



Author/Lead Officer of Report: Lisa Firth, Head of Parks & Countryside

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Report of: Executive Director, Place

Report to: Councillor Mary Lea, Cabinet Member for Culture, Parks & Leisure.

Date of Decision: 31st March 2019

Subject: Budget Savings – Fee increases Bereavement Services

Is this a Key Decision? If Yes, reason Key Decision:-	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
- Expenditure and/or savings over £500,000		<input type="checkbox"/>		
- Affects 2 or more Wards		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Which Cabinet Member Portfolio does this relate to? Culture, Parks & Leisure.				
Which Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee does this relate to? Economic and Environmental Wellbeing Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee				
Has an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) been undertaken?	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
If YES, what EIA reference number has it been given? 415				
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If YES, give details as to whether the exemption applies to the full report / part of the report and/or appendices and complete below:-				
<i>“The (report/appendix) is not for publication because it contains exempt information under Paragraph (insert relevant paragraph number) of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).”</i>				

Purpose of Report:

The purpose of this report is to propose increasing charges for council bereavement services from 1st April 2019 as follows:

- Exclusive rights to the grave plot from £925 to £950 (3%)
- Interment (burial) from £1,090 to £1,200 (10%)
- Cremations from £840 to £900 (7%)

The report also identifies other proposed variations to existing cremation fees.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that:

- Charges and fees for bereavement services fees are increased or varied as set out in the table in this report with effect from 1 April 2019.

Background Papers:

(Insert details of any background papers used in the compilation of the report.)

Lead Officer to complete:-		
1	I have consulted the relevant departments in respect of any relevant implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist, and comments have been incorporated / additional forms completed / EIA completed, where required.	Finance: Janinne Scarborough
		Legal: Andrea Simpson
		Equalities: Annemarie Johnston
<i>Legal, financial/commercial and equalities implications must be included within the report and the name of the officer consulted must be included above.</i>		
2	EMT member who approved submission:	Laraine Manley
3	Cabinet Member consulted:	Councillor Mary Lea
4	I confirm that all necessary approval has been obtained in respect of the implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist and that the report has been approved for submission to the Decision Maker by the EMT member indicated at 2. In addition, any additional forms have been completed and signed off as required at 1.	
	Lead Officer (s) Name: Lisa Firth Ian Turner	Job Title: Head of Parks & Countryside Medico-Legal Centre Manager
Date: 15th March 2019		

1.0 Background

- 1.1 Bereavement Services undertakes cremations and burials across the city of Sheffield, managing and maintaining 16 cemeteries and 2 crematoria. Approximately 3000 cremations and 650 burials take place annually across these sites (with further specific services such as burial of cremated remains, purchasing and displaying of plaques and niche storage of remains also being offered).
- 1.2 Three of the existing cemeteries are closed to new burial plots and are only utilised when existing graves are reopened for further burial within. There is a single privately owned and managed crematorium within Sheffield at Grenoside. Burial is also possible within various churchyards across the city. These are not managed by Sheffield City Council.
- 1.3 Within the Council, the services provided by the Place portfolio are wide-ranging with a daily and citywide impact on the lives of most people and businesses in Sheffield. This includes a number of statutory obligations for managing and maintaining the development, safety, and cleanliness of the city, as well as some discretionary activities that we choose to provide because of the benefits for the city. The income from fees and charges funds the provision of this range of statutory and discretionary services.
- 1.4 The Council incurs cost inflation like any other organisation. By keeping overheads as low as possible and providing services more efficiently, the Council strives to mitigate inflation. However, the Council will seek to recover cost increases through adjusting prices where possible. These changes mean that we can continue to provide these services to the people of Sheffield without reducing the quality or scale of provision of those services.
- 1.5 The proposed fee price increases in Bereavement Services are set out in the table below. The fee increases are realistic and reasonable and are a preferable to cutting costs which would result in a reduction in the quality of service provided. The additional Income may be used to improve bereavement services facilities in cemeteries and crematoria, and enable facilities to be maintained to a high standard in future.

	Sheffield Average number per year	Sheffield current fees	PROPOSAL
Exclusive Right (adult graves) Purchasing the lease to a grave plot for your exclusive use for a number of years	390	£925 (50 yr lease)	£950 (+2.7%)
Interment (adult) Burial in a grave	650	£1,090 Over 16 yrs	£1,200 (+10%)

Cremations	3000	£840 17 over	£900 (+7.1%)
Other cremation fees:			
Cremation with no service or family attending (equivalent to cremation fee minus service fee of £300)		540	600 (+11%)
New category – non-viable foetus (privately arranged. Hospital arranged will remain no charge)		n/a	£100
Delete category and merge with 5+ child category: Stillborn child or child whose age at time of death did not exceed 5 years of age		No charge	
Revised Category: Stillborn child or child whose age at the time of death did not exceed 16 years of age		£96	£100 (4.2%)

- 1.6 Sheffield City Council's current fees have been benchmarked against other Local Authorities for the financial year 2018/19. The comparable fees for 2018/19 are set out in the table below compared to Sheffield's fees.

	Cremation	Burials	
		Interment	Exclusive rights
Rotherham (provided by Dignity)	943	1232	1036
Doncaster	743	940	1026
Barnsley	765	860	885
Chesterfield	750	824	1020
Leeds	884	1100	1424
Sheffield	840	1090	925

2 How does this decision contribute?

- 2.1 Providing a service that ensures that customers receive the highest standard of care during their bereavement contributes to the Corporate plan priority of the Council being an In-touch Organisation.

3 Has there been any consultation?

- 3.1 Sheffield City Council is not required to carry out consultation in respect of its bereavement service fees.

3.2 The change in fees will be communicated to all Funeral Directors in the city and published on the SCC website.

4 **Equality of opportunity implications**

- 4.1 As a Public Authority, the Council have legal requirements under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. These are often collectively referred to as the 'general duties to promote equality' with particular regard to persons sharing the relevant protected characteristics - age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. It is considered that the proposals comply with this duty as overall there are no significant differential equality impacts, positive or negative, from their implementation."
- 4.2 EIA 415 - Increase in Bereavement Services fees: Overall there are no significant differential, positive or negative, equality impacts from this proposal.
- 4.3 Sheffield has a higher proportion of population aged 65 years or over (16.2% or 92,000 people) than the other English Core Cities. This is projected to increase to 19% by 2036, with the number of residents aged over 85 nearly doubling.
- 4.4 The increase in fees may impact upon middle aged to older adults as they may be more likely to pay for the cost of the service. This includes those in receipt of state pension who may be on reduced income.
- 4.5 The increase in fees for exclusive rights and burial has the potential to have a more significant impact on certain faith groups due to their religious preference for burial (over other methods such as cremation). For example, people of the Muslim and Jewish faiths primarily use burial, Hindus and Sikhs solely cremation and people of the Christian faith use either method.
- 4.6 In the last 12 months (01.01.18 – 31.12.18) the total number of burials plus cremations was 3778. The total number of Muslim / Jewish burials (in dedicated Muslim / Jewish sections of the cemeteries) was 104. This equates to 2.8%. Muslim / Jewish burials overall accounted for 15.9% of burials in Sheffield City Council's cemeteries.
- 4.7 According to the 2011 Census the largest religion/belief held in the city is Christian (52.5%), followed by no religion (31%), Muslim (7.7%), Hindu (0.6%), Buddhist (0.4%), Sikh (0.2%), Jewish (0.1%), Atheist (0.1%). The remaining percentage has not declared their beliefs.
- 4.8 Sheffield will also publicise its fee structure on the internet to ensure firstly, that customers are aware of exactly what they are being charged (this may not be currently be known as often fees are included as part of an overall funeral package). In addition to this, it is felt that this will better ensure customers understand the proportion of any fees they pay that are directly related to Sheffield City Council charges and perhaps be able to make better informed decisions.

5 Financial and Commercial implications

- 5.1 The budget implementation plans (BIPs) approved as part of the City Councils 2019/20 Budget setting process identified the need for inflationary increases in fees and charges across the services provided by the Place portfolio, including Bereavement Services.

It is anticipated that increased income of around £260,000 will be generated from the proposals, using Sheffield average numbers of burials and cremations per year.

The costs of making the necessary changes to tariffs are expected to be minimal, however should any small costs arise (e.g. print costs of new price lists), these will be met from the Parks and Countryside service's existing revenue budget.

6 Legal implications

- 6.1 The Council is a burial authority with functions in respect of cemeteries and burial grounds by virtue of section 214 of the Local Government Act 1972; by the same section it is a burial authority for the purposes of the Creation Acts 1902 and 1952.
- 6.2 The Council's powers of management of its cemeteries are set out in the Local Authorities' Cemeteries Order 1977. Article 15 of the Order provides that a burial authority may charge such fees as they think proper for or in connection with burials in a cemetery, and must keep a table (available for inspection by the public at all reasonable times) showing the matters in respect of which fees or other charges are payable to them, and the amount of each such fee or charge.
- 6.3 Section 9 of the Cremation Act 1902 empowers a burial authority to demand charges or fees in respect of or in connection with cremation. Section 12 of the Act provides that a fee in respect of a burial service before, at or after cremation may be fixed in a table of fees respecting burials.

7 Alternative options considered

- 7.1 The Council could maintain its current tariffs. This option would not generate the additional income required to respond to budget challenges.
- 7.2 The service could cut costs rather than raise prices. This would result in a reduction in the quality of the service provided.

8 Reasons for recommendations

- 8.1 Income from burials and cremations is used to maintain bereavement services facilities in cemeteries and crematoria, ensuring customers continue to receive the highest standard of care during their bereavement and also to ensure that facilities continue to be maintained to a high standard in future.
- 8.2 Increasing income is preferable to reducing costs which would result in a reduction in quality of the service provided.

