

Central Durham Crematorium Joint Committee



27 January 2010

Fees and Charges 2010/11



Joint Report of Terry Collins – Corporate Director: Neighbourhood Services; Stuart Crowe – Treasurer to the Joint Committee

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to set out details of the proposed fees and charges for the Central Durham Crematorium for 2010/11.

Background Information

2. Durham County Council's Fees and Charges Policy provides a framework for the County Council's approach to charging. The policy is built around the following principles;
 - Develop an entrepreneurial approach so that charges, whether new or reviewed, are properly considered, and consistent;
 - Compliance with the Local Government Act 2003, which gives wide general powers to provide and charge for "Discretionary Services";
 - Adherence with the financial duty to ensure income does not exceed cost;
 - Charges may be set, so that different people are charged different amounts and in different areas to satisfy local needs and objectives. (A service can also continue to be provided free); and
 - The income derived from charging will normally be used to offset the costs of providing the service being charged for, including support service costs.
3. In reviewing existing charges or setting of 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.

4. The County Councils general approach to fees and charges harmonisation post Local Government Review was to ensure that all statutory and regulatory fees and charges were being applied correctly and consistently; and to harmonise policy, standards of service and discretionary fees and charges where it was appropriate to do so, particularly where maintaining different charges was inequitable and unfair.
5. Bereavement services (including cemetery charges) were harmonised with effect from 1 April 2009. However, since the fees and charges for the Central Durham and Mountsett Crematoria had already been set by the two respective Joint Committees and communicated by that stage, discussions on harmonisation within these areas was deferred until 2010/11.
6. In accordance with the County Council's fees and charges harmonisation policy, it is the intention that Mountsett Crematorium will increase its fees and charges in line with those agreed for Central Durham.

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7. The proposals for 2010/11 have been developed in the context of the business case for the cremator replacement / mercury abatement requirements, considered by members at 25 November meeting, which assumed an increase in gross income of 3% next year.
8. The revised charges take into account the views of the Superintendent Registrar with regards to the local market and customer impact from the proposed increases, together with benchmarking data on the charges levied in other neighbouring facilities. Significantly, the proposals seek to harmonise policy with regards to charges with that of the Mountsett Crematorium.
9. The following revisions to fees and charges are proposed:

Cremation

Adult Cremation fees are increased by 4.4% to £400 in 2010/11. This results in an increase of £17 per adult over the age of 16 years. Fees levied for 2010/11 (inclusive of medical referees and environmental surcharge) are therefore proposed at £470.

It is proposed that charges for children up to 1 month and up to 16 years are removed.

Book of Remembrance

The charges for the book of remembrance have not been reviewed for a number of years. In that time, costs in relation to calligraphy have increased significantly. It is therefore proposed that fees in respect of the Book of Remembrance are increased from £34 to £36 (5.88%) to cover these costs.

It is proposed that all other fees and charges remain the same as in 2009/10. A full schedule of the proposed fees and charges for the Central Durham Crematorium is shown in Appendix 2, with benchmarking comparison data shown in Appendix 3 for members' information.

Recommendations and reasons

10 It is recommended that:-

- Members of the Joint Committee note and approve the proposed fees and charges.
- The approved fees and charges are incorporated into the 2010/11 budget.

Background Papers

2009/10 Budget and Financial Monitoring Reports
Cremator Replacement / Mercury Abatement Options Appraisal Report
2010/11 Budget Working Papers
DCC Fees and Charges Policy

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Appendix 1: Implications

Finance

A detailed schedule of the proposed fees and charges for the Central Durham Crematorium is included at Appendix 2. These proposals have been factored into budget projections for 2010/11 and are in line with the financial business case developed for the planned cremator replacement, as considered by the Joint Committee in November 2009.

Staffing

There are no staffing implications associated with this report.

Equality and Diversity

The proposals set out in this report seek to harmonise fees and charges policy with the Mountsett Crematorium and provide equity of treatment / access across County Durham.

Accommodation

There are no Accommodation implications associated with this report.

Crime and Disorder

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

Sustainability

The proposals set out in the report are in line with the financial business case developed for the planned cremator replacement, providing sufficient funding to sustain both the operating costs and asset management investment needs of the Central Durham Crematorium.

Human Rights

There are no Human Rights implications associated with this report.

Localities and Rurality

There are no Localities and Rurality implications associated with this report.

Young People

There are no Young People implications associated with this report.

Consultation

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

Health

There are no Health implications associated with this report.