

## **Mountsett Crematorium Joint Committee**

**30 January 2015**

**Fees and Charges 2015/16**



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### **Joint Report of Terry Collins – Corporate Director: Neighbourhood Services; Don McLure – Corporate Director: Resources & Treasurer to the Joint Committee**

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#### **Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to set out details of the proposed fees and charges for Mountsett Crematorium for 2015/16.

#### **Background Information**

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. The impacts of decisions made by the Central Durham Crematorium Joint Committee also need to be carefully considered. 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 the Central Durham Crematorium.

#### **Fees and Charges 2015/16**

4. 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 are key factors in considering any increases for 2015/16.
5. A major redevelopment of the chapel and book of remembrance areas of the Central Durham Crematorium is scheduled to be undertaken in 2015. The Central Durham Crematorium Joint Committee met on 21 January 2015 to set their budget and fees and charges for 2015/16. Taking into account the potential disruption that this may cause and in lieu of the fact that there was a 15% increase applied in 2014/15, the decision was taken to hold fees and charges at their current levels and not to increase to the current fees and charges for 2015/16. This decision will be welcomed by local funeral directors and customers.

6. In lieu of the decisions reached by the Central Durham Crematorium, and taking into account the desire to maintain harmonised charges across County Durham, plus the fact that there was a 15% increase in 2014/15, it is proposed follow suit and hold charges at the Mountsett Crematorium. Similar reciprocal arrangements would apply if a major refurbishment / redevelopment was being undertaken at the Mountsett facility.

### ***Cremation Charges***

7. Adult cremation fees were increased by 15% in 2014/15 to bring the fees in line with average charges levied by other facilities in the region. This represented a monetary increase of £80 per adult over the age of 16 years.
8. The projected number of cremations in 2014/15 is 1,282 which will be 91 more than the 1,191 cremations delivered in 2013/14 and 132 higher than the budgeted position of 1,150.
9. The proposed 2015/16 fees and charges for the neighbouring crematoria is attached at Appendix 3 and the average total cost is calculated at Appendix 4, which indicates an average cremation fee of £645 (inclusive of medical referees fees and environmental surcharge) next year. Holding the current charges will mean that the total cremation fees levied for the Mountsett Crematorium in 2015/16 (inclusive of medical referee fees) remains at £630.
10. 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 £215.

### ***Book of Remembrance***

11. There is no proposed increase to the Book of Remembrance fee for 2015/16.
12. 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. As can be seen, the cremation fees continue to compare well in relation to neighbouring crematoria, indicating a mid-price range position within the benchmarking group, but below the regional average.

### **Recommendations and Reasons**

10. It is recommended that:-
  - Members of the Joint Committee note and approve the proposed fees and charges at Appendix 2 effective from 1 April 2015, which seek to maintain charges at existing levels.
  - The proposed fees and charges are incorporated into the 2015/16 budget.

### **Background Papers**

2014/15 Budget and Financial Monitoring Reports  
2015/16 Budget Working Papers

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **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 2015/16.

### **Staffing**

There are no staffing implications associated with this report.

### **Risk**

The sensitive pricing of services is essential to maintain the competitiveness and reputation of Mountsett Crematorium in the current economic climate. The proposed standstill in 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 Mountsett Crematorium Joint Committee, 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.

### **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 Central Crematorium and provide equity of treatment / access across County Durham. An equality Impact assessment screening has been undertaken which has revealed no issues.

### **Accommodation**

There are no Accommodation implications associated with this report.

### **Crime and Disorder**

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

### **Human Rights**

None

### **Consultation**

None. However, officers of Gateshead Council were provided with a copy of the report and given opportunity to comment/raise any detailed questions on the content of the report in advance of circulation to members of the Mountsett Crematorium Joint Committee.

### **Procurement**

None

### **Disability Discrimination Act**

None

### **Legal Implications**

None