

Central Durham Crematorium Joint Committee

31 January 2018

Fees and Charges 2018/19



Joint Report of Ian Thompson – Corporate Director: Regeneration and Local Services; John Hewitt – Corporate Director: Resources and Treasurer to the Joint Committee

Purpose of the Report

1. This report sets out details of the proposed fees and charges for the Central Durham 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. Members of the Joint Committee will recall that following Local Government Review in 2009 the fees and charges at the Central Durham Crematorium were harmonised with the charges at Mountsett Crematorium. The cremation fees and charges were not increased in 2017/18 in recognition of the major works that were being undertaken at Mountsett Crematorium 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, customer impact from any proposed increase and benchmarking data on the charges levied in other neighbouring facilities, plus the fact that the crematorium has recently undertaken major redevelopments are key factors in considering any increases for 2018/19.
5. Members may recall at the September 2017 meeting Members approved a £30 (4.6%) increase to the current crematoria fees and charges for 2018/19 as part of the Budget Strategy for the Joint Committee.
6. 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 Members endorse the £30 (4.6%) increase to the current cremation fees and charges for 2018/19.

Cremation Charges

7. The projected number of cremations in 2017/18 is 2,289 which will be 35 lower than the 2,324 cremations delivered in 2016/17, but 89 more than the budgeted position of 2,200. For 2018/19 budget setting purposes it has been assumed there will be 2,200 cremations next year. This is a prudent forecast.
8. The current 2017/18 fees and charges for crematoria across the region, including the average charges levied is attached at Appendix 3, which indicates an average cremation fee of £755 (inclusive of medical referees fees and environmental surcharge where appropriate). Increasing the current charges by £30 will mean that the total cremation fees levied for the Central Durham Crematorium in 2018/19 (inclusive of medical referee fees) increase to £680. Modest increases in the last few years have resulted in the Central Durham and Mountsett Crematoria charges now being the lowest in comparison with all other neighbouring facilities in the region.
9. 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 £300.
10. All other fees and charges at the Crematorium are proposed to remain at the same levels as 2017/18.
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.

Recommendations and Reasons

12. 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 cremation charges by £30 (4.6%) per cremation 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 Strategy Report – CDCJC Report – September 2017
2018/19 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 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 the Central Durham 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 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.