

Mountsett Crematorium Joint Committee

30 January 2018

Fees and Charges 2018/19



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 2018/19.

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. The cremation fees and charges were not increased in 2017/18 in recognition of the major works that were being undertaken in the current year.

Fees and Charges 2018/19

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 are key factors in considering any increases in charges for 2018/19.
5. Taking the above into consideration, particularly the redevelopment works that have been undertaken and the fact that there was no increase made in 2017/18, it is proposed that there is a £30 (4.6%) increase to the current cremation fees and charges for 2018/19.

Cremation Charges

6. The projected number of cremations in 2017/18 is 1,356 which is 83 less than the number of cremations delivered in 2016/17 but 56 higher than the budgeted position of 1,300. For 2018/19 budget setting purposes it has been assumed there will be 1,300 cremations next year.
7. The current 2017/18 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 £755 (inclusive of medical referees fees and environmental surcharge). Increasing the current charges by £30 will mean that the total cremation fees levied for the Mountsett Crematorium in 2018/19 (inclusive of medical referee fees) will increase to £680.
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 for these services range from £0 to £300.
9. All other fees and charges at the Crematorium are proposed to remain at the same levels as 2017/18.
10. 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 2018, which seeks to increase the cremation by £30 (4.6%) per crematorium from £650 to £680.
- The proposed fees and charges are incorporated into the 2018/19 budget.

Background Papers

2017/18 Budget and Financial Monitoring Reports

2018/19 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 2018/19.

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 Central Durham 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