

For publication

Review of Cemeteries Fees and Charges 2017/18 (HW410)

Meeting:	Cabinet
Date:	7 March 2017
Cabinet portfolio:	Health and Wellbeing
Report by:	Commercial Services Manager

For publication

1.0 Purpose of report

- 1.1 To set the Council's cemeteries fees and charges for the financial year commencing 1 April 2017.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that the 2017 / 18 fees and charges as detailed in Appendix A, be approved.

3.0 Report details

- 3.1 Chesterfield Borough Council are responsible for the management of four Council cemeteries; Brimington, Staveley, Boythorpe and Spital. The cemeteries service is managed within the Bereavement Services Section who also manage the crematorium on behalf of the Chesterfield, North East Derbyshire and Bolsover Councils.
- 3.2 Cemeteries fees and charges are subject to annual review, with revised fees and charges implemented on 1st April each year.

3.3 In preparing this report, the Council's adopted general guidelines on charging for services have been taken into account, along with the Council's latest budget forecast for 2017-18.

3.4 The Cemeteries Service is currently subsidised with approximately 77% of controllable costs recovered from fees and charges. In setting the annual fees and charges for Cemeteries, proposals in this report have taken into account;

- (a) The reduction in the number of burials taking place in recent years.
- (b) The need for the Council to achieve a balanced budget.
- (c) The level of fees and charges levied by other authorities in our family group and local cemeteries providers.
- (d) Broader value for money considerations.

3.5 A Comparison of charges has been carried out, reviewing fees and charges made by other authorities in our family group (table1) as well as those made by surrounding authorities (table 2).

Table 1: Fees of "Family Group Comparator Authorities 1 April 2015

Authority	Interment Fee	Exclusive Right of Burial	Exclusive Right of burial (CR)	Interment of cremated remains
Mansfield	£555.00	£1270.00	£710.00	£170.00
Chesterfield Borough Council	£760.00	£945.00	£340.00	£255.00
Ipswich	£770.00	£1200.00	£1200.00	£168.00
Worcester	£845.00	£765.00	£380.00	£320.00
Gloucester	£969.00	£660.25	£261.50	£209.50
Carlisle	£675.00	£1075.00	£375.00	£205.00
Newcastle U Lyme	£808.00	£1088.00	£538.00	£353.00

Average Fee	£768.00	£1,000	£543.00	£240.00
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Table 2: Fees of "Local" Comparator Authorities as at 1 April 2015

Authority	Interment Fee	Exclusive Right of Burial	Exclusive Right of Burial (CR)	Interment of Cremated Remains
Amber Valley Borough Council	£607.00	£536.00	£199.00	£113.00
Chesterfield Borough Council	£760.00	£945.00	£340.00	£255.00
Sheffield City Council	£845.00	£1,280.00	£550.00	£205.00
Derby City Council	£851.00	£1030.00	£195.00	£115.00
Derbyshire Dales District Council	£661.75	£588.80	£189.50	£139.20
Erewash Borough Council	£770.00	£625.00	£195.00	£175.00
High Peak Borough Council	£690.00	£616.00	£276.00	£175.00
North East Derbyshire District Council	£539.00	£425.00	£103.00	£213.00
South Derbyshire District Council	£389.00	£493.50	£238.00	£113.50
Mansfield	£555.00	£1270.00	£710.00	£170.00
Average Fee	£667.00	£780.00	£276.00	£167.00

**Note to Tables:*

"Interment fee" is the price for each burial in a grave and is payable in addition to the Exclusive Right of Burial Fee"

"Exclusive Right of Burial Fee" is the price to purchase the right of burial in a grave. The owner of this right must authorise each

burial in the grave and has the automatic right to be buried in the grave at the time of his or her own death.

"CR" – cremated remains

- 3.6 Members will note that the Council's fees, whilst being above the local average, are still below the family group average. Comparator authorities will almost certainly increase their fees again in 2017-18.
- 3.7 For 2016/17 the controllable cost of cemeteries is forecast to be around £294,000 and the income is expected to be approximately £220,950, meaning that there is a net subsidy of £73,050, and that income now covers around 75% of the controllable cost of the service.
- 3.8 Should members approve fees and charges for 2017 / 2018, as set out in Appendix A it is estimated that 79.3% of controllable costs will be recovered.

4.0 Human resources/people management implications

- 4.1 There are no human resource implications arising from this report.

5.0 Financial implications

- 5.1 The Council's general guidelines for charging include an aim to recover the full cost of the service except where:
- There is an opportunity to maximise income; or
 - Members determine that a reduction or subsidy should be made for specific reasons
- 5.2 The proposed fees and charges for 2017-18 therefore aim to ensure that:
- the service continues to move towards cost recovery
 - our fees remain competitive and affordable, helping to ensure we provide an affordable service and that burials continue to be an affordable option for the bereaved.

6.0 Legal and data protection implications

There are no legal or data protection implications arising from this report.

7.0 Risk management

7.1 Details of the risks associated with increasing fees and charges are given below.

Description of the Risk	Impact	Likelihood	Mitigating Action	Impact	Likelihood
Below expected take up of services generally	High	Medium	Income from cemeteries is largely subject to fluctuations in the death rate rather than price sensitivities. Proposed fees will be comparable with neighboring authorities.	Medium	Low
Users choosing to use facilities elsewhere	High	Low	Funeral directors prefer using Chesterfield's cemeteries and will influence the decisions of the bereaved. Families also have connection to local cemeteries and proposed increases still represent good value for money.	Medium	Low
Adverse publicity	High	Medium	Prepare good reasoning for the increase in fees and charges and that they remain below comparable authorities. Improve standards in cemeteries.	Medium	Low

8.0 Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)

- 8.1 A preliminary equality impact assessment was undertaken and no disproportionate impacts were identified for protected characteristics. However it is recognised that people on low incomes could struggle with the fees and charges.
- 8.2 Funeral payments are normally the first costs to come out of the deceased's estate. Where there is a shortfall a DWP Funeral Payment, an element of the Social Fund, provides help to people receiving specified income-related benefits and tax credits. This can provide a contribution towards the costs of a simple, respectful, low cost funeral. The payment covers the full cost of specified expenses (i.e. cemetery fees and charges) plus up to £700 for Funeral Director expenses.
- 8.3 It is recognised that the future of the Social Fund is uncertain, it is therefore recommended that the impact of any changes to the Social Fund is considered when setting fees and charges in future years.

9.0 Alternative options and reasons for rejection

- 9.1 Members could decide not to increase fees and charges, however, the cemeteries service is already subsidised and income is below projections due to a reduction in the number of people being buried.
- 9.2 A larger increase could be applied to fees, however, this may result in burial not being an affordable option.

10.0 Recommendations

- 10.1 It is recommended that the 2017 / 18 fees and charges as detailed in Appendix A, be approved.

11.0 Reasons for recommendations

- 11.1 To generate income to contribute to the costs of providing and maintaining a burial service.

Decision information

Key decision number	709
Wards affected	All
Links to Council Plan priorities	To provide value for money services

Document information

Report author	Contact number/email
Mike Brymer	Tel: 01246 345325 Email: mike.brymer@chesterfield.gov.uk
Background documents	
These are unpublished works which have been relied on to a material extent when the report was prepared.	
None	
Appendices to the report	
Appendix A	Proposed fees and charges for 2017 / 2018