

CHESTERFIELD AND DISTRICT JOINT CREMATORIUM COMMITTEE

Monday, 21st September, 2020

Present:-

Councillor Ludlow and Powell (Chair)

Councillors Blank
Holmes
Ludlow

Councillors J Innes
Mannion-Brunt

*Matters dealt with under the Delegation Scheme

39 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS
RELATING TO ITEMS ON THE AGENDA**

No declarations of interest were received.

40 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Kenyon and Cllr Watson.

41 **MINUTES OF THE JOINT CREMATORIUM COMMITTEE HELD ON
5TH JUNE, 2020**

That the Minutes of the Chesterfield and District Joint Crematorium Committee on 5th June, 2020 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

42 **BUDGET MONITORING REPORT – PERIOD 5**

The Senior Accounting Technician submitted a report on the Period 5 Budget Monitoring position as at the end of August 2020.

There had been additional expenditure on staffing, supplies and services caused by the COVID 19 pandemic. A decision had been taken to offer free webcasting to families during this time and therefore £13,486 of income had been forgone. Planned works had been delayed and so premises costs and capital expenditure were below profile. The committee heard that the increase in income was as a result of an

increase in the number of cremations and extended use of the chapel. It was noted that therefore there was a favourable profiled variance.

RESOLVED –

That the report be noted.

REASON FOR DECISION

To keep the Joint Committee informed about the financial performance of the Crematorium.

43 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 - EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED –

That under Regulation 21 (1)(b) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements)(Access to Information)(England) Regulations 2000, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by Paragraphs 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972' on the grounds that it contains information relating to financial or business affairs.

44 COVID-19 UPDATE

The Bereavement Services Manager presented a report to the committee updating the members on the impact of COVID-19 on the Chesterfield and District Crematorium. The committee heard that 213 excess cremations were carried out across April, May and June compared to the five-year average for that period but the figures for July and August were back down to a manageable level. The seconded staff had returned to their normal duties and the service interval times had resumed their usual pattern. The chapel capacity had been increased from 24 to 30 and a track and trace system is in place.

The free webcasting continued to be on offer to families and the enhanced cleaning regime was still in place, both of which would be reviewed at the December meeting of the committee.

The Chair congratulated the whole team on the difficult task they had carried out balancing the needs and ensuring the safety of both members of the public and the funeral directors.

It was noted that the risk assessment was a live document that would need continuous review and amendments.

RESOLVED –

1. That the report be noted.
2. That webcasting continues to be offered free of charge until review at the December 2020 meeting of the Committee.
3. That additional building cleaning services are retained until review at the December 2020 meeting of the Committee.
4. That the Seasonal Gardener be given additional hours over the winter months

REASONS FOR DECISION –

1. To reduce the risk of contracting Covid-19 at Chesterfield and District Crematorium as far as practicable.
2. To build resilience of the service in response to the Pandemic.
3. To continue to build on the good reputation of the Crematorium and to assist as many people as possible to attend the service virtually when they otherwise could not participate at all.
4. For the future development of staff and their retention

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BEREAVEMENT SERVICES MANAGER'S REPORT

The Bereavement Services Manager submitted a report on matters relating to the operation of the Crematorium.

Information on cremation totals, comparisons with national and regional data, and geographical information on which areas funerals had been received from in 2020/21 was provided in Section 2 of the officer's report.

The committee heard that the number of cremations from outside Derbyshire had increased disproportionately in the last period and this was thought to be related to the Crematorium's response to the COVID-

19 pandemic. In particular, the number of cremations from Sheffield had increased.

The ongoing investigation into the funeral sector by the Competition and Markets Authority had been interrupted by the pandemic but provisional conclusions had been published and this would involve a push towards more transparent pricing across the industry. Discussion took place around the rate of increase in cremation fees and the potential impact of fees on the number of cremations. The Bereavement Services Manager noted that price was the third highest factor in choosing a crematorium according to the satisfaction survey but that any substantial increase in cremation numbers would affect the service for local residents.

All of the scheduled repairs and improvement works had been recommenced or rescheduled. Good feedback had been received from the customer satisfaction survey and a rating of “reasonable assurance” had been received from internal audit.

Members acknowledged that the report gave confidence to the committee for the future. The Crematorium had dealt with difficult requests and high profile services but all had been dealt with in a professional manner.

RESOLVED –

1. That the report be noted.

REASONS FOR DECISION –

1. To keep the Joint Committee informed of matters relating to the operation of the Crematorium.

46 CHESTERFIELD CREMATORIUM FEES AND CHARGES 2020/2021

The Bereavement Service Manager presented a report recommending for approval a proposed increase in the Crematorium fees and charges for 2021.

The report provided a detailed service analysis, which included a benchmarking exercise with other local authorities across Derbyshire. The review identified that Chesterfield Crematorium was placed sixth out of nine local crematoria that were looked at, ranking them in terms of price from highest to lowest.

The high level of service provided by the Crematorium was also highlighted as a consideration when looking at the fees. The considerable cost of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic was discussed, which equated to approximately £45 per service. The potential for a decrease in numbers over next year or two as a direct result of the pandemic were also taken into account.

The committee was informed that the burden sharing scheme administrator CAMEO had recommended an increase in the environmental surcharge of £3. It was also proposed that the cost of memorials be increased for the first time in five years as suppliers costs and charges continued to increase.

It was noted by the committee that the COVID-19 pandemic presented a very delicate situation and the task of setting the fees and charges was as a result, very much a balancing act.

RESOLVED –

1. To approve Fees and Charges for 2021 according to Appendix A.
2. To increase Memorial Fees by 5%.
3. To increase Band A by 5% from £415.00 to £436.00
4. To increase Band B by 5% from £574.00 to £603.00.
5. To increase Banc C and other miscellaneous fees by 5%. BAND C would increase from £770.00 to £808.00.
6. To increase the Mercury Abatement Surcharge to £56.00 in accordance with industry guidance.

REASON FOR DECISIONS

1. To ensure sufficient funds to maintain high levels of standards for the bereaved, reach a balanced budget and to maintain sufficient reserve levels to meet any future pressures.
2. To provide an affordable option for cremation for all with below average fees and above average standards.
3. To ensure adequate funds are available to continue to respond to the Covid-19 in a Covid Secure way