investigation as quickly as possible. She said:-“In December we recovered the detailed crematorium records and PWC are looking at those for us. I have been speaking to the Scottish Government through the Permanent Secretary. We have a duty to report to the Scottish Government about the goings on and the findings at Mortonhall.

“After this meeting today I will update the Scottish Government and discuss the permutations of what can be done” Bruce also confirmed that she had arranged for further recommendations if the person of first choice is not available.

She continued to explain to the councillors:-“As a council we are responsible for running the crematoria in the city. I agree that in terms of Recommendation 2 in the report there are several aspects to the matter, including looking into current policy, and these will all feed in to any investigation. We understand how important it is to the parents to get this matter settled, and do not want to give out partial information. We are mindful of the need for this to be done efficiently and well. It would not be helpful to parents to give them some of the information.”



Convener of
Transport &
Environment –
Lesley Hinds

Transport Convenor Councillor Lesley Hinds said that she had apologised on behalf of the council in December when the matter first came to light. She said:-“I hope you agree it was

appropriate for me to apologise to parents at that time. It is important we get the facts however and act upon facts alone. I have also spoken to SANDS and it is important in my view to work with groups such as those. SANDS have also met the leaders of all political groups at the council and we are all working together to get this matter resolved. We are very keen that we get it right.”

This is the report brought to the meeting, and the recommendations in it were adopted in full without any amendments:-

[Report to City of Edinburgh Council about investigation into Mortonhall Crematorium](#) by