

ENVIRONMENT PDG

11 January 2022

Bereavement Services Fees and Charges

Cabinet Member Cllr Colin Slade Cabinet Member for the Environment and Climate Change

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

Reason for Report: To review and approve the Bereavement Services Fees & Charges for 2022-23.

RECOMMENDATION(S): To recommend approval to Cabinet the proposed charges for 2022-23 set out on Table A.

Relationship to Corporate Plan: Environment

Financial Implications: Bereavement Services total income for 2020/2021 was £104,434.25 in a full year; the proposed increases in fees could generate an additional £2,088.69.

Budget and Policy Framework: The Council remains committed to operating the two cemeteries it has responsibility for in Tiverton and Crediton 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; 3 (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 affect 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 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 that also includes buildings.
- 1.3 It is proposed to increase bereavement charges from 1 April 2022 by 2%, as set out in Table A. The fee for use of the Chapels has clearly lost pace with that of neighbouring authorities and it is proposed to increase that fee by 100%. This increased fee will still not cover cleaning cost or contribute to wider maintenance costs of the Chapels or the Cemeteries generally, but does set a fee similar to neighbouring authorities. Chapel use is infrequent and Table C sets out the usage and income for the last 5 years (Covid having prevented use in 2020/ 21).
- 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 hardships 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 Payments, available via the Department of Work and Pensions.
- 1.5 In addition under Section 50 of the National Assistance Act 1948 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 2020-2021 the cost of providing national assistance burials was £1,050.00, of this we managed to recover £455.00 leaving a cost of £595.00 to the Council.
- 1.6 Among the broader financial considerations, the Council continues to face on - going budget pressure.

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 2021-22.

3.2 Column 'B' shows proposed charges for 2022-23 that includes an increase of 2% (excluding the charge increases for Chapel hire and Exhumation).

Table A

A			B		
'A' - Current charges 2021-22			'B' - Proposed charges 2022-23		
Interment fees of a coffin		Ashes	Interment fees of a coffin		Ashes
Adult (+18 yrs)	£1076.50	£176.50	Adult	£1098.00	£180.00
Under 18 Stillborn/NVF/	Nil	N/A	Stillborn/NVF/ Under 18	Nil	N/A
Inter ashes into tree cremation plot (this charge includes 30 year Exclusive Rights of Burial and Right to erect a Memorial					
£552.00			£563.00		
Exclusive Rights of Burial and Right to Erect a Memorial					
	30 years	75 years		30 years	75 years
Adult grave	£1163.50	£2850.00	Adult grave	£1187.00	£2907.00
Childs grave	FOC	£623.00	Childs grave	FOC	£635.50
Cremation plot	£334.50	£842.50	Cremation plot	£341.25	£859.50

Sundry charges		
Hire of Chapel followed by interment (Half an Hour)	£82.50	£165.00
Exhumation- Standard administration fee. Total charge quoted upon request and on a case -by -case basis.	£75.00	£125.00
To carry out a trial dig	£155.00	£158.00
Saturday/Bank holiday supplement (Ashes only interments)	£186.50	£190.25
Administration fees for Transfer of Rights/Assignments, etc.	£35.00	£36.00

Table A Continued

A		B
‘A’ - Current charges 2021-2022		‘B’ - Proposed charges 2022-23
Additional costs are required when the grave was purchased before 1 April 2003		
Erect a Headstone	£181.00	£184.50
Headstone & Kerbing	£449.00	£458.00
Additional Inscription	£110.00	£112.25
Place Tablet (18x18) Vase	£110.00	£112.25
Tablet/Ledger (18x36)	£209.50	£213.50
Tablet/Ledger larger than (18x36)	£331.50	£338.00
Place open kerbing up to (7x3)	£289.50	£295.25
Place open kerbing larger than (7x3)	£529.00	£539.50
Place fully enclosed kerbing	£621.00	£633.50

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 The proposed charges from 1st April 2021 would increase income by circa £2,088.69 and the schedules of charges are 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 (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 increase the fee to £125.00 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 on 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 from April 2021		MDDC	MDDC+2%	Exeter City 21/22	East Devon 21/22	Cullompton Town Council 21/22	Taunton West & Somerset 21/22
Burial Interment fees	Juvenile	FOC	FOC	FOC	FOC	FOC	FOC
Burial Interment fees	Adult	£1076.50	£1098.00	£1230.00	£491.00	£1240.00	£845.00
Ashes Interment fees	Casket	£176.50	£180.00	£615.00 incl 30y EROB	£143.00	£241.00	£80.00
Ashes Interment fees	Scatter	£176.50	£180.00	£150.00	£102.00	£241.00	£80.00
Saturday and BH supplement (Ashes only)	Saturday	£186.50	£190.25	N/A	N/A	£315/£157	£237/£90
	Bank Hol	£186.50	£190.25		N/A	£315/£157	£237/£93
EROB 30Yrs	Adult	£1163.50	£1187.00	£1230.00	(50)EROB £870.00	£1200.00	-
EROB 30Yrs	Child	FOC	FOC	FOC	FOC	£Nil	-
EROB 30Yrs	Ashes	£334.50	£341.25	£615 incl interment.	£205.00	£404.00	-
EROB 75 Years	Adult	£2,850.00	£2,907.00	-	-	£2794.00	£1076.00
EROB 75 Years	Child	£1048.00	£1069.00	-	-	£Nil	N/A
EROB 75 Years	Ashes	£842.50	£859.50	-	-	£965.00	£778.00
Chapel Hire		£82.50	£165.00	£165	£123		£200

6.0 Table C – Chapel usage 2015 – present

** please refer to para 1.3*

Year	Tiverton No./ Income £		Crediton No/ Income £		Total No./ Income £	
2015/ 16	1	67.00	3	244.55	4	311.55
2016/ 17	4	294.00	1	73.50	5	367.50
2017/ 18	4	294.00	1	73.50	5	367.50
2018/ 19	6	463.50	2	154.50	8	618.00
2019/ 20	3	243.00	Nil	Nil	3	243.00
2020/ present	Nil / due to Covid-19		Nil / due to Covid-19		Nil / due to Covid-19	

7.0 Conclusion

7.1 If the 2% increase on cemetery fees & charges are approved for 22-23, this would generate additional income at circa £2,088.69. A 100% increase in the Chapel use fee may generate £500 additional income and contribution toward their operational costs.

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Circulation of the Report: Leadership Team, Cabinet member