

Central Durham Crematorium Joint Committee



27 January 2016

Fees and Charges 2016/17



Joint Report of Terry Collins – Corporate Director: Neighbourhood Services; Don McLure – Corporate Director: Resources & 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 2016/17.

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. Members will recall that the charges were not increased in 2015/16 in recognition of the major works that were being undertaken last year to the Chapel areas.

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4. The inflationary and cost pressures facing the crematorium, along with the views of the Bereavement Services Manager with regards to the local market and customer impact from any proposed increase, benchmarking data on the charges levied in other neighbouring facilities, plus the fact that the crematorium has recently undertaken a major refurbishment of the chapel as part of the Phase 3 works are key factors in considering any increases in charges for 2016/17.
5. Taking the above into consideration, particularly the redevelopment works that have been undertaken and the fact that there was no increase made in 2015/16, it is proposed that there is to be a £20 (3.3%) increase to the current cremation fees and charges for 2016/17.
6. **Cremation Charges** The projected number of cremations in 2015/16 is 2,240 which will be 47 lower than the 2,287 cremations delivered in 2014/15, but 120 more than the budgeted position of 2,120. For 2016/17 budget setting purposes it has been assumed there will be 2,200 cremations next year.

7. The current 2015/16 fees and charges for the neighbouring crematoria, including the average total charge levied is attached at Appendix 3, which indicates an average cremation fee of £681 (inclusive of medical referees fees and environmental surcharge where appropriate). Increasing the current charges by £20 will mean that the total cremation fees levied for the Central Durham Crematorium in 2016/17 (inclusive of medical referee fees) will be £650. The charge currently levied by the Coundon Crematorium is £728.
8. 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 £270.
9. The charges levied for provision of an organist has been increased by £10 to £35 per service, in recognition of the updated costs of providing this service. Most services do not use an organist. This additional charge has no impact on the Crematorium revenue as this increase is paid directly by the funeral director to the organist.

Book of Remembrance

10. There is a proposed increase of £3 from £50 to £53 for a 2 line entry in the Book of Remembrance for 2016/17 to reflect increasing calligraphy costs.
11. 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. As can be seen the cremation fees continue to compare well in relation to the neighbouring crematoria, indicating a below average position within the benchmarking group.

Recommendations and Reasons

12. It is recommended that:

- (i) Members of the Joint Committee note and approve the proposed fees and charges at Appendix 2 effective from 1 April 2016, which seeks to increase charges by £20 (3.3%) per cremation from £630 to £650.
- (ii) The proposed fees and charges are incorporated into the 2016/17 budget.

Background Papers

2015/16 Budget and Financial Monitoring Reports
2016/17 Budget Working Papers

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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 proposals for 2016/17.

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 the Central Durham Crematorium in the current economic climate. The proposed increases in fees and charges next year will ensure that the charges remain competitive in comparison with neighbouring facilities at a time when significant redevelopment works have been undertaken, and this, together with a prudent assumption in terms of the number of cremations undertaken next year, plus the strong reputation of the CDCJC and the enhancements that the Phase 3 works have brought in terms of the service offer, 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 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 Spennymoor Town 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 Central Durham Crematorium Joint Committee.

Procurement

None.

Disability Discrimination Act

None.

Legal Implications

None.