

JJBS (Joint Jewish Burial Society) Report for AGM

The JJBS

Radlett Reform Synagogue is a member of the JJBS. The society was set up in 1968 with the objective of providing burial and cremation facilities and services for members of Synagogues and their dependents (defined as children under 21 years old at 1st January of the year concerned). The society provides the opportunity for non-Jewish partners to join the scheme. For Radlett Reform members the main burial ground is at The Western Cemetery, Cheshunt and the main crematorium is at Golders Green.

JJBS Members

In 2019 Radlett Reform was one of 26 “London” member synagogues where JJBS arrange the funeral and manage the cemeteries. There are an additional 14 “National” member synagogues where members pay a higher fee to cover the cost of funerals near their synagogue. As at the end of 2019 JJBS had 15,109 London synagogue members and 2,403 national synagogue members.

JJBS Membership Fee

JJBS charges each member an annual fee (2019 & 2020 = £50) which Radlett Reform itemises on your subscription statement (£50 for a single member £100 for a couple) and collects it on behalf of JJBS.

In 2021 the fee will be £52 per member.

JJBS Funds – quotes from 2019 Annual report

The Scheme is long term by its nature and uses actuarial calculations to account for its commitment to provide for future funerals for current members. The Charity faces ongoing risks due to the Covid-19 pandemic; these are the significant loss in value since the year end of the Charity's investment portfolio and the accelerated costs of providing for funerals earlier than previously would have been actuarially expected. However these risks are not a threat in the short term to the going concern assumption.

The Charity has general reserves of over £6.7m.

These reserves are sufficient to fund the charity's activities for a number of years.

Western Cemetery – Cheshunt

The work on the new prayer hall and the offices has been delayed by the bad weather at the end of 2019 and the pandemic.

Covid 19 – this relates to 2020 but may concern members now.

Covid 19 is having a major impact on funerals. Firstly there is a major concern over the risk of transmission to mourners, undertakers, sexton team and Rabbis. The Reform and Liberal Rabbis set the guidance based on the overriding concern of protecting the living. This meant that only the Rabbi could attend the funeral in person or from their home, the family and mourners had to attend the funeral and shiva prayers online. JJBS are very grateful for all the technical online advice with this from Rabbi Paul. The restrictions have been partially lifted and at the time of writing a maximum of 5 people may attend outdoors and observing social distancing this is to be considered for each funeral and by

the officiating Rabbi. The up to date guidance on funerals and subsequent visiting the grave and stone settings can be found <https://www.jjbs.org.uk/urgent-guidance/> .

By the end of June (7 months) JJBS had conducted 238 funerals (of which 72 were conducted in March and April). This compares to the previous 12 months of 2019 = 283 and 2018 = 306

Proposed changes to the JJBS Constitution

The JJBS officers are seeking to amend the society's constitution. As currently constituted there are 6 elected Honorary Officers who run the JJBS and the staff and 27 Representative governors (out of a potential of 40). Each member synagogue is entitled to a Representative governor who may attend and vote at the quarterly governors meetings and the AGM. At these meetings governors receive reports from the honorary officers & the sexton, raise questions and vote.

The Honorary Officers are seeking to change the constitution so that the number of Trustee Governors shall consist of 5 elected Honorary Officers (Chair, Vice-Chair, Treasurer, Secretary and Honorary Actuary) together with 7 other elected Trustee Governors nominated by The Honorary Officers . They are to have individual skill sets that would benefit JJBS and will be working governors. It will cease to be a requirement that Honorary Governors and (the new) Trustee Governors are members of a JJBS member synagogue (although preferable) and no more than 3 members of the 7 trustee governors shall be members of the same synagogue. Each can serve up to two consecutive three year terms in office before having to retire for one year before being eligible again.

It is proposed that The Representative Governors become a consultative and advisory body only. It will not be a decision making body, it will meet twice a year and have no defined quorum.

This is the one place in my report where I will give an opinion – and that is that: I will in consultation with our Chair seek to oppose the Representative Governors becoming a consultative only body: oppose allowing non-member Governors; have the appointment of Trustee governors rest with the Honorary Officers and have the possibility of the Honorary Officers and 3 of the 7 Trustee Governors be members of the same synagogue. From discussions at the Reform Chair's forum we are not the only synagogue wishing to oppose these changes.

With many thanks to my predecessor Dani Kornhauser

Paula Wood