

**Mountsett Crematorium Joint  
Committee**

**30 January 2023**

**Fees and Charges 2023/24**



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**Joint Report of**

**Alan Patrickson, Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and  
Climate Change**

**Paul Darby, Corporate Director of Resources and Treasurer to the  
Joint Committee**

**Electoral division(s) affected:**

Countywide

**Purpose of the Report**

- 1 This report sets out details of the proposed fees and charges for the Mountsett Crematorium for 2023/24.

**Executive summary**

- 2 In reviewing existing charges or setting new charges, inflationary pressures; the potential impact of competition in terms of price and quality; trends in demand; results of customer surveys; budget targets; cost structure implications; impact on other service areas; alternative more effective charging structures and proposals for targeted promotions etc need to be fully taken into consideration.
- 3 Members of the Joint Committee will recall that following Local Government Review in 2009 the fees and charges at the Mountsett Crematorium were harmonised with the charges at Central Durham Crematorium. The cremation fees and charges were increased in 2022/23 by £25 (3.4%).
- 4 Background papers available  
  
2022/23 Budget and Financial Monitoring Reports  
  
2023/24 Budget Working Papers

**Recommendation(s)**

- 5 It is recommended that members of the Joint Committee note and approve the proposed fees and charges at Appendix 2 effective from 1 April 2023, which seeks to increase cremation charges by £30 (3.92%) per cremation from £765 to £795.
- 6 It is recommended that the proposed fees and charges are incorporated into the 2023/24 budget.

## Fees and Charges 2023/24

- 7 The inflationary and cost pressures facing the crematorium, along with the views of the Bereavement Services Manager with regards to the local market, customer impact from any proposed increase and benchmarking data on the charges levied in other neighbouring facilities, plus the fact that the crematorium has recently undertaken major redevelopments are key factors in considering any increases for 2023/24.
- 8 The projected number of cremations in 2022/23 is 1,453 which will be 10 less than the 1,463 cremations delivered in 2021/22 and 153 more than the budgeted position of 1,300. For 2023/24 budget setting purposes it has been assumed there will be 1,300 cremations next year. This is a prudent forecast.
- 9 The current 2022/23 fees and charges for crematoria across the region, including the average charges levied is attached at Appendix 3, which indicates an average cremation fee of £872 (inclusive of medical referees fees and environmental surcharge where appropriate). Increasing the current charges by £30 will mean that the overall cremation fee levied for Mountsett Crematorium in 2023/24 (inclusive of medical referee fees) will increase to £795, which is £77 below the average charges currently levied across the region. Once other crematoria apply their fee increases for next year, the proposed 2023/24 cremation fee of £795 will probably remain the lowest in comparison with all other neighbouring facilities in the region.
- 10 At the September 2022 meeting Members approved a £30 (3.92%) increase to the current crematoria fees and charges for 2023/24 as part of the Budget Strategy for the Joint Committee.
- 11 The table below indicates the additional income that could be received over and above the budget. The £30 increase for 1,300 cremations is budgeted to generate an additional £39,000 income.

No of Cremations	Increase in Fees £					
	£10	£20	£30	£40	£50	£60
1,300	£13,000	£26,000	£39,000	£52,000	£65,000	£78,000
1,350	£51,750	£65,250	£78,750	£92,250	£105,750	£119,250
1,400	£90,500	£104,500	£118,500	£132,500	£146,500	£160,500
1,450	£129,250	£143,750	£158,250	£172,750	£187,250	£201,750
1,500	£168,000	£183,000	£198,000	£213,000	£228,000	£243,000

- 12 In terms of the charging policy for child cremations, it is proposed to retain the NIL fee. Members will see from Appendix 3 that neighbouring crematoria charges range from £0 to £490.

- 13 It is proposed to increase the following fees from 2023/24:
- Cremation Services – Off peak increase by £30.
  - Cremation Services – Saturday increase by £30.
- 14 Urn boxes - Increase by £5 to cover additional purchasing costs.
- 15 Book of Remembrance, Memorial Cards and Miniature Books are proposed to increase between £14 and £17. These fees have not been increased since 2016/17.
- 16 Memorials are proposed to increase between £12 and £36. These fees have not been increased since 2015/16.
- 17 Memorial renewals for plaques, seats and columbaria are proposed to increase by between £4 and £254.
- 18 New charges for varying years of memorial renewals are being introduced.
- Seat lease 5 years - £432
  - Columbaria lease 15 years - £788
  - Columbaria lease 10 years - £525
  - Columbaria lease 5 years - £263
- 19 All other fees and charges at the Crematorium are proposed to remain at the same levels as 2022/23.
- 20 A full schedule of the proposed fees and charges for Mountsett Crematorium is shown in Appendix 2, with benchmarking comparison data shown in Appendix 3 for Members' information.

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

None.

### **Finance**

A detailed schedule of the proposed fees and charges for Mountsett Crematorium is included at Appendix 2. These proposals have been factored into budget proposals for 2023/24.

### **Consultation**

None. However, Officers of Gateshead Council were provided with a copy of the report and given opportunity to comments / raise any detailed queries on the contents of this report in advance of circulation to members of the MCJC.

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

The proposals set out in this report are based on a harmonised fees and charges policy with the Mountsett Crematorium and provide equity of treatment / access across County Durham. An equality Impact assessment screening has been undertaken which has revealed no issues.

### **Climate Change**

None.

### **Human Rights**

None.

### **Crime and Disorder**

None.

### **Staffing**

None.

### **Accommodation**

None.

### **Risk**

The sensitive pricing of services is essential to maintain the competitiveness and reputation of Mountsett Crematorium in the current economic climate. The proposed fees and charges next year will ensure that the charges remain

competitive in comparison with neighbouring facilities and this, together with a prudent assumption in terms of the number of cremations undertaken next year, plus the strong reputation of the MCJC, should ensure risk is minimised with regards to the achievement of the income budgets. Charging information will be publicised in advance and communication carefully handled.

## **Procurement**

None.