

Mountsett Crematorium Joint Committee

29 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. This report sets out details of the proposed fees and charges for Mountsett 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. 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.

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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, customer impact from any proposed increase and benchmarking data on the charges levied in other neighbouring facilities plus the recent decision by Members to replace the current cremators are key factors in considering any increases for 2016/17.
5. In lieu of the decisions to move ahead with the Cremator replacement project and 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 no increase 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.

Cremation Charges

6. The projected number of cremations in 2015/16 is 1,320 which is the same as the number of cremations delivered in 2014/15 and 90 higher than the budgeted position of

1,230. For 2016/17 budget setting purposes it has been assumed there will be 1,300 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). Increasing the current charges by £20 will mean that the total cremation fees levied for the Mountsett Crematorium in 2016/17 (inclusive of medical referee fees) will be £650.
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 for child cremations.
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. 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 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 below average position within the benchmarking group.

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 2016, which seeks to increase charges by £20 (3.3%) per cremation from £630 to £650.
- 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 Mountsett 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 Mountsett Crematorium in the current economic climate. The proposed increase 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