

**Mountsett Crematorium Joint
Committee**

29 January 2024

Fees and Charges 2024/25



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 2024/25.

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 2023/24 by £30 (3.92%).
- 4 Background papers available

2023/24 Budget and Financial Monitoring Reports

2024/25 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 2024, which seeks to increase cremation charges by £30 (3.77%) per cremation from £795 to £825 (inclusive of £30 medical referee fee).
- 6 It is recommended that members of the Joint Committee give consideration to a mid-year increase in fees and charges, due to the widening gap between fees at Mountsett Crematorium and the average cremation fee across the region.
- 7 It is recommended that the proposed fees and charges are incorporated into the 2024/25 budget.

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- 8 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 2024/25.
- 9 The projected number of cremations in 2023/24 is 1,420 which will be 25 less than the 1,445 cremations delivered in 2022/23 and 120 more than the budgeted position of 1,300. For 2024/25 budget setting purposes it has been assumed there will be 1,350 cremations next year. While this has increased from 1,300 in 2023/24, it is still a prudent forecast.
- 10 The current 2023/24 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 £926 (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 2024/25 (inclusive of medical referee fees) will increase to £825, which is £101 below the average charges currently levied across the region. Once other crematoria apply their fee increases for next year, the proposed 2024/25 cremation fee of £825 will remain amongst the lowest of other neighbouring facilities in the region.
- 11 At the September 2023 meeting Members approved a £30 (3.77%) increase to the current crematoria fees and charges for 2024/25 as part of the Budget Strategy for the Joint Committee.
- 12 In view of the significant and widening gap between the 2024/25 cremation fee at Mountsett Crematorium and the regional average charge mentioned above, members may wish to consider an additional mid-year increase in cremation fees to bring our charges closer to the regional average and bolster the financial position of the Joint Committee.
- 13 The table overleaf indicates the additional income that could be received over and above the budget. The £30 increase for 1,350 cremations is budgeted to generate an additional £80,250 income.

Cremation Numbers	Increase in Fees						
	£20	£25	£30	£35	£45	£55	£65
	2.52%	3.14%	3.77%	4.40%	5.66%	6.92%	8.18%
1,300	£26,000	£32,500	£39,000	£45,500	£58,500	£71,500	£84,500
1,350	£66,750	£73,500	£80,250	£87,000	£100,500	£114,000	£127,500
1,400	£107,500	£114,500	£121,500	£128,500	£142,500	£156,500	£170,500
1,450	£148,250	£155,500	£162,750	£170,000	£184,500	£199,000	£213,500
1,500	£189,000	£196,500	£204,000	£211,500	£226,500	£241,500	£256,500
1,550	£229,750	£237,500	£245,250	£253,000	£268,500	£284,000	£299,500
1,600	£270,500	£278,500	£286,500	£294,500	£310,500	£326,500	£342,500

- 14 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 £525.
- 15 It is proposed to increase the following fees from 2024/25:
- Cremation Services – Off peak increase by £30.
 - Cremation Services – Saturday increase by £30.
- 16 Extension of cremation service by 30 minutes - Increase by £100.
- 17 Scattering of cremated remains from another Crematorium in lawn area – Increase by £5.
- 18 New charges for varying years of memorial renewals are being introduced.
- Small Plaques - Lease for 5 years - £50
 - Outside Large Plaques - Lease for 5 years - £90
 - Outside Vase Block - Lease for 5 years - £150
 - Inside new Garden - Large Plaques - Lease for 5 years - £100
 - Inside new Garden - Vase Block - Lease for 5 years - £160
- 19 For visual tributes, there is also a new charge for Family video file - not part of a slide show - £21.
- 20 All other fees and charges at the Crematorium are proposed to remain at the same levels as 2023/24.
- 21 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

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 2024/25.

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 assess the competitiveness and reputation of Mountsett Crematorium in the current economic climate. There has been a prudent assumption in terms of the number of cremations

undertaken next year, and 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.