

**Central Durham Crematorium Joint
Committee**

29 January 2025

2025/26 Revenue and Capital Budgets



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 for Members' consideration proposals with regards to the 2025/26 revenue and capital budgets for the Central Durham Crematorium.

Executive Summary

- 2 The 2025/26 budget has been developed with the Bereavement Services Manager, taking into account the proposed Fees and Charges set out in an earlier report, the updated 2024/25 forecast outturn position and known expenditure pressures in the coming year.

Recommendation(s)

- 3 It is recommended that members of the Joint Committee note and approve the revenue and capital budget proposals contained within the report (as set out at Appendix 2).
- 4 It is also recommended that Members note the forecast level of reserves at 31 March 2026 (also set out at Appendix 2).

Revenue Budget Proposals 2025/26

- 5 The proposed 2025/26 revenue budget is shown at Appendix 2, together with the forecast position with regards to the reserves of the Central Durham Crematorium at 31 March 2026. Members should note that the main changes from the 2024/25 budget are as follows:

Employees

- 6 The 2025/26 budget has been increased by **£18,167**. This takes into account the 2024/25 and 2025/26 pay awards.

Premises

- 7 The base budget has decreased by **(£91,362)** next year. The main reasons for this decrease are as follows:
- The repairs and maintenance budgets have been adjusted to reflect the Service Asset Management Plan works scheduled for 2025/26 in line with the Service Asset Management Plan approved at the September meeting. The net result of the removal of the 2024/25 works schedule and the inclusion of the 2025/26 requirements is decrease in the base budget of **(£115,000)**. Provision for the following works is included in the 2025/26 budget:

➤ Carry out re-lining of hearths x 1	£5,400
➤ Replacement of lights in chapel	£5,000
 - Electricity has been reduced by **(£5,960)**. In previous years the electricity costs increased leading to overspends in this area, however, for the past two years costs have reduced and the electricity budget has been underspent so the budget has been reduced to reflect this.
 - The increase in rates following the revaluation of the premises has resulted in the rates budget for 2025/26 being increased by **£28,252**.
 - Other premises costs such as major works and general cleaning have increased by **£5,346**.

Supplies and Services

- 8 The supplies and services budget has been increased by **£1,828** next year. The main changes are as follows:
- The software licences budget was increased in 2024/25 due to the initial set up costs plus the annual fee of the new Plotbox system. It has now been reduced by **(£17,113)** to budget for the annual fee for 2025/26.
 - Medical referee costs have increased by **£2,650** due to the increase in projected cremation numbers from 2,200 to 2,300.

- The Public Book of Reference Visual Reference budget has increased by **£8,841** to reflect current costs.
- The postage and customer CDs DVDs and web casting budgets have been increased by **£7,450** to reflect increased costs.

Support Service Costs

- 9 The 2025/26 budget factors in the proposed increase of **£3,148** in the SLA for the provision of Support Services, as detailed in the Item 7 report.

Income

- 10 The income budget has been increased by **(£228,844)** the major changes are as follows:

- The projected outturn as at 31 December 2024 assumes an increase of 133 cremations against the 2024/25 budgeted number of 2,200. In preparing the 2025/26 budget the estimated number of cremations has been increased to 2,300 and this is felt to be a prudent estimate. Along with the proposal to increase the cremation charges to £925 (inclusive of medical referee fees) the cremation fee income budget has increased by **(£257,500)**.
- Sale of urns budget has decreased by **£10,000**.
- The interest budget has decreased by **£27,656** reflecting the fall in interest rates compared to previous years.
- Other income budgets such as visual tributes, columbaria and use of chapel are over-achieving so budgets have been increased by **(£9,000)**.

- 11 Should cremation numbers be maintained in line with those projected for the current year, or indeed return to levels experienced in previous years, then there would be an additional surplus generated again next year.

Capital Budget Proposals 2025/26

- 12 The proposed 2025/26 capital budget, shown in the table below, will be financed through utilising reserves and is in line with investment requirements outlined in the Service Asset Management Plan and also the Bereavement Manager's report as agreed by the Committee at the September 2024 meeting.

Redevelopment Works	SAMP Cost £
Carry out installation of resin pathway around turning circle	25,000
Carry out re-lining of cremator x 1	87,600
Total	112,600

Surplus Redistribution

13 As detailed in the Budget Strategy Report to the Joint Committee in September 2024, the surplus redistribution to Durham County Council and Spennymoor Town Council will remain the same for 2025/26:

- Durham County Council - £745,000
- Spennymoor Town Council - £186,250

Earmarked Reserves

14 The net transfer to the Masterplan Memorial Garden Reserve next year is budgeted to be £5,000.

15 The transfer to the Small Plant Reserve next year is budgeted in line with the 2024/25 level at £2,000.

16 The net transfer from the Cremator Reline Reserve next year is budgeted at £62,600 to cover the capital work (re-lining of cremator) mentioned earlier in the report.

17 After consideration of all the above factors, £300,651 is budgeted to transfer to the Major Capital Works reserve. In line with the CDCJC Reserve Policy a transfer to the General Reserve of £68,653 is required in order to maintain a general reserve of 30% of the Joint Committees income budget. £25,000 is also required to fund the capital programme in 2025/26 for the installation of a resin pathway around the turning circle. These are offset by a forecast contribution from the revenue surplus of £394,304 which results in a budgeted net transfer to the Major Capital Works reserve of £300,651. The projected balance for the Major Capital Works reserve at the end of 2025/26 is £2,005,859, as shown in Appendix 2.

18 The estimated earmarked reserves and balances of the Central Durham Crematorium Joint Committee at 31 March 2026, taking into account the 2024/25 Quarter 3 budgetary control report and the proposed transfers to/from earmarked reserves in the 2025/26 budget are as follows:

- General reserve of **£721,413** an increase of £68,653 (10.5%) from 2024/25.
- Retained reserves of **£2,241,415** a net increase of £245,051 (12.3%) from 2024/25 after funding capital investments planned for 2025/26.

19 The estimated total reserves as shown in Appendix 2 at 31 March 2026 are **£2,962,828**.

Appendix 1 - Implications

Legal Implications

The Central Durham Crematorium Joint Committee is required to set a balanced budget and the budget proposals contained within this report have been prepared in accordance with standard accounting policies and procedures.

Finance

The proposed budget for the Central Durham Crematorium is included at Appendix 2, with an explanation of year on year changes set out in the body of the report.

Consultation

None. However, Officers of Spennymoor Town 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 CDCJC

Equality and Diversity/Public Sector Impact Duty

The income 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

There are no specific climate change impacts associated with this report.

Human Rights

None specific to this report.

Crime and Disorder

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

Staffing

The employee budget provides for 9 members of staff.

Accommodation

None.

Risk

The budgets take into account the 2024/25 forecast outturn position and all known expenditure pressures and opportunities for efficiencies in the coming year. The budget also takes into consideration one off expenditure requirements for 2025/26. Knowledge of these pressures and requirements such ensure that risk is minimised.

Pricing sensitivity is essential to assess the competitiveness and reputation of the Central Durham 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 CDCJC, should ensure risk is minimised with regards to the achievement of the income budgets.

Procurement

None.