



Report to Policy Committee

Author/Lead Officer of Report: Ellie Fraser,
Head of Bereavement and Coronial Services

Tel: 07970862606

Report of: *Ajman Ali*

Report to: *Communities, Parks and Leisure*

Date of Decision: *13/03/2023*

Subject: *Bereavement Services Fees and Charges*

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? <i>(Insert reference number)</i>				
Has appropriate consultation taken place?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Has a Climate Impact Assessment (CIA) been undertaken?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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:-				

Purpose of Report:

The Bereavement Services team proposes to increase fees by 4% for burials, cremations and memorials from 1st April 2023, with some exceptions (as outlined within the report).

The purpose of this report is to provide detail on, and seek agreement for, the proposed price increases.

Recommendations:

That the Communities, Parks, and Leisure Committee:

- Agree a general 4% increase (rounded up) to all Bereavement Services fees and charges from 1st April 2023, alongside the specific changes listed within the report.

Background Papers:

N/A

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: Kerry Darlow
		Legal: Louise Bate
		Equalities & Consultation: <i>Ed Sexton</i>
		Climate: <i>n/a</i>
	<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	SLB member who approved submission:	<i>Ajman Ali</i>
3	Committee Chair consulted:	<i>Richard Williams</i>
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 Committee by the SLB member indicated at 2. In addition, any additional forms have been completed and signed off as required at 1.	
	Lead Officer Name: <i>Ellie Fraser</i>	Job Title: <i>Head of Coronial and Bereavement Services</i>
	Date: <i>23/02/2023</i>	

1. PROPOSAL

1.1 Bereavement Services undertakes cremations and burials across the city

of Sheffield, managing and maintaining 16 cemeteries, 1 garden of remembrance and 2 crematoria.

Approximately 3,000 cremations and 850 burials take place annually across these sites (with further specific services such as burial of cremated remains, purchasing and displaying of memorials and niche storage of remains also being offered).

1.2 The services provided by Operational Services are wide-ranging with a daily and citywide impact on the lives of most people and business in Sheffield. This includes a number of statutory obligations for managing the development, safety, and cleanliness of the city, as well as some discretionary activities that we chose 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 Bereavement Services has benchmarked its fees and charges against neighbouring authorities and other core cities as detailed in appendix one. Neighbouring authorities are expected to increase their fees between 4% and 10% in April 2023 with at least one authority also adding a temporary additional fuel surcharge to their cremation fee.

Bereavement services proposes to increase its fees by 4% for burials, cremations and memorials (rounded up to maintain a simple pricing structure), with some exceptions as outlined in appendix two. Once prices have been rounded accordingly the average percentage increase across all items, excluding the exceptions listed, is 4.4%.

1.5 Bereavement Service proposes to increase fees from 1st April 2023, honouring prices on existing bookings until 16th April 2023, which is in accordance with the Funerals Market Investigation Order 2021 which places a requirement on cremation authorities to publish and circulate changes to prices a minimum of 15 days before the changes take effect.

2. HOW DOES THIS DECISION CONTRIBUTE ?

2.1 Every resident in Sheffield will experience a bereavement at some time in their lives. Providing a high-quality, professional, caring and dignified bereavement service contributes to the wellbeing of Sheffield's population, building healthier communities and neighbourhoods.

Investing in and managing cemetery green spaces well adds a different offer to the city's green estate, connecting spaces and providing another opportunity to improve biodiversity and respond to the nature emergency.

Increasing fees to offset cost pressures protects the delivery of a vital service for residents and supports the council to deliver its statutory responsibilities in years to come.

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.
- 3.3 Wider consultation took place on the 2023-24 budget which included the principle of fees. No further consultation of specific groups is deemed necessary because the increase proposed has been calculated to offset inflationary budget pressures. This principle has been applied in previous years.

4. RISK ANALYSIS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

4.1 Equality Implications

- 4.1.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed for this budget saving proposal.
- 4.1.2 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. Overall, there are no significant differential, positive or negative, equalities impacts from this proposal.
- 4.1.3 There may be more of a financial impact on:
- older people due to the average age of people who die and those who pay for funerals
 - people with a religious/cultural belief that leads them to purchase more services/items
 - low-income families where the deceased has left no Estate
- 4.1.4 To minimise the impact, the review of prices charged by other providers ensures that our prices are comparable and fair. Applying a consistent percentage increase across all items means that no person or community will be disproportionately affected by these changes.

4.2 Financial and Commercial Implications

- 4.2.1 The Council continues to face significant financial challenges and must make difficult decisions about services that the people of Sheffield care deeply about.
- 4.2.2 The Council's 2023/2024 budget setting process identified the need for inflationary increases in fees and charges across the services provided by Operational Services, including Bereavement Services.

4.2.3 Mounting pressures due to inflation, particularly around energy costs will impact budgets and the proposed price increase will help to alleviate this.

4.3 Legal Implications

4.3.1 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 Cremation Acts 1902 and 1952.

4.3.2 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.

4.3.3 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.

4.3.4 The Funerals Market Investigation Order 2021 (Part 4) places a requirement on cremation authorities to publish and circulate changes to prices a minimum of 15 days before the changes take effect.

5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

5.1 Not increasing fees would lead to a significant reduction in the quality of services provided.

5.2 Increasing fees by more than 4% to match inflation would be beneficial for the development and delivery of the service but would provide an additional financial burden on bereaved customers when accessing this essential service at a time when cost of living is already increasing significantly.

6. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Raising fees as outlined is recommended in order to minimise the impact delivery cost increases will have on the service delivered to customers.

Appendix 1: 2022/23 Fee Comparison Table

Fee Comparisons (2022-23 figures)	Sheffield	Grenoside	Rotherham	Barnsley	Doncaster	Chesterfield	Leeds	Sheffield PROPOSAL (+4%)
Burial Fee. Price of Exclusive Right and first internment fee	£2380 (50 yr lease)	n/a	£2,268	£1931	£2185	£2260	£2897	£2430
Cremations	£975	£837 increased 04/01/23	£999	£898	£935 increased 04/01/23	£980	£1016	£1015

Appendix 2: Exceptions Table

Item	Current Fee	Proposed Fee	Reason
Direct to cremation	£650	£500	We are very expensive compared to other neighbouring authorities. It is proposed we reduce our fees to attract more business and become competitive with other crematoria. We need to attract 28 more cremations per year to achieve a neutral budget position. By matching fees it is predicted we can exceed this.
Saturday cremations	£975	£1115	We do not currently charge extra for Saturday services however we incur additional staffing costs to provide this offer. It is proposed that £100 is added to the standard cremation fee to help cover this additional cost. This remains competitive with other Crematoria.
Cremation of body part	£63	£150	We carry out very few of these services and the current fee does not cover our costs.

Ashes scattered in our gardens after cremation elsewhere: 1) No attendance 2) With attendance	1) £55 2) £100	1) £100 2) £150	We want to actively discourage people from using other Crematoriums and our Garden of Remembrance
Transfer of grave ownership	£55	£75	£75 is more reflective of the actual staffing cost incurred
Additional fee for coffins 600mm – 7600mm	n/a	£125	We currently only charge a standard coffin fee, and a casket (coffin over 7600mm) fee. This leads to funerals being booked for the largest coffin size available as standard which in turn leads to graves being dug larger than required unnecessarily. The consequence of this is that we incur substantial extra costs with regards to manual labour, H&S precautions and soil disposal. Charging an additional £125 for larger coffins will deter funerals from being automatically booked for a bigger size than is required and will help towards our additional costs where this is needed.
Concrete lining and additional digging fee	1) £845 2) £304	1) £1000 2) £350	We are currently losing money on the provision of concrete linings which are requested by some of the Muslim community. This increase is greater than the standard 4% but does not cover the full cost (which is substantially more). Further work is needed in consultation with the committee and the Muslim community to review the current service offer. In the meantime, this increase is recommended to help contribute towards the costs incurred.
Two or more internments at the same time	£50	£75	Where two people are buried at the same time there are additional statutory administration requirements. This increase is recommended to help meet the additional costs.

Burial of cremated remains: 1) No attendance 2) With attendance	1) £167 2) £220	£200 £250	At the moment our charge for this service does not cover our staffing costs to deliver these appointments
Burial of body parts	£860	£1355	This is not a common service. Where burial is required, we must inter to normal coffin depth and therefore the normal interment fee should apply.
Public graves	£545	£1355	Public funerals are less common than they used to be meaning that graves must now be refilled between funerals. This means the interment costs to the service are the same as for other funerals and as such the fee should match. This increase does not affect the public.

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Report to Policy Committee

Author/Lead Officer of Report: Ruth Bell, Head of Parks and Countryside

Tel: 07867 150747

Report of: *Ajman Ali, Executive Director – Operational Services*

Report to: *Communities, Parks and Leisure Policy Committee*

Date of Decision: *13th March 2023*

Subject: *Task and Finish Group for the Response to the Council’s Declaration of a Nature Emergency*

Has an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) been undertaken?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If YES, what EIA reference number has it been given? <i>(Insert reference number)</i>				
Has appropriate consultation taken place?	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has a Climate Impact Assessment (CIA) been undertaken?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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:-				
<p><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></p>				

Purpose of Report:

This report seeks approval to appoint a Task and Finish Group to oversee work to respond to the declaration of a Nature Emergency in Sheffield. Membership will be drawn initially from the Communities, Parks, and Leisure Policy Committee.

The Terms of Reference of the Group are appended to this report.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that the Communities, Parks and Leisure Policy Committee:

1. Approve the appointment of a Task and Finish Group on the terms of reference at Appendix A to oversee work to respond to the Nature Emergency declared by Sheffield City Council on 16th June 2021

Background Papers:

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

Link to Council motion declaring a Nature Emergency in Sheffield: [Sheffield City Council - Agenda for Council on Wednesday 16 June 2021, 2.00 pm](#)

Appendix 1 - Terms of reference for Task and Finish Group

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: <i>N/A at this stage</i>
		Legal: <i>N/A at this stage</i>
		Equalities & Consultation: <i>N/A at this stage</i>
		Climate: <i>N/A at this stage</i>
	<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	SLB member who approved submission:	<i>Ajman Ali, Executive Director – Operational Services</i>
3	Committee Chair consulted:	<i>Richard Williams</i>
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 Committee by the SLB member indicated at 2. In addition, any additional forms have been completed and signed off as required at 1.	
	Lead Officer Name: <i>Ruth Bell</i>	Job Title: <i>Head of Parks and Countryside</i>
	Date: <i>02/03/23</i>	

1. PROPOSAL

- 1.1 Sheffield City Council declared a nature emergency in June 2021. Work has been ongoing across the Council since that date to both continue our work which has a strong focus on nature and biodiversity and also understand the implications of new and future legislation on this agenda.

It is proposed that a Task and Finish Group review the action taken within the Council to improve biodiversity and nature recovery and set out the proposed approach to ensure that nature recovery and the environment are considered throughout the Council in decisions and policy setting going forwards.

2. HOW DOES THIS DECISION CONTRIBUTE ?

- 2.1 The Council's response to the nature emergency, it's approach to nature recovery and the environment need to be at the heart of the decision-making process and policy setting in the future. The Task and Finish Group will enable issues, challenges, links to other key agendas and how the matter can be approached to be debated by Members from across political parties.

The links between the nature emergency and climate change emergency are key and need to be strengthened. This group can work to understand and set out the links and future overlap to strengthen both agendas.

3. HAS THERE BEEN ANY CONSULTATION?

- 3.1 No consultation has been undertaken at this stage however the Council formally declared a nature emergency following a petition to Council and with support from all political parties.

4. RISK ANALYSIS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

4.1 Equality Implications

- 4.1.1 The Task and Finish Group will have Member representation from the 3 largest political parties, ensuring that advice is reflective of the political makeup of the Council.

Members will have the opportunity to discuss equality and inclusivity relevant to each of the session topics.

4.2 Financial and Commercial Implications

- 4.2.1 There are no direct financial and commercial implications because of

creating a Task and Finish Group. However, the group will consider the financial implications of policy advice provided.

4.3 Legal Implications

- 4.3.1 Policy committees may form Task Groups to assist in the completion of their duties. Policy committees may have no more than one appointed Task and Finish Group at any time.

4.4 Climate Implications

- 4.4.1 There are no direct climate implications as a result of creating a Task and Finish Group. However, climate implications and the links between the two emergencies and overlap in the response to them will be one of the areas the Group will consider. CIAs will be completed as required throughout the process and for any resulting actions.

4.4 Other Implications

- 4.4.1 The Communities, Parks and Leisure Policy Committee can establish limited Task and Finish Groups each year. Setting up a Task and Finish Group for the Nature Emergency will leave lower opportunity for the Committee's remaining annual work plan.

5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 5.1 An alternative would be to deliver a series of Knowledge Briefings for the Policy Committee. This was rejected as it would not enable constructive debate and advice to be provided to officers.

6. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 The Task and Finish Group will bring together a small, focused group of members to examine key challenges around the nature emergency and provide clear advice and direction to officers developing an action plan for the Council and city. Cross party representation will mean that political agreement is reached at an early stage of the process allowing the strategy to progress.

The group will feed back advice given, and progress on the work programme to the Policy Committee, so the Committee can make informed decisions on any future actions.

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Policy Committee Task and Finish Groups

Terms of Reference

Nature and biodiversity working group

Communities, Parks and Leisure Policy Committee

1. Purpose

- 1.2 The Council's Constitution outlines that Task and Finish Groups may be appointed by Policy Committees as appropriate to assist in the completion of their duties, save that each Policy Committee may have no more than one appointed Task and Finish Group at any time.

The purpose of such Task and Finish Groups is to examine in detail specific issues or aspects of policy, procedure or service, according to their remit. These groups do not take any decisions but inform the deliberations of the Policy Committee. They should provide regular progress updates to meetings of the Policy Committee

Details of the scope of this Task and Finish Group are set out in Section 4.

2. Membership and attendance

- 2.1 Membership is drawn initially from the Communities, Parks and Leisure Policy committee. This may be the whole Committee or some of the Committee. When not the whole committee, membership of the Group will be proportionate to the political representation on the committee.

The Nature and Biodiversity Task and Finish Group will consist of:

- 5 Elected Members and include 2 from the Labour Party, 2 from the Liberal Democrats party and 1 from the Green Party
- The Group will include at least one of the following members of the Communities, Parks and Leisure Policy Committee:
 - Chair
 - Deputy Chair
 - Group Spokesperson
- Councillors from each party will be appointed based on the topic for review. Members of the group may have a special knowledge or interest in the subject being considered.
- The Group may co-opt non-voting members who are not elected Members of the Council to assist in its consideration of an issue. This could include other council officers and representatives of other agencies for specific items.

- 2.3 Chair:

Task and Finish Groups will require a Chair to lead the review, chair meetings and report on progress. The Chair should be appointed based on the topic for review and can either be appointed by the parent committee or at the first meeting of the Task and Finish group.

2.4 The Task and Finish Group will be supported by officers from the relevant directorate. Officers will provide relevant material and take action notes for the Group.

2.5 Task and Finish groups do not meet in public session and are not subject to the Access to Information Requirements.

2.6 The Group will be accountable to the Communities, Parks and Leisure Committee and report on progress against the work programme to investigate the measures taken to improve biodiversity and nature recovery and any policy development in this area.

2.6 Behaviours:

- Members of the Group will be polite and respectful and encourage constructive debate across the range of issue.
- Prepare for each meeting by reading briefings and fact sheets relevant to the task and finish group purpose.
- Request further information to help shape thinking where it is practicable to provide this within the constraints of the timetable set out for the group
- Members of the Group will request that certain issues are considered by the Group where this is practicable within the constraints of the timetable set out for the group
- Members will liaise with their relevant political parties in advance of the meetings and be empowered to provide advice within the remit of the task and finish group

3. Meeting Frequency and Format

3.1 4/5 meetings will be held. Meetings will take place fortnightly and last for 2 hours. Meetings will be in person where practicably possible or online. Additional meetings can be requested by Group Members by exception and will be facilitated where practicable with the time constraints of the Group

3.2 The Task and Finish Group will seek to bring its work to a conclusion and submit a report to the Policy Committee by June 2023

4. Scope of the Task and Finish Group

4.1 The Group has been established to look into actions taken to date across the Council with regards to the nature emergency declared by full council in June 2021. The group will meet regularly for a time limited period to collate a report of actions being taken and any policy development in this area.

4.2 Specific Functions

- The Group will have oversight of the investigation of measures taken to improve biodiversity and nature recovery and any policy development in this area
- Raise awareness and share information about policies, strategies and, plans related to improving biodiversity and nature recovery.
- Feedback to the Communities, Parks and Leisure Policy Committee with findings about actions taken to date with regards to actions taken to improve biodiversity and nature recovery and set out the proposed approach to ensure that nature recovery and the environment are considered throughout the Council in decisions and policy setting going forwards.

4.3 Meeting work programme:

1. Setting the scene and understanding the challenges
 - a. What has been done to date?
 - b. The policy context – The Environment Act aims to halt species decline by 2030. All our statutory duties/targets/policies will speak to this target and will require strengthened policy and teams that are resourced, trained, empowered, and motivated to achieve this.
 - c. What would a Council wide approach look like?
 - d. Who will set the agenda for nature and the environment in the Council for the city?
2. Understanding the links to the climate change agenda and Local Plan
 - a. How has tackling climate change been approached in SCC
 - b. What can we learn from the response to the climate change emergency?
 - c. How does our approach to the nature emergency link to the local plan?
3. Who are our key partners in the city and region
 - a. What is their role?
 - b. What are their strengths/weaknesses?
 - c. What are we required to 'own' as a Local Authority, what can we look to our partners to do?
4. How have other authorities organised themselves around this agenda?
 - a. What are the internal structures/decision making processes?
 - b. How have they championed the agenda and what can we learn?
5. Future approach and options

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