

CHILTERNS CREMATORIUM JOINT COMMITTEE

MEETING 27TH JANUARY 2011

OPEN REPORT OF THE CLERK TO THE JOINT COMMITTEE AND THE SUPERINTENDENT

5.4 SCANNING OF MANUAL CREMATION REGISTERS AND DECEASED ON LINE

Contact Officer: Charles Howlett (01494) 724263

4.1 This subject was previously considered by the Joint Committee at its meeting on 15th January 2009 (minute 23 refers) when it was agreed to keep the matter under review.

4.2 In summary, increasing interest in genealogical research had led to a commercial company, Deceased On Line (DOL), developing an internet based system enabling people to search burial and cremation records for a fee (a percentage of which is payable to the authority). In order to do this all the records need to be computerised and Chilterns, like many other authorities, still has pre-computerisation manual records. These would have to be scanned to make them available for genealogical research, but the dual benefit would be safeguarding the records from gradual deterioration or catastrophic loss of the paper version and also making them easier for crematorium clerical staff to use compared to searching through paper records and moving large heavy registers around.

4.3 Substantially the Superintendent's view expressed at the time is unchanged; that the income generating potential of the DOL system is low relative to the costs involved in setting it up, and the risk in security and use of the manual records is also low. However, two years on there are a couple of factors which have changed.

4.4 In the report in 2009 it was highlighted that the alphabetical indexes would need attention sooner rather than later because they are deteriorating with use. The point has now come when these should be scanned before further deterioration starts to affect the quality of the images. The cost of scanning these would be an estimated £600 but it seems sensible to have the registers scanned at the same time for a total estimated cost of £4,500.

4.5 To use these scans on a computer would involve searching through pages similar to searching through the books themselves. To enable quick access by name, date or cremation number for example requires 'data capture' i.e. typing in of some of the data for each of the 62,000 records involved. It is estimated this would cost up to £7,500 more. This would make the computerised version much more 'user friendly' for clerical staff and would be necessary if the records were ever put on the DOL system in the future. With regard the DOL system, although specific details are unknown, from recent enquiries it appears the company are reducing their initial set up and annual subscription charges and focussing instead on only making a charge (to the authority) when an enquiry is made. This means it may become an attractive

option to the Chilterns sooner than it appeared when it was first investigated in late 2008.

4.6 An amount of £12,000 has been included in the budgets for 2011-12 should the Joint Committee decide to proceed.

RECOMMENDATION

- 1. That the manual cremation registers and indexes are scanned for an estimated cost of £4,500.**
- 2. That the Joint Committee decide whether or not to proceed with ‘data capture’ allowing quick access of the records (which would be necessary for the records to be put on the DOL system in the future date) for a further estimated cost of up to £7,500.**

Background Papers: None