

UBJECT:	Crematorium Staffing
REPORT OF:	Clerk to the Crematoria Joint Committee – Bob Smith
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	Head of Environment – Chris Marchant
REPORT AUTHOR	Superintendent and Registrar – Charles Howlett
WARD/S AFFECTED	All

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 To seek approval to appoint an additional full time clerical assistant.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That approval be given to appoint an additional full time clerical assistant.

2. Content of Report

2.1 The first time the number of cremations at Chilterns exceeded 3,000 was in 1995 when 3,014 were carried out. Despite national predictions of a gradually increasing death rate it remained relatively static over the next decade. The original business case study for Bierton Crematorium was carried out in February 2010 and was based on 3,100 cremations per annum going forward; the number of cremations carried out in 2009 being 3,056. Although all forecasts continued to predict an increase in the death rate there was still no sign of this happening when the case study was revised in 2014 and so the same base figure of 3,100 cremations was used.

2.2 Since the revision of the business case in 2014 the long predicted increase in the death rate does appear to have started to have affect.

Year	Cremations
2014	3,278
2015	3,552
2016	3,491
2017	3,764
2018	3,840

2.3 The office is the most sensitive part of the business in terms of the direct impact of increases (or conversely decreases) in workload. Staffing levels have not changed for well over a decade, during which time customer service 'demand' has continued to increase. To some extent this has been absorbed by streamlining procedures and increasing the use of technology but, especially as the number of cremations has increased, the office has been working near to capacity for some time.

2.4 In the 2014 business case revision it was envisaged 800 or so cremations coming from the Aylesbury area to Chilterns would transfer to the two new crematoria at Bierton and Watermead. It was anticipated at least one of the new crematoria would be open by 2016 reducing the number of cremations at Chilterns to about 2,200.

2.5 During this planning period the Ministry of Justice had also produced another revised programme for bringing implementing the long anticipated new death certification system (initiated following the conviction of Dr Shipman in 2000) which would have resulted in the end of Crematorium Medical Referees and a significant corresponding reduction in the number of documents having to be processed by the office.

2.6 In the event, although some progress has been made, the Ministry of Justice has recently further delayed the new death certification system and at the time of writing it is not known when this will now be implemented. It is also clear that even when the new crematoria in Aylesbury open the number of cremations at Chilterns is unlikely to drop much below 3,000 per annum. Currently the office is coping because new staff have been engaged and are training in advance preparation for opening Bierton (Minute 51, meeting 19th June 2017 refers). But once Bierton opens the officers consider the number of staff at the Chilterns office will be insufficient for the amount of work still being undertaken, as well as the additional workload it will need to manage from Bierton - such as invoicing and banking.

2.7 The other issue is that with the exception of the Senior Administrator, all the office staff are part time. This has been a deliberate policy over the years to provide maximum flexibility for holiday and other absence cover. However with the Superintendent, and to some extent the Senior Administrator, ranging across both sites once Bierton opens, the officers consider the continuity of a full time presence in the main Chilterns office will be an advantage to the overall running of the business.

2.8 Consequently the officers are recommending members approve the appointment of an additional full time clerical assistant to be based at the Chilterns office. The current additional cost of this proposal per year would be up to £24,308.

3. Consultation

3.1 n/a

4. Corporate Implications

4.1 Financial – the additional costs have been included in the 2019/20 budget for salaries.

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

5.1 This report links to the Joint Committee's service plan for 2019-20 in connection with the implementation of the new staff structure and progression of the project to build and open the new Bierton Crematorium.

6. Next Step

6.1 Following agreement the f/t clerical assistant will be recruited from 1st April 2019.

Background Papers:	None
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