

Mountsett Crematorium Joint Committee

30 January 2017

Fees and Charges 2017/18



Joint Report of Ian Thompson – Corporate Director: Regeneration and Local Services; John Hewitt – 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 2017/18.

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.
4. Members will recall that the cremation fees and charges were increased by £20 (3.3%) in 2016/17.

Fees and Charges 2017/18

5. 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 decision to replace the current cremators are key factors in considering any increases in charges for 2017/18.
6. Taking the above into consideration, particularly the crematorium replacement works that will be undertaken in 2017 it is proposed that there is no increase to the current fees and charges for 2017/18.
7. Members may recall that Mountsett Crematorium Joint Committee did not increase their fees and charges in 2015/16 when the major redevelopment works were being carried out at Central Durham Crematorium. In lieu of the decision to move ahead with the

Mountsett cremator replacement project in 2017 and taking into account the desire to maintain harmonised charges across County Durham the Central Durham Crematorium Joint Committee are also proposing to hold the current cremation fees and charges for 2017/18.

Cremation Charges

8. The projected number of cremations in 2016/17 is 1,385 which is the 89 more than the number of cremations delivered in 2015/16 and 85 higher than the budgeted position of 1,300. For 2017/18 budget setting purposes it has been assumed there will be 1,300 cremations next year.
9. The current 2016/17 fees and charges for the other neighbouring crematoria across the region, including the average total charge levied, is attached at Appendix 3, which indicates an average cremation fee of £716 (inclusive of medical referees fees and environmental surcharge). Holding the current charges will mean that the total cremation fees levied for the Mountsett Crematorium in 2017/18 (inclusive of medical referee fees) remains at £650. Modest increases in the last few years, plus the freeze in charges in 2015/16 have resulted in the Mountsett and Central Durham Crematoria charges now being the lowest in comparison with our neighbouring facilities.
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 £270.
11. It is proposed to increase the charge for use of the Crematorium chapel only from £100 to £600 between 10.00am and 2.30pm and from £100 to £200 prior to 10.00am or after 2.30pm for the reasons outlined earlier in the Bereavement Manager's report.
12. All other fees and charges at the Crematorium are proposed to remain the same levels as 2016/17.
13. 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.

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 2017, which seeks to maintain the cremation at existing levels.
- The proposed fees and charges are incorporated into the 2017/18 budget.

Background Papers

2016/17 Budget and Financial Monitoring Reports
2017/18 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 2017/18.

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