

# CPG for Funerals and Bereavement

12 September 2017

Q1.03

## MEETING MINUTES

### In attendance:

Fulton MacGregor MSP (Co-convener)	Devin Scobie
Miles Briggs MSP (Co-convener)	Rose Jackson
Graham McAusland	Paul Cuthell
Erik Cramb	James Blackburn
James Morris	John Williamson
Gordon Swan	David Beamer (Secretary)

### Item 1: Apologies

Alex Rowley MSP	Nigel Lymn Rose
Stuart McMillan MSP	Ann McMurray
Willie Coffey MSP	Stewart Wilson
Johann Lamont MSP	Jeremy Field
Alex Cole-Hamilton MSP	Mark Hazelwood
Pauline McNeill MSP	Rebecca Paterson
Mandie Lavin	Gerard Boyle
John Birrell	

### Item 2: Approval of the minutes from the last meeting

The minutes of the last meeting were approved.

### Item 3: Update

A discussion was held on local authority fees and the recent funeral pledge by the Scottish Working Group on Funeral Poverty.

The Secretary confirmed that following the last meeting of the Group, John Birrell had made contact with the AAPT and the appropriate release of the deceased from mortuaries had been satisfactorily addressed.

**Item 4: The Burial and Cremation (Scotland) Act and its implementation**

The Group discussed latest developments including the appointment of Natalie McKail (Inspector of Funeral Directors) and the possible format of a future meeting that could examine the Act and its implementation in more detail.

Fulton McGregor stated that future speakers on the Act could be sent questions in advance to help with responses at a Q&A session after they had spoken.

Paul Cuthell stated that the funeral sector was concerned about a recent consultation issued by the Scottish Government.

**Item 5: Funeral Poverty / funeral affordability (including Local Authority charges)**

The Scottish Government's Funeral Costs Plan, published on 8 August 2017, was reviewed by the Group.

Erik Cramb from the Scottish Pensioners Forum discussed the work of the Forum and a project in Dundee that is looking at developing more affordable and more intimate funerals. The project had received £50,000 in funding from the Scottish Government.

Paul Cuthell highlighted the range of options available from funeral directors in Scotland and how changes in customs were impacting on funeral provision. This included how the length of time between death and burial or cremation had increased over the years.

A discussion was held about how Northern Ireland was able to hold a burial within 3 days of death and what steps the Scottish Government could take to reduce delays.

Fulton MacGregor asked for the Group to be kept updated on progress with the Dundee project.

**Item 6: Social Fund Funeral Payment devolution**

A discussion was held on how devolution can improve the administration of the social fund funeral payment system and the level of financial support.

James Blackburn outlined international examples of how support is provided including the Swedish model that civil servants in Scotland had examined.

A discussion was then held on the potential role of life insurance companies and pension providers in assisting with funeral costs.

**Item 7: Funeral Planning**

Gordon Swan stated that following the last meeting of the Group, he had reached out to Graham McAusland, CEO of the Funeral Planning Authority, who had agreed to address the Group's meeting.

Graham McAusland set out the work of the Authority, its membership, its Code of Practice and cultural changes in how funerals are paid for. He outlined the very small number of complaints the FPA received compared to the volume of funeral plans sold.

Mr McAusland discussed personnel changes that had occurred recently at the FPA to demonstrate the FPA's independence and broaden the Board's expertise. He then addressed the regulation of the sector and potential options moving forward.

Fulton MacGregor welcomed Mr McAusland's input and acknowledged that funeral plans were a topic that the Group could examine in a separate meeting with Group members providing questions in advance to speakers.

**Item 8: Mortuary Estate Capacity / Appropriate Release of Bodies**

James Blackburn outlined the current state of mortuary facilities in Scotland and, in particular, the level and standard of provision in Edinburgh. He also outlined the amount of space available at the premises of funeral directors.

It was agreed that this matter would be closely monitored by the Group.

**Item 9: Date of Next Meeting**

To be confirmed. The Secretary confirmed that the next meeting of the Group would be our Annual Meeting.

**Item 10: AOB**

Fulton MacGregor thanked all those who attended including the new members of the Group and acknowledged interest from the Church of Scotland.