

ENVIRONMENT PDG

9 March 2021

Bereavement Services Fees and Charges

Cabinet Member: Cllr Colin Slade Cabinet Member for the Environment

Responsible Officer: Andrew Busby Corporate Manager for Property, Leisure and Climate Change

Reason for Report: To review and approve Bereavement Services Fees & Charges for 2021-22.

RECOMMENDATION(S): To recommend approval to Cabinet of the proposed charges for 2021-22 set out on Table A.

Relationship to Corporate Plan: Priority 5 -Corporate

Financial Implications: Bereavement Services total income for 2019/20 was £94,317 in a full year; the proposed increases in fees could generate an additional annual income of £2,532.20.

Budget and Policy Framework: The Council remains committed to operating the two cemeteries it has responsibility for and providing the best standard of service and support to bereaved residents within the financial constraints that exist.

Legal Implications: By virtue of section 214 of the Local Government Act 1972 and of the provisions of the Local Authorities' Cemeteries Order 1977, the Council is the burial authority. Paragraph 15 of the said 1977 Order provides burial authorities with the power to charge such fees as they think are proper – "(a) for or in connection with burials in a cemetery; (b) for any grant of a right to place and maintain a tombstone or other memorial in a cemetery...(c) for any grant of a right to put an additional inscription on such a tombstone or other memorial".

A burial authority is obliged to keep a table showing the matters in respect of which fees or other charges are payable to them, and the amount of each such fee or charge, and the table shall be available for inspection by the public at all reasonable times.

Risk Assessment: Failure to increase charges will further impact on the financial constraints the Council

Equality Impact Assessment: An equality impact assessment has been undertaken and is attached as Annex A.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 In previous years price increases within the Bereavement Service were necessary for the Council to reduce the estimated cost of service provision. The focus remains on providing the best possible standards of service, which includes not only the maintenance of our two cemeteries but the ongoing aim of ensuring that the long-term needs of burials are met. Our two cemeteries

provide places for quiet reflection where people are treated with dignity and respect at all stages of their lives.

- 1.2 The Council remains committed and continues to ensure that re-investment is made for various maintenance works across the Council's two cemeteries in Crediton and Tiverton including the buildings.
- 1.3 It is proposed to increase bereavement charges from 1 April 2021 by 2%, as set out in Table A.
- 1.4 In the case of a death with no next of kin, or should some members of the public be unable to meet these new charges through financial hardship or other such circumstances, support is available to bereaved families. There are three main means of support: Social Services, the hospital where the death occurred and Funeral Expenses Payments, available via the Department of Work and Pensions.
- 1.5 In addition under Section 46 of the Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984 a local authority will meet the costs of a basic funeral where the deceased or the next of kin are not in a position to meet the expenses. In 2019-2020 the cost of providing national assistance burials was £1,100, of this we managed to recover £855.00 leaving a cost of £245.00 to the Council.
- 1.6 Among the broader financial considerations, the Council continues to face budget pressures and has experienced a reduction of core funding from central government.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 There is a risk that budget targets will not be met due to increased costs of providing the service and therefore this decision is important in ensuring the sustainability of burial provision.
- 2.2 The Council apply a range of fees and charges associated with burials. The existing fees and charges are presented on Table A.

3.0 Table A

- 3.1 Column 'A' lists the current charges that were set in 2018-20.
- 3.2 Column 'B' shows proposed charges for 2021-22 that includes an increase of 2%.

Table A

A			B		
'A' - Current charges 2018-20			'B' - Proposed charges 2021-22		
Interment fees of a coffin		Ashes	Interment fees of a coffin		Ashes
Adult (+18 yrs)	£1052.50	£173.00	Adult	£1076.50	£176.50

Under 18 Stillborn/NVF/	Nil	N/A	Stillborn/NVF/ Under 18	Nil	N/A
Interment beneath memorial tree (Includes 30 Years Exclusive Rights of Burial subject to limited availability)					
£541.00			£552.00		
Exclusive Rights of Burial and Right to Erect a Memorial					
	30 years	75 years		30 years	75 years
Adult grave	£1140.50	£2794.00	Adult grave	£1163.50	£2850.00
Childs grave	FOC	£611.00	Childs grave	FOC	£623.00
Cremation plot	£328.00	£826.00	Cremation plot	£334.50	£842.50
Sundry charges					
Exhumation- Standard administration fee. Total charge quoted upon request and on a case -by -case basis.			£75.00		
To carry out a trial dig			£155.00		
Saturday/Bank holiday supplement					
£183.00 (Ashes only interments)			£186.50 (Ashes only interments)		
Administration fees for Transfer of Rights/Assignments, etc.					
£33.00			£35.00		

Table A Continued

A		B
‘A’ - Current charges 2018-20		‘B’ - Proposed charges 2021-22
Additional costs are required when the grave was purchased before 1 April 2003		
Erect a Headstone	£177.50	£181.00
Headstone & Kerbing	£440.00	£449.00
Additional Inscription	£108.00	£110.00
Place Tablet (18x18) Vase	£108.00	£110.00
Tablet/Ledger (18x36)	£205.00	£209.50
Tablet/Ledger larger than (18x36)	£325.00	£331.50
Place open kerbing up to (7x3)	£284.00	£289.50
Place open kerbing larger than (7x3)	£518.50	£529.00
Place fully enclosed kerbset	£609.00	£621.00

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 The proposed charges from 1st April 2021 would increase income by circa £2,532.20 and the schedule of charges is listed at Table A within this report.
- 4.2 A comparison of the cemeteries and crematorium fees currently charged by other surrounding local authority and private providers shows fees across the area vary (please see Table B). It is acknowledged that all authorities will review their bereavement service charges in the coming months and each one will differ in terms of the current level of service provision they choose to make. Therefore, it is difficult to make a true like for like comparison with other neighbouring authorities.
- 4.3 If a funeral director requires any changes or an exhumation that requires a licence prior to disturbing an existing grave, it is proposed to introduce a fee of £75.00 for every application that the Council has to make, with a quotation being provided on a case-by case basis. Whilst it is acknowledged that these applications are not made as a regular occurrence, they are time consuming in the administration and pursuance of the said licence.

5.0 Table B

5.1 Column 'A' compares current Mid Devon charges with three neighbouring authorities and a town council.

5.2 Column 'B' compares increased Mid Devon charges with three neighbouring authorities and a town council.

Table B A B

Costs as from April 2018		MDDC	MDDC+2%	Exeter City	East Devon	Cullompton Town Council 21/22	Taunton West & Somerset
Burial Interment fees	Juvenile	FOC	FOC	FOC	FOC	FOC	FOC
Burial Interment fees	Adult	£1052.50	£1076.50	£1200.00	£491.00	£1240.00	£824.00
Ashes Interment fees	Casket	£173.00	£176.50	£200.00	£143.00	£241.00	£78.00
Ashes Interment fees	Scatter	£173.00	£176.50	£150.00	£143.00	£241.00	£78.00
Saturday and BH supplement	Saturday	£183.00	£186.50	N/A	N/A	£315/£157	£230/£90
	Bank Hol	£183.00	£186.50		N/A	£315/£157	£230/£90
EROB 30Yrs	Adult	£1140.50	£1163.50	£1200.00	(50)EROB £870.00	£1200.00	-
EROB 30Yrs	Child	FOC	FOC	FOC	FOC	£Nil	-
EROB 30Yrs	Ashes	£328.00	£334.50	£600	£205.00	£404.00	-
EROB 75 Years	Adult	£2,794.00	£2,850.00	-	-	£2794.00	£1045.00
EROB 75 Years	Child	£1027.00	£611.00	-	-	£Nil	N/A
EROB 75 Years	Ashes	£826.00	£842.50	-	-	£965.00	£755.00

6.0 Conclusion

6.1 If the 2% increase on cemetery fees & charges are brought in for 21-22 this would generate an estimated £2,532.22 in income based on 21-22 budgeted income figures. This additional income would reduce the net cost of service, which in 21-22 is £147,130.

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Circulation of the Report: Leadership Team, Cabinet member for the Environment, Group Managers.