

<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Pricing Structure</b>
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	<b>Clerk to the Chilterns Crematorium Joint Committee – Bob Smith</b>
<b>RESPONSIBLE OFFICER</b>	<b>Head of Environment – Chris Marchant</b>
<b>REPORT AUTHOR</b>	<b>Superintendent and Registrar – Charles Howlett</b>
<b>WARD/S AFFECTED</b>	<b>All</b>

## 1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To consider the fees charged for babies and children and a reduced fee for cremation only and the first diary slot of the day.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That members' consider whether they wish to make changes to the present pricing structure for the cremation of babies and children.
2. In line with national funeral trends to help address funeral poverty and an increasingly competitive environment an early morning cremation fee of £475 and a 'cremation only' fee of £358 be introduced with immediate effect.

## 2. Content of Report

### Babies and children

#### Background

2.1 This issue was last considered by the Joint Committee in 1991. At that time there was a scale of three different charges dependent on the age/size of the baby/child, ranging from a still born child to one month, one month to five years and five to seventeen years. This was still relatively common for cremation then and was considered to have originated for practical reasons from the days when burial was the only form of disposal and the cost was linked to the size of the grave which needed excavating and the amount of space used. But for cremation there is little difference as it takes nearly as long to cremate a child's body as an adult's and for a baby there are additional requirements as a special baby cremating tray is used to ensure there are ashes.

2.2 At the time the Superintendent also considered that whilst the death of a baby or child is, understandably, especially emotive he cautioned against dropping the fee altogether on the basis that for relatives and friends the death of a person over the age of 17 is obviously just as emotional as the death of someone younger.

2.3 In 1991 a survey of the five nearest neighbouring crematoria showed that all but one (that made no charge) had a similar scale of charges to the Chilterns although two of these did not charge for very young babies.

2.4 For all these reasons it was proposed and resolved to continue to charge at Chilterns for any cremation up to 17 years old although for a single rather than graduated fee.

### Current position

2.4 At Chilterns the single rate is currently £47 (8% of the adult fee, in 1991 it was 15%). Fortunately there are very few deaths in this age group (41 in the last year, of which 32 were of foetus and stillbirths, income £1,657). Although no comments have been received about this charge the officers considered it should be reviewed. A survey of twenty neighbouring crematoria has revealed that whilst the majority no longer charge for babies and children seven still do, including Chilterns, although three of these either don't charge or charge a reduced fee for under 5 years old. For over 5 years old to adult the fee ranges from £150 to £544. Three of those charging have the same fee structure and similar fee as Chilterns. At the majority of crematoria surveyed the adult fee starts at 17 years old.

### Future options

2.5 If members are minded to change the pricing structure for children's funerals there are a number of options including not charging, removing the charge for under five years old and increasing it for over five to seventeen years old (say, back to 15% of the adult fee) and/or starting the adult fee at 16 or 17 years old. However, if members decide not to charge it is recommended that the fee for multiple cremations of foetus from hospitals is retained because of the amount of paperwork involved.

### **Cremation only and first funeral of the day**

2.6 The practice of charging a reduced fee for the first funeral slot of the day is not new and although never before applied at Chilterns eight out of the twenty crematoria surveyed do it. A more recent change is a reduced fee for what is being referred to nationally as 'direct cremation,' although better and more accurately described as 'cremation only.' Distinct from a 'committal only,' when the funeral takes place in a church or other place followed by a short service at the crematorium for family and close friends, 'cremation only' means the body is brought to the crematorium without anyone in attendance and is taken through the chapel straight to the crematory for cremation.

2.7 In practice this has happened in a small way for many years but unrecognized as a specific disposal method of choice and charged at the standard cremation fee. Now there is a growing trend for funerals portraying a broader celebration of a life without the presence of the dead and these ceremonies are taking place away from the crematorium. Recently some celebrities, like the author Anita Brookner and singer David Bowie, have insisted on no ceremony at all which has given this method added publicity. And inflation busting increases in the cost of funerals has given rise to the return of the term 'funeral poverty' which has increased demand for more affordable options such as 'direct cremation.' With this service now being actively promoted by organisations like Memoria Crematoria, and the Greenacres Cemetery and Ceremonial Park group (which has a site at Beaconsfield), there are predictions that it could take up to 20% of the funeral market over the next few years.

2.8 Introducing early morning and 'cremation only' fees at the Chilterns Crematorium may result in a small loss of income, but whereas in the past not doing so may have deterred it from happening, in today's increasingly competitive environment people will simply go to other crematoria where the facility is available. Not only that, but offering a lower cost cremation helps to address funeral poverty. For these reasons the officers are proposing the introduction of an early morning cremation fee of £475 (£100 less than the adult cremation fee) and a cremation only fee of £358 (the adult cremation fee minus the weekday use of the chapel fee).

### **3. Consultation**

3.1 To establish 'local' practice a survey of the twenty nearest neighbouring was carried out.

### **4. Corporate Implications**

4.1 Financial – the new pricing structure for early morning and 'cremation only' fees has been included in the 2018/19 recommendations of fees and charges.

4.2 Introducing a lower cost funeral helps address funeral poverty and maintain the crematorium's competitiveness.

### **5. Links to Chilterns Crematorium Joint Committee Objectives and Service Plan**

5.1 This report links to the Joint Committee's objective of providing an indiscriminate, excellent customer-friendly service and good quality facilities creating an appropriate environment and ambiance in which a funeral service and/or cremation can take place.

<b>Background Papers:</b>	None
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