

For Publication

## **Impact of Covid-19 Update**

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Meeting: Chesterfield and District Joint Crematorium Committee

Date: 14 December 2020

Report by: Bereavement Services Manager

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#### **1.0 Purpose of Report**

Reports were presented at the June and September 2020 meetings on the Impact of Covid-19 at Chesterfield and District Joint Crematorium.

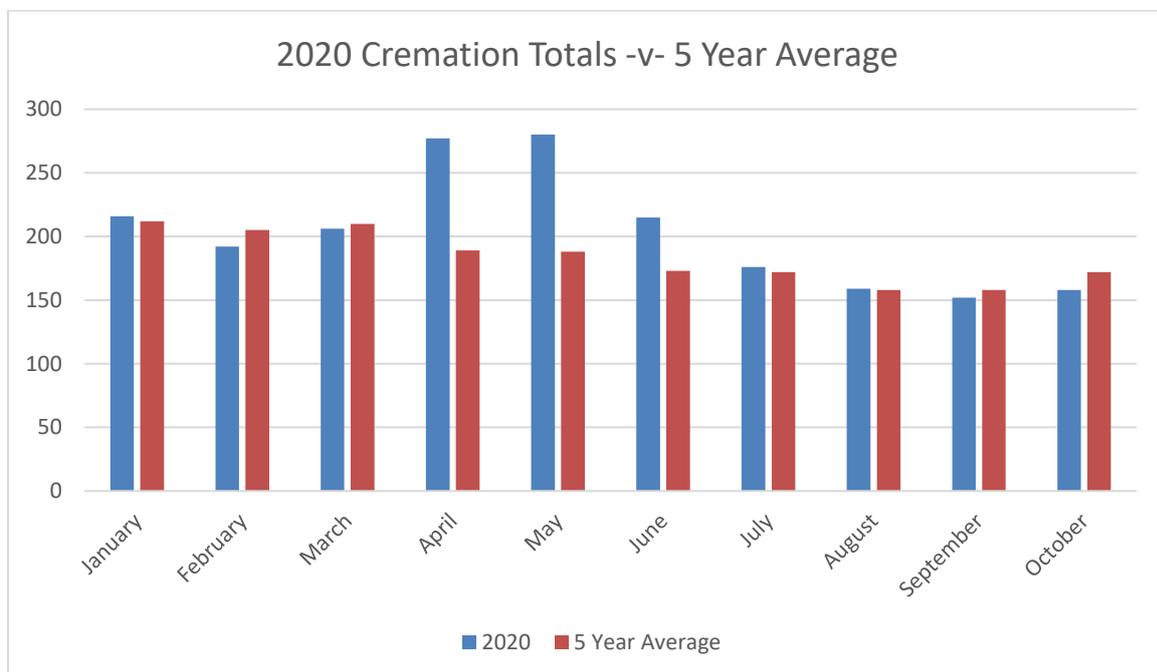
This report will update and inform Members on the current position with any key updates since the last meeting of the Joint Committee.

#### **2.0 Cremation Numbers During 2020**

From 1<sup>st</sup> January to 31<sup>st</sup> October 2020, 2031 Cremations have been undertaken at Chesterfield and District Joint Crematorium compared to the 5 year average of 1839 for the same period.

In summary, 192 excess cremations have been undertaken so far in 2020 compared to the 5 year average. Those majority of excess cremations took place in April, May and June.

The chart below shows, month by month, the 5 year average number of cremations (in red) compared to those undertaken in 2020 (shown in blue). Cremations taking place in July and August returned to manageable levels, similar to the 5 year averages. September and October saw cremation totals fall below the 5 year average.



The Manager regularly attends the Excess Deaths Sub Group arranged by DCC Emergency Planning and chaired by Public Health Officials. The predicted deaths for Derbyshire over Winter 2020/2021 are above the 5 year average but within the capacity of Derbyshire’s Crematoria and Cemeteries.

### 3.0 **Seconded Staff**

In recent weeks, four members of the Lead Authority’s staff who were seconded to the Crematorium during the first wave of the pandemic have returned to refresh the skills that they learnt.

Another two members of staff are on standby to return should the need arise. Refresher training shall continue to be arranged periodically over the Winter Period.

#### **4.0 Chapel Capacity and Public Health England Updated Guidance**

Government Guidance currently states that funeral services must have no more than 30 people attending, whether indoors or outdoors. The chapel capacity at Chesterfield and District Crematorium is currently 30. Current guidance allows both close family and friends to attend.

Ceremonial events linked to the funeral such as stone setting ceremonies or strewing of ashes must have no more than 15 people attending. Therefore, 15 people are now allowed to attend the strewing of ashes or stone setting within the grounds of the crematorium, an increase on the limit of 6 previously reported.

The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) (No. 4) Regulations 2020 came into force in England on 5th November 2020 and state that a person who is responsible for a crematorium or burial ground must ensure that the crematorium or burial ground is closed to members of the public, except for a) funerals or burials b) commemorative events celebrating the life of a person who has died and c) to allow a person to pay respects to a member of their household, a family member or friend.

The Crematorium Grounds remain open every day of the week, however, the Waiting Room, Public Toilets and Book of Remembrance Room remain closed at weekends with a Security Patrol, twice per day passing through. Usually, staff rotate to provide a patrol, book turning, light maintenance and litter picking service.

#### **4.0 Impact on Staff**

Clinically Vulnerable staff remain on site, unlike during the first wave of the Pandemic when instructed to shield at home.

Every step has been taken to protect Clinically Vulnerable staff and the updated service Risk Assessment is attached at Appendix A for information.

Administrative, Clerical and Supervisory duties continue to be done from home as far as practicable. Member's will appreciate that the nature of the service requires the majority of staff to be on site, however, for context, there are usually 2 members of staff working from home at any time.

Stress Risk Assessments were distributed in November 2020 which will be monitored and an action plan put in place to address any areas of concern.

Staff have been signposted to the Lead Authorities Employee Assistance Scheme which is a confidential counselling and information service which is available 24/7, 365 days a year and is there to assist with personal or work-related problems that may be affecting your health, wellbeing or performance.

As the high demands on the service began to slow from July onwards, most staff have taken their leave allocation with the exception of a small number of staff who have carried a handful of days over.

#### **5.0 Track and Trace**

Members will recall that from the beginning of August 2020, the Crematorium has been assisting the NHS Test and Trace by keeping a temporary record of everyone visiting the Chapel.

From September 24<sup>th</sup>, a QR Code Poster was downloaded and displayed in prominent areas for visitors to check in using the NHS Covid 19 App.

This method of scanning the code on arrival compliments the contact tracing card system that is still in place for mourners who may not have a smart phone.

At the time of writing, the Manager has not been informed by Health Authorities of an outbreak or a single case.

## **6.0 Webcasting**

Members will recall that the webcasting of services was being provided free of charge during the pandemic since 24<sup>th</sup> March 2020.

The cost to date to the Joint Crematorium is approximately £20,550.00 to the end of October 2020. The cost reflects the £30 charged by the supplier per service and ordinarily this charge would be passed onto the applicant via the Funeral Director.

This facility continues to be a considerable success with approximately 685 services broadcast over the internet to friends and relatives who were otherwise unable to attend.

It is therefore recommended that the free webcasting of services is extended (to be reviewed at the March 2021 meeting) particularly as the Chapel Capacity remains at 30 people.

## **7.0 Additional Cleaning Regime**

Throughout the pandemic, additional cleaning regimes have been in place with 1 full time equivalent cleaner rotating around the buildings cleaning surfaces and touch points including a clean of chapel in between all services.

It is recommended that the additional cleaning regime is kept in place to be reviewed in March 2021.

## **8.0 Recommendations**

- 8.1 That the webcasting of services is continued to be offered free of Charge to be reviewed in March 2021.
- 8.2 The additional cleaning regime is extended for review in March 2021.

## **9.0 Reason for Recommendation**

- 9.1 To continue to provide Cremation Services in a Covid 19 Secure manner.

Ross Fawbert  
Bereavement Services Manager