



---

## **Report of Graham Harrison, Bereavement Services Manager and Registrar**

### **Electoral division(s) affected:**

Countywide

### **Purpose of the Report**

- 1 To provide Members of the Central Durham Crematorium Joint Committee with an update relating to performance and other operational matters.

### **Executive summary**

- 2 This report provides Members of the Central Durham Crematorium Joint Committee with an update of performance and operational matters at the crematorium.

### **Recommendation(s)**

- 3 It is recommended that Members of the Central Durham Joint Committee:
  - a. Note the current performance of the crematorium;
  - b. Note the updated position with regards to the Technical Assistant post;
  - c. Note the updated position with regards to the recycling of metals scheme;
  - d. Note the options available for the cremation fee and approve Option 2 – reinstatement of the full 2020/21 fee from 1 November 2020;
  - e. Note the options available for the provision of webcasts and approve Option 2 – recommencement of the fees from 1 November 2020; and
  - f. Note and agree the content of the Service Asset Management Plan attached at Appendix 3, which will be factored into budget planning in 2021/22 and beyond.



- 8 The number and value of memorials sold 134 / £43,826 compares to 128 / £46,833 in the same period last year, which is an increase of 6 memorials sold and a decrease of £3,007 year on year.

## **Operational Matters**

### **Staffing**

- 9 Members agreed at the January 2020 meeting to advertise a full time Technical Assistant post.
- 10 There were 4 applicants shortlisted and following interviews on 23 July 2020 the Admin Apprentice was successful and commenced her new role on the 3 August 2020.
- 11 As Members will be aware, the Covid 19 pandemic placed the crematorium under immense pressure due to the increase in death rates.
- 12 To accommodate the additional workload extra staff were brought in from other Durham County Council services to cope with the demand. This meant that existing staff were having to carry out their normal duties whilst training other staff in the roles, ensuring that we could then have a bank of trained staff in order to operate a shift system and be able to operate 7 days a week. This shift system was in place for 2 months with staff working 10-hour days, 4 days on and 4 days off, which also included myself and the staff working bank holidays to cope with the demand.
- 13 The seating within the chapel had to be removed and replaced with 15 individual seats which allowed us to sanitise between each service ensuring that a safe distance of 2 metres can be maintained at all times.
- 14 The staff continue to cope with the demands and are an asset to the Crematorium and I would like to personally thanks them for their assistance during this difficult time.

### **Recycling of Metals Scheme**

- 15 Members may recall from the last meeting that extra funds from collections in 2019 had resulted in a second round of nominations being made available, therefore we nominated the Friends of Durham Woodland Cemetery. Due to Covid 19 restrictions a cheque for £10,000 was handed to the Friends of Durham Woodland Cemetery, without involving the Chair or Vice Chair of the Joint Committee. A letter of thanks from the trustees is attached at Appendix 4.

## **Heritage Open Weekend**

- 16 Members will be aware that the Durham Heritage Open Weekend has been running for several years and Durham Crematorium has been part of this event.
- 17 We were asked to participate in the September 2020 event, however due to Covid 19 it was decided not to take part this year.

## **Cremation Fee**

- 18 Members agreed at the January 2020 meeting to increase the cremation fee on 1 April 2020 from £700 to £720, however, due to the outbreak of the Covid 19 pandemic, a decision was taken to freeze the price at £700 during this time. This is in line with actions taken by other Councils.
- 19 During the period 1 April to 31 August there were 1,333 cremations where the £20 price increase was not applied, equating to £26,660 in reduced revenues.
- 20 Discussions with neighbouring authorities have found that whilst they too had either frozen their prices or offered a discount, all had now reverted back to the planned 2020/21 cremation fee. In light of this two options are put forward for consideration:

Option 1. Continue to freeze the cremation prices at £700.

Option 2. Implement the previously agreed budgeted cremation price of £720 from 1 November 2020.

### **Recommended Option**

Due to the reduction in cremation numbers back to normal levels and the approach taken by neighbouring authorities it is recommended that Members approve Option 2 and charge the budgeted £720 per cremation from 1 November 2020. This proposal has been factored into the financial outturn report.

## **Webcasts**

- 21 Members agreed at the January 2020 meeting to increase the Webcast charges on 1 April 2020 from £36 to £48. However, due to the Covid 19 pandemic, it was agreed to provide the service free of charge due to the reduced numbers of only 15 mourners allowed in the chapel during a service. Each webcast currently costs £30 and they are currently being made available for all services.

- 22 During the period 1 April to 31 August there were 516 webcasts requested and provided free of charge at a cost of £15,480 and lost revenue of £24,768 (assuming all 516 webcasts were charged at £48).
- 23 Discussions with neighbouring authorities have found that whilst they also provided the Webcasts free or offered a discount initially, all have now started charging the fee again. In light of this two options are put forward for consideration:

Option 1. Continue to provide the Webcasts free of charge.

Option 2. Re-commence the Webcast fee of £48 from 1 November 2020.

### **Recommended Option**

Due to the reduction in cremation numbers back to normal levels and the approach taken by neighbouring authorities it is recommended that Members approve Option 2 and re-commence the budgeted £48 per webcast from 1 November 2020. This has been factored into the financial outturn report.

## **Service Asset Management Plan**

- 24 The Service Asset Management Plan (SAMP) was presented to Members on 27 September 2019 and has been reviewed and updated to provide further direction and highlight future budget pressures for the Joint Committee. The SAMP is attached at Appendix 3 and will need to be refined in line with any future decisions taken by Members.
- 25 The Service Asset Management Plan is split into four priorities of maintenance need and includes all of the completed and planned crematorium improvement works.

**Priority 1 essential works** for 2021/22 have been estimated to the sum of £277,057. These will need to be considered as part of the budget setting process for next year. These works include:

- Re-Decoration Works
- Carry out replacement of ride on grasscutter
- Carry out works to allow two-way passing at entrance and new gates.
- Carry out Re-lining of 2 cremators
- Install lighting to the crematorium entranceway.
- Replace floral tribute stands.
- Carry out replacement of cooler cassettes to cremators

- Carry out Re-lining of 1 hearth

**Priority 2 works**, which will need to feature in 2022/23 budget plans have been estimated to the sum of £5,000 and the works are set out below:

- Carry out Re-lining of 2 hearths

**Priority 3 works**, which would fall beyond the next two years, have been estimated to the sum of £24,000 and the works are set out below:

- Re-Decoration Works
- Carry out Re-lining of 1 hearth

Longer term works have been costed to the sum of £484,000 and some of the works include:

- Re-Decoration Works
- Carry out Re-lining of 2 cremators
- Carry out Re-lining of 2 hearths

---

**Contact:** Graham Harrison

Tel: 03000 265606

---

---

## **Appendix 1: Implications**

---

### **Legal Implications**

There are no legal implications associated with this report

### **Finance**

As identified in the report with regards to the position of the Income.

### **Consultation**

Officers of Spennymoor Town Council were consulted on the contents of this report.

### **Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty**

There are no Equality and Diversity implications associated with this report.

### **Human Rights**

There are no Human Rights implications associated with this report.

### **Crime and Disorder**

There are no Crime and Disorder implications associated with this report.

### **Staffing**

As identified in the report.

### **Accommodation**

There are no accommodation implications associated with this report.

### **Risk**

As identified in the report.

### **Procurement**

There are no procurement issues associated with this report.

### **Climate Change**

There are no climate change issues associated with this report.

## Appendix 2: Breakdown of Figures

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Total
DURHAM	61	62	57	77	122	67	58	41	545
BARNARD CASTLE	1			1	1		1		4
BILLINGHAM							1		1
BIRTLEY	1			1	5			2	9
BISHOP AUCKLAND	7	5	3	5	6	8	6	4	44
BISHOP MIDDLEHAM		1	1	3		1			6
BLACKHALL	2	1	4	1	12	6	4	1	31
CHESTER LE STREET	13	12	17	28	34	29	15	15	163
CHESHIRE				1					1
CHILTON	1	2	1	4	3	2	1	4	18
CONSETT	3	2		2	3	2	1	2	15
CROOK	8	2	8	11	6	2	4	8	49
DARLINGTON	1		1	1	2	1	1	1	8
EASINGTON	7	8	9	18	8	2	5	3	60
EAST RAINTON	1	1		1	1			1	5
ESH			2						2
EDMONDSLEY				1					1
ESH WINNING		3	1	2	2	7	2	5	22
FENCEHOUSES	1			1			2		4
FERRYHILL	8	5	4	7	5	5	3	3	40
FISHBURN			1	2	1	1			5
GATESHEAD				2		1			3
GREAT LUMLEY	1	3	3	3	2	2		3	17
HARTLEPOOL			1	1	4			1	7
HASWELL	1		2	1	1	1	2	1	9
HETTON LE HOLE	3	5	1	16	6	2	1	4	38
HEXHAM			1						1
HORDEN	7	3		3	9	5	5	3	35
HOUGHTON	4	6	14	9	14	5	7	5	64
HOWDEN LE WEAR	1		1						2
KENDAL	1								1
KIMBLESWORTH						1			1
LANCHESTER	1		2	1	1	2	1		8
LANGLEY PARK	9	6	2	5	6	3	2	4	37
LINCOLN					1				1
MORPETH			1						1
MURTON	4	3	7	7	8	4	3	2	38
NEW BRANCEPETH	1	2	2		1	1			7
NEWCASTLE	1		2	1	1		1		6



	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Total
NEWTON AYCLIFFE	8	3	3	2	4	8	2	2	32
NORTHUMBERLAND				1	1	4		1	7
OUSTON	2	1		17	3			1	24
PELTON			1	2	5	2			10
PETERLEE	18	6	18	17	18	8	7	9	101
SACRISTON	4	7	3	4	1	3	1	6	29
SALTBURN					1				1
SEAHAM	12	11	6	18	31	11	9	9	107
SEDFIELD	2	2	2	4	1	7	1	2	21
SHILDON	4	1		1	7	3	2		18
SHINEY ROW								1	1
SHOTTON	3	1	3	6	8		4	3	28
SOUTH HETTON	2	3	2	1	2	2	3	3	18
SPENNYMOOR	9	9	16	7	12	8	12	3	76
STANHOPE	1					1			2
STANLEY	2		1	6	5		2	2	18
STATION TOWN	1	1	2	1					5
STOCKTON		1	1				1		3
SUNDERLAND		3	2	10	2	1	2		20
SUNNYBROW				1	2	1	1		5
SOUTHERN ENGLAND					1				1
THORNLEY	1		1	1		1	3		7
TOW LAW					1			1	2
TRIMDON	1	6	1	5	3	2	5	3	26
WASHINGTON	2	2	2	1	2	3	4	1	17
WEST AUCKLAND			1	1	2			1	5
WEST CORNFORTH			2	4	3	2	1		12
WHEATLEY HILL	4		4	8	8	1	5	3	33
WILLINGTON	5	5		3	6	1		4	24
WINGATE	1	3	6	1	3	3	1	2	20
WOLSINGHAM	1	2			1				4
WYNYARD					1				1
YORKSHIRE	1		1		1				3
WALES							1		1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>233</b>	<b>199</b>	<b>226</b>	<b>338</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>232</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>1,991</b>