

For Publication

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

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Meeting: Chesterfield and District Joint Crematorium  
Committee

Date: 24 May 2021

Report by: Bereavement Services Manager

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

Reports were presented at the June, September, December 2020 and March 2021 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 Services During the Second Wave of Pandemic**

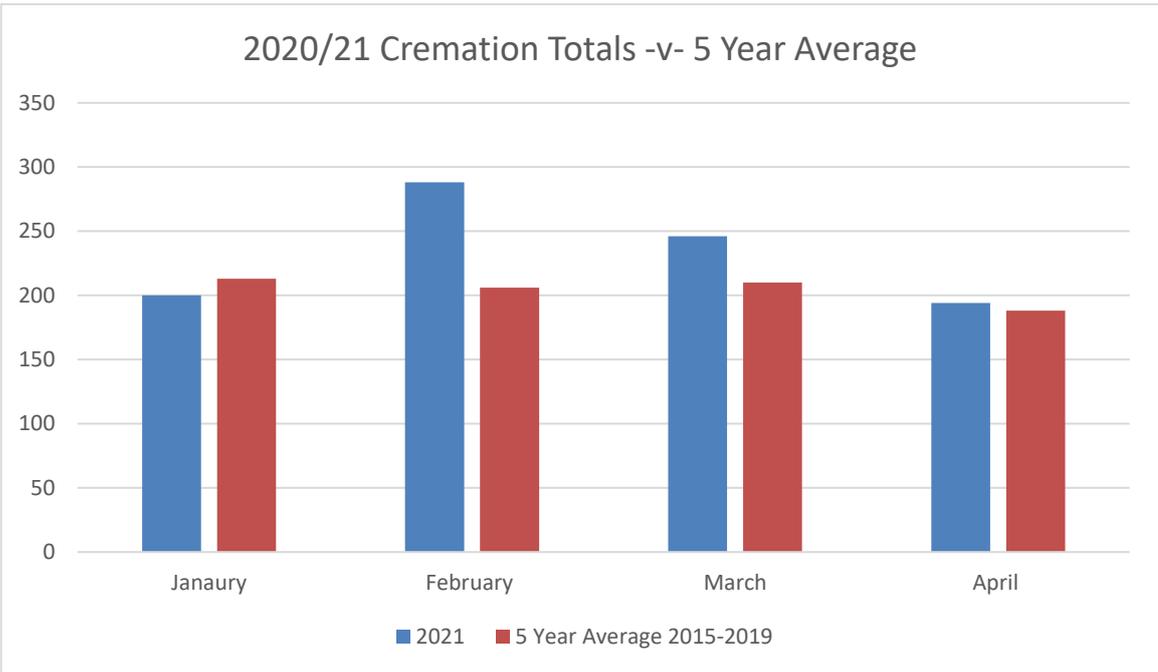
From 1<sup>st</sup> January 2021 to 30<sup>th</sup> April 2021, 928 Cremations were undertaken at Chesterfield and District Joint Crematorium compared to the 5 year average of 824 for the same period.

In summary, 104 excess cremations have been undertaken in 2021 to date, during the Second Wave of the Covid 19 Pandemic.

Most of those excess cremations took place in February and March 2021 and within the last Financial Year.

At previous meetings, Members had already been informed that in 2020, approximately 320 excess cremations had taken place during the calendar year. Therefore, sadly, since the beginning of the Pandemic, 424 excess cremations have taken place at Chesterfield and District Joint Crematorium.

The chart below shows, month by month, the 5 year average number of cremations (in red) compared to those undertaken in 21 (shown in blue).



### 3.0 Cremation Services and Chapel to 17<sup>th</sup> May 2021

At the March meeting, Members were informed that a decision was taken to reduce the service interval times from 8<sup>th</sup> February 2021 to increase capacity from 69 service slots to 101 service slots per week.

This proved to be the correct decision, coinciding with the expected uplift in deaths. Waiting times were kept at an acceptable level and the pressure on local mortuary and funeral directors remained manageable.

The Manager is pleased to inform Members that the diary did revert to its usual 40 minute intervals at the earliest opportunity – 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2021.

The limit on the number of mourners allowed to attend a funeral service whether indoors or outdoors remained at 30 people until 17<sup>th</sup> May 2021.

### **3.0 Funeral Service from 17<sup>th</sup> May 2021**

In a Press Release issued on behalf of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, on 3 May 2021, it was announced that the legal limit of 30 mourners will be removed, to take effect from 17 May at the earliest as part of 'Step 3 of the Roadmap out of Lockdown'.

On Monday 10<sup>th</sup> May 2021, the Prime Minister confirmed that the Roadmap is on track and planned easements will go ahead on 17 May 2021.

The number of people able to attend a funeral will now be determined by the number that can be safely accommodated in the venue with social distancing in place.

In light of the announcements, the following has been put in place at Chesterfield and District Crematorium from 17<sup>th</sup> May 2021, to be reviewed again from 21<sup>st</sup> June 2021.

- Chapel capacity increased from 30 to 38
- Outside speakers will be reactivated for up to 30 people

- Witnessed strewing of cremated remains increased from 6 to 15 people
- Current capacity limits for office reception, Book of Remembrance room and waiting room remain in place.

Additionally, the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) (No. 4) Regulations 2020 have been revoked by the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (All Tiers) (England) Regulations 2020, which in turn have been revoked by the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Steps) (England) Regulations 2021.

In England, article 10 of the No.4. Regulations no longer applies. This means that in England, a person who is responsible for a cremation or burial ground no longer has to ensure that it is closed except for funerals, burials or commemorative events. Until the Pandemic, one member of crematorium staff, working to a rota, would be onsite to open public toilets and the book of remembrance whilst carrying out patrol and light maintenance and litter picking.

The buildings are secure and alarmed, however as an additional precaution, a Security Company were employed to carry out two patrols per day on Saturday, Sunday and Bank Holidays since March 2020. It has been decided that we will continue with this arrangement and review after 21 June 2021. Some staff on the rota are vulnerable and it is an additional risk that is not deemed necessary just yet. Added to this, the Book of Remembrance is also available to view online and this service has proved a valuable asset with 'online views' increasing from 1500 in 2019 to 6500 in 2020 based on figures provided by the supplier. There has been little complaint or demand for the public toilets to be opened.

### **3.0 Update on Established and Seconded Staff**

Support from seconded staff from the Lead Authority has been reduced to one person, one day per week from May. During

April and May, a member of staff from Chesterfield's Visitor Information Centre provided clerical and administrative support.

Members were informed at the March meeting that all workers in Derbyshire who are involved in funeral services have been offered the vaccine including staff at the Crematorium.

Most staff accepted the first dose of the vaccine and have now received their second in April 2021.

Staff have also been directed to the Community Testing Facilities in Derbyshire for those who travel to work or have been strongly encouraged to order home testing kits online.

Vulnerable staff will continue to work away from the high risk, front line duties for now, again to be reviewed after 21 June 2021.

It should be noted that the second wave and excess cremations that took place in February and March was in addition to those months being historically the most challenging months of the year. The manager is very aware of the pressures that staff have been under. Staff are being encouraged to take their annual leave and support is available from various sources if needed.

#### **4.0 Webcasting and Additional Cleaning Regime**

It was agreed at the last meeting that authority be given to the Manager to continue or end the free of charge webcasting and additional building cleaning regimes when appropriate.

For information, both will continue until 21 June 2021 and reviewed again then.

#### **5.0 Recommendations**

5.1 That the report is noted.

## **6.0 Reason for Recommendation**

6.1 To inform members on the current situation at the Crematorium, the changes from 17<sup>th</sup> May 2021 and for reassurance that services continue to be delivered in a Covid Secure manner.

Ross Fawbert  
Bereavement Services Manager