

CHESTERFIELD AND DISTRICT JOINT CREMATORIUM COMMITTEE

Monday, 20th November, 2023

Present:-

Councillor Kerry (Chair)

Councillors	Barker	Councillors	J Innes
	Clarke		Staton
	Davies		Stone
	Holmes		Raspin

*Matters dealt with under the Delegation Scheme

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

No declarations of interest were received.

17 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Pickering, Yates and Dooley.

18 MINUTES OF THE JOINT CREMATORIUM COMMITTEE HELD ON 18TH SEPTEMBER 2023

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of the Chesterfield and District Joint Crematorium Committee on 18 September, 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

19 BEREAVEMENT SERVICE MANAGERS REPORT

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

Information on cremation totals and comparisons with national and regional data from 2019 to 2023 was provided in Section 2 of the Manager's report.

The Manager's report also provided a review of the staffing structure for the team responsible for delivering Crematory, Chapel and Grounds Maintenance/Gardening functions.

The Crematorium currently had one vacancy following the resignation of a Full Time Gardener. Considering this vacancy the Manager had reviewed the structure of the Gardening, Chapel and Crematory functions and made the recommendations as detailed in the Manager's report.

If the recommendations were approved an increase in staffing levels, from 5.5 FTE to 6 FTE's, would occur in this area over a two-year period of apprenticeship programmes. This would be reviewed in 2025/2026. The cost implications were shown in the table in section 4.1 of the Manager's report.

RESOLVED –

1. That the Seasonal Cremator Technician Gardener Post being made Full Time Permanent be approved in principle following the Lead Authorities Vacancy Control Process.
2. That it be approved in principle to freeze the vacant Crematorium Gardener Post and not recruit. It was recommended that this vacancy be reviewed at the end of Apprenticeship Contracts.
3. That the recruitment of a second apprenticeship in Horticulture at Bereavement Services be approved in principle following the Lead Authorities Vacancy Control Process.

REASON FOR DECISIONS

To ensure that the staffing structure was fit for purpose and to a capacity and resilience to deliver high quality bereavement services.

The Bereavement Services Manager presented a report seeking approval of the fees and charges for the crematorium from 1 January 2024 and approval for delegated authority to be given to the Manager to introduce an “Energy Cost Surcharge” over and above what has been budgeted for over the next financial year.

A full breakdown of the current and proposed fees and charges were shown in Appendix 1 of the Manager’s report.

It was noted that the proposed changes to fees and charges had been based on a robust estimate of the impact of cost increases and demand within the services;

- Increases in energy costs
- Inflationary increases resulting in increases to supplier costs and materials
- Increases in Cremator Service and Maintenance Contract costs
- NJC Pay Claim for 2023/24 resulting in higher than budgeted pay increase for staff
- A possible reduction in cremation numbers after excess deaths during the Covid 19 Pandemic

An annual table of standard cremation fees, shown in Appendix 2 of the Manager’s report, was published each year by the Cremation Society of Great Britain.

It was estimated that, should the recommended fees and charges be approved, an additional £109k income would be raised in the 2024/25 financial year. The Standard Cremation Fee would rise by around 6.7% to 7% if approved, from £905.00 to £965.00.

Councillor Holmes questioned the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) study into the funerals market in the UK and proposed a freeze on current charges. Members sought clarification on the CMA study.

The Bereavement Services Manager confirmed that the CMA study had reviewed the funeral industry as a whole and that Funeral Directors were included in the findings as well as Crematoriums. It was noted that crematorium fees and charges were set by this committee, but Funeral Directors set their own fees.

Members voted in favour to accept the proposed fees and charges shown in Appendix 1 of the Manager's report. Councillor Holmes' vote against the recommendation at paragraph 2.1 was recorded.

RESOLVED –

1. That the Fees and Charges for 2024 be approved according to Appendix 1.
2. That Members give delegated authority for the Manager to introduce and 'Energy Cost Surcharge' during 2024 with suitable notice being given to Funeral Director's before any surcharge was made. Any decision would be taken in consultation with the Treasurer, Chair of the Committee and Lead Authority Service Director.
3. That the National Recommendation of £59.00 Environmental Surcharge per cremation be adopted.
4. That the Medical Referee Fee be increased from £20.85 to £22.00.

REASON FOR DECISIONS

To ensure sufficient funds to maintain high levels of standards for the bereaved, reach a balanced budget and to maintain sufficient reserves levels to meet any future pressures.

21 DONATION FROM METAL RECYCLING SCHEME FOR 2024

The Bereavement Services Manager presented a report on the surplus derived from the recovery of metals following cremation. The proposal was for distribution to Charities for 2024.

At the September 2023 committee Members had agreed to leave the ICCM scheme in favour of another similar one, administered by RS Bruce Precious Metal Recycling in Sheffield, endorsed by the Federation of Burial and Cremation Authorities.

Whilst there was greater flexibility on how surplus donations were distributed, the Manager had retained the principle of nominating Charities that could demonstrate bereavement support to constituents,

It was expected that the recommended Charities would receive an equal share of around £18 - £20k this year.

RESOLVED –

1. That the nomination of SANDS, McMillan Cancer Support, Ashgate Hospice, Samaritans, Cruse Bereavement Care and Alzheimer's Society be approved to receive an equal share of the surplus.
2. That ACT Addenbrooks Hospital Charitable Trust, Teenage Cancer Trust and St Johns Ambulance not be nominated at this time.

REASONS FOR DECISIONS

1. The nominated Charities demonstrate bereavement support.
2. The nominated Charities demonstrate support to constituents of Bolsover, North East Derbyshire and Chesterfield areas.
3. An equally split donation to support as many eligible Charities as possible.

22 ESTIMATES OF EXPENDITURE & INCOME FOR YEARS ENDING 31/03/2024 ONWARDS

The Senior Accounting Technician presented to the committee the revenue estimates for 2023/24 to 2026/27 which were detailed in the appendices of the officer's report.

RESOLVED –

1. That the revenue forecast position for 2023/24 financial year be approved.
2. That the revenue estimates for 2024/25 through to 2026/27 be approved.
3. That the Capital schemes as detailed in Appendix 4b be approved.

4. In line with the recommendation agreed at the Joint Board meeting on the 12th December 2016 that a re-distribution of £600,000 to the Constituent Authorities be approved for 2023/24.
5. That the planned use of reserves be approved (para 7.0).

REASON FOR DECISIONS

To enable the Crematorium to set a balanced budget and maintain adequate reserves for 2023/24 and in future years.