

Cabinet – 19 November 2008

Bereavement and Registration Services – Annual Review

Portfolio: Councillor Rachel Walker, Environment

Service Area: Public Protection

Wards: All

Key Decision: Yes

Forward Plan: Yes

1. Summary of Report

This report invites cabinet to approve proposals for the annual increase in fees and charges associated with burials, cremation and miscellaneous registration fees as detailed in the **Appendices**, to take effect from 1 January 2009; and to

Approve proposed enhancements to the existing burial service.

2. Recommendations

Cabinet is requested to:-

- 2.1 Approve an increase in burial, cremation and discretionary registration fees with effect from 1 January 2009 as detailed in this report and **Appendices**.
- 2.2 Approve enhancements to the burial service detailed within this report.
- 2.3 To delegate authority to the Head of Public Protection, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, to amend the council's rules and regulations in respect of cemeteries as required, to implement proposed service enhancements.

3. Resource and legal considerations

The last review of fees and charges was approved by Cabinet on 21 November 2007 with effect from 1 January 2008. **Appendix A** and **B** to this report show the current level of fees and the proposed increase for cemeteries, crematorium and registration services.

The majority of charges for registration services, e.g. births, deaths, marriages, civil partnerships and citizen ceremonies, are set by the General Register Officer nationally. However a number of discretionary fees are applied by Walsall and in these cases the proposed increases are shown in **Appendix B**.

It is recommended that a 7½% increase is levied to the cemetery lodge rentals with effect from 1 January 2009.

Proposals for fees have been developed by considering the fee structures adopted by neighbouring local authority fees, and the opportunity has been taken to propose the following fees:

- An inclusive fee for the cremation which will now include the use of the organ whether or not it is required. This is consistent with neighbouring local authorities' traditional practice.
- A new fee of £30 for witnessing of cremated remains disposals. This will reflect the additional administrative costs and staff attending at specific times.
- A new fee for the interment only of cremated remains beneath a plaque at Streetly, Bloxwich or Ryecroft cemeteries of £75.
- A new fee for searches of burial registers, as is charged by neighbouring local and church authorities, at a level of £20 per hour or part thereof.
- A new fee of £50 for late attendance at a burial or cremation service (over 20 minutes late).

In meeting the local authority's responsibilities to provide a Coroner Service, a value for money exercise was undertaken in 2007 with the Manor Hospital to agree the level of service and associated charges to provide post-mortem services for the Black Country Coroner. Officers have been able to agree a favourable Service Level Agreement and as part of these negotiations, have agreed that the cremation fee for body parts, non-viable foetal remains, a still born child or child under 6 months could be held at £38.00 for the duration of the three year agreement taking effect from 1 April 2007, due to the overall benefits accrued from the Service Level Agreement.

It is also felt appropriate at this time to impose no increase to the current fees associated with the burial and cremation of infants and children up to the age of 16 years.

The level of additional annual income generated through these increases at current budgeted demand is estimated to be in the region of £200K. It is important to stress, however, that the level of demand for burials, cremations and registration services is difficult to predict and increases in fees and charges do not necessarily generate the additional income forecast due to variations in demand. Specifically in relation to burial fees, the high unit cost of, for example, a new grave means that even a relatively minor fluctuation in demand has a major impact on income achieved.

Introduction of a proposed seven day burial service

The proposals for an enhanced burial service set out below have been developed following discussions and consultation with the Muslim community.

Subject to recruitment and staff negotiations, the proposals establish new staffing arrangements for:

- **Extended service for weekday burials** to enable staff rotas to be in place to provide up to two evening burials in the Summer months of May to August inclusive,
- **Extended service on Saturdays** to make more staff available to make burial arrangements to cater for two burials should these be requested.
- **New service on Sundays** to provide a one hour standby window for applicants/funeral directors to contact the Council in order to make burial arrangements. This will be sufficient to cater for up to two burials should these be requested.
- **New Bank Holiday service** to provided a one hour standby window for applicants/funeral directors to contact the Council for all statutory/council holidays except New Years Day, Easter Sunday, Good Friday, Christmas Day and Boxing Day. This will be sufficient to cater for up to two burials should these be requested.

The proposed burial service enhancements as detailed above and summarised in **Appendix C** of this report, will be available to all members of the community enabling the cost to be more evenly spread across service users.

It is therefore recommended that in addition to the exclusive right of burial/interment fees, where a burial is required on a Saturday, Sunday or Bank Holiday, a premium of 10% of the overall costs will be charged. For a summer evening burial between 3pm and 6pm a premium of 5% will be levied.

The financial impact of implementing these proposals is subject to the approval of a revenue investment bid submitted as part of the budget setting process for 2009/10.

The Local Authorities' Cemeteries Order 1977 empowers a Burial Authority to charge such fees as they think proper for, or in conjunction with, burials in a cemetery.

By virtue of Section 9 of the Cremation Act 1902, a Burial Authority may demand payment of charges and fees for cremating human remains in any crematorium provided for them.

4. Citizen impact

The fees and charges for burial, cremation and registration services will affect all users of the service and will help to ensure the continued delivery of a high quality service increasing the accessibility of the burial service for all.

5. Community Safety

Cemeteries are subject to vandalism from time to time and there is a continued expenditure required to safeguard cemetery visitors.

Mobile patrol staff visit the cemeteries during their opening hours and grave digging and grounds maintenance staff present on site seek to provide some community reassurance and deal with visitor enquiries. However, in view of the size of the cemeteries it is not always possible to address every concern.

6. Environmental Impact

None arising directly from this report.

7. Performance and Risk Management Issues

The level of demand for burials and cremations is difficult to predict and accordingly, any increases in fees and charges do not necessarily generate the additional income forecast.

8. Equality Implications

Bereavement and Registration Services charges affect all users of the service irrespective of age, gender, disability, race, religion/faith or sexual orientation.

The proposals for an enhanced burial service have been developed following discussions and consultation with the Muslim community but will be of benefit to all faith groups.

These proposals have introduced no increase to the current fees associated with the burial and cremation of infants and children up to the age of 16 years.

9. Consultation

Regular consultation with a range of stakeholders is undertaken during the year to establish views about the service delivery and assist the service in its path to excellence.

In particular, the Muslim community have been actively involved in developing the proposals for service enhancements and meetings have been held with community leaders to seek their comments on the burial enhancements on areas of service for enhancement and the proposals set out within this report. At a meeting on 11 November there was broad support for the outline proposals, which were welcomed, and community leaders agreed to forward any further written comments by Friday, 14 November.

Several written comments have been received from community representatives, all of which are strongly supportive of the service changes being proposed.

If the service enhancement proposals are agreed, there will be further work required by officers with the Muslim community representatives to implement the new arrangements.

10. Background Papers

Comparisons with other Local Authority fees and charges.

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Signed:



Signed:

Executive Director: Jamie Morris

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Rachel Walker

Date: 17 November 2008

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Appendix A

SCHEDULE OF PROPOSED BURIAL AND CREMATION CHARGES

<u>CEMETERIES - SCHEDULE A</u>	Existing charge	Proposed charge
	£	£
<u>INTERMENT FEES</u>		
In Babies Memorial Garden irrespective of age (Maximum coffin size 3'8" x 1'8")	114.00	No change
Organs and other body parts removed in the course of a Post Mortem Examination/Non viable Foetal Remains/Stillborn Child/Child under 6 months in an Adult Grave at any depth	114.00	No change
Child of over 6 months and under the age of 16 yrs at any depth	254.00	No change
16 years and over in one coffin depth	750.00	806.00
16 years and over in two coffin depth	775.00	833.00
16 years and over in three coffin depth	800.00	860.00
Cremated Remains in Grave or Vault	295.00	317.00
<u>EXCLUSIVE RIGHT OF BURIAL FOR:- EARTHEN GRAVE FOR 100 YEARS</u> (inc Right to erect Headstone fee W.E.F. 1.1.99)		
Grave for full coffins	1335.00	1435.00
Grave for Cremated remains only	734.00	789.00
Grave for babies only	268.00	No change
<u>WALLED GRAVES AND VAULTS</u>		
<u>(Excludes cost of construction)</u>		
Vault for 1 grave space	1335.00	1435.00
Vault for 2 grave spaces	2669.00	2870.00
Vault for 3 grave spaces	4004.00	4305.00
<u>MONUMENTS, GRAVESTONES, TABLETS AND INSCRIPTIONS - Right to Erect:-</u>		
Flatstone not exceeding 2' x 2'	245.00	263.00
Headstone not exceeding 3'	223.00	240.00
Headstone over 3'	528.00	568.00
Kerbs or Border stones not exceeding 7'6" x 3'6"	250.00	269.00
Kerbs or Border stones over 3'	528.00	568.00
Vases exceeding 14" x 12"	73.00	78.00
Additional Inscription	84.00	90.00
Memorial not exceeding 15" x 15" x 15" in a Babies Plot	64.00	No change

<u>CEMETERIES - SCHEDULE A</u>	Existing charge	Proposed charge
<u>MEMORIAL PLAQUES</u> - including burial of cremated remains	£	£
Streetly Memorial Plaque - 4 line inscription – resident	874.00	940.00
Streetly Memorial Plaque - 4 line inscription - non resident	943.00	1014.00
Streetly Memorial Plaque - Additional 4 line inscription	174.00	187.00
Bloxwich/Ryecroft Memorial Plaque - 3 line inscription - resident	590.00	634.00
Bloxwich/Ryecroft Memorial Plaque - 3 line inscription - non resident	638.00	686.00
Bloxwich/Ryecroft Memorial Plaque - Additional 3 line inscription	139.00	149.00
Transfer of Plaques/Cremated Remains between Cemeteries (inc Exhumation)	111.00	119.00
Temporary Memorials	103.00	111.00
Placing of cremated remains only beneath the plaque	New	75.00
<u>MISCELLANEOUS FEES</u>		
Maintenance of Grave, per occasion	77.00	83.00
Maintenance of Grave, per annum	114.00	123.00
Board Fee – Muslim Grave	84.00	90.00
Use of Chapel (per half hour)	84.00	90.00
Exhume Adult/Child from a full coffin adult sized Grave	2078.00	2234.00
Exhume Child not from a full Adult Grave	381.00	No change
Exhume Cremated Remains from Earthen Grave	348.00	374.00
Exhumation of Cremated Remains from beneath a Plaque	111.00	119.00
For the services, when available for one Council Employee acting as a Bearer	115.00	124.00
Replacement for Bloxwich Barrier Swipe Card	26.00	28.00
Witness disposal of cremated remains	New	30.00
Search of burial records by staff per hour or part thereof	New	20.00
Late arrival at burial/cremation service (over 20 minutes)	New	50.00
<u>OUT OF HOURS BURIALS</u>		
Saturday	835.00	10% additional premium on cost of exclusive right of burial and interment fee
Sunday	New	
Bank Holiday	New	
Weekday Summer Evening – May to August inclusive	558.00	5% additional premium as above

NOTES FOR CEMETERIES SCHEDULE

- i) The fees for exclusive Right of Burial (inc Right to Erect fee) and the interment fee are trebled when neither the Purchaser nor Deceased live/lived in the Borough. However, in exceptional circumstances the Head of Public Protection and/or Bereavement and Registration Services Manager have the discretion to waive or vary the premium fee surcharge.
- ii) Where two burials take place at the same time, the second fee is halved (this reflects the fact that the Grave is only excavated once)

<u>STREETLY CREMATORIUM - SCHEDULE B</u>	Existing charge	Proposed charge
<u>CREMATION FEES</u>	£	£
Organs and other body parts removed in the course of a Post Mortem Examination/Non-Viable Foetal Remains/Stillborn Child/Child under 6 months	50.00	No change
Child 6 months but under the age of 16 years now including use of organ	186.00	No change
16 years and over now including use of organ	483.00	519.00
16 years and over organised by Public Protection under Public Health Control of Disease Act 1984 and where insufficient monies are available from the deceased's estate to meet the full cremation fee now including use of organ	230.00	247.00
<u>OTHER FEES</u>		
Use of Organ	77.00	Inc with cremation fee
Late Fee - Cremation Service on or after 3.45pm	65.00	70.00
Post and Package to any address in the UK	73.00	78.00
Use of Chapel including organ at Streetly Crematorium (per half hour)	161.00	173.00
Use of Chapel at Willenhall Lawn Cemetery (per half hour)	84.00	90.00
<u>URNS AND CONTAINERS</u>		
Metal Urn	49.00	53.00
Plastic Urn	27.00	29.00
Wooden Caskets	65.00	70.00
<u>MEMORIALS</u>		
Donation for trees	560.00	602.00
Bronze Plaque for Memorial Trees	194.00	209.00
<u>ENTRIES IN BOOK OF REMEMBRANCE</u>		
Not exceeding 2 lines	72.00	77.00
Not exceeding 5 lines	118.00	127.00
Not exceeding 8 lines	169.00	182.00
Full Coat of Arms	169.00	182.00
Badge, Crest or Motif	144.00	155.00
<u>Ryecroft</u>		
Not exceeding 2 lines	43.00	46.00
Not exceeding 5 lines	89.00	96.00
Not exceeding 8 lines	141.00	152.00
Full Coat of Arms	169.00	182.00
Badge, Crest or Motif	144.00	155.00

<u>STREETLY CREMATORIUM - SCHEDULE B</u>	Existing charge	Proposed charge
<u>MINIATURE BOOK</u>		
<u>Streetly</u>	£	£
Not exceeding 2 lines	86.00	92.00
Not exceeding 5 lines	118.00	127.00
Not exceeding 8 lines	144.00	155.00
Badge, Crest or Motif	91.00	98.00
Additional Inscription	46.00	49.00
<u>MEMORIAL CARD</u>		
Not exceeding 2 lines	46.00	49.00
Not exceeding 5 lines	60.00	65.00
Not exceeding 8 lines	82.00	88.00
Badge, Crest or Motif	91.00	98.00
Additional Inscription	46.00	49.00
<u>DEPOSITION OF CREMATED REMAINS</u>		
Scattering of Cremated Remains from other Crematoria	60.00	65.00

NOTES FOR STREETLY CREMATORIUM SCHEDULE

- i) The total fee for Cremation quoted includes the Medical Referees charge @ £18.50 (where applicable); use of the Chapel and waiting area, use of organ (if required), all attendances after the coffin is placed on the catafalque by the Funeral Director, disposal of Cremated Remains in the Garden of Remembrance (if required) or provision of container when Cremated Remains are collected for private disposal, provision of taped music (if required). Includes copy of certificate of cremation if required.
- ii) Where a Cremation Service takes place for two or more persons at the same time the fee will be reduced by £173.00. This reflects the use of the Chapel and organ (if required)

Appendix B

SCHEDULE OF PROPOSED REGISTER OFFICE CHARGES

REGISTER OFFICE - SCHEDULE C	Existing charge	Proposed charge
NON STATUTORY FEES	£	£
<u>Licensing Fees</u>		
Marriage Licensing Fee for premises (lasts for 3 years)	1050.00	1129.00
Charges for outside marriages – Saturday	308.00 *157.00	331.00 *169.00
Charges for outside marriages - Sunday	308.00 *£157.00	331.00 *169.00
Charges for outside marriages Week Day - Monday - Thursday	194.00	209.00
Charges for outside marriages – Friday	308.00	331.00
Re-affirmation of vows		
• Register office		
Mon-Fri	89.00	96.00
▪ Outside venues		
Mon - Thursday	178.00	191.00
Sat/Sun	262.00	282.00
Private British Citizenship ceremonies		
Mon- Fri	157.00	169.00
Sa/Sun	210.00	226.00
Baby/child naming		
• Register office		
Mon- Fri	79.00	85.00
▪ Outside venues		
Mon- Fri	178.00	191.00
Sat	262.00	282.00
▪ Issue of Certificate on same day as requested – not including statutory fee of £7.00	18.00	19.00

*Late ceremony fee (where no immediately preceding ceremony at the time of the booking)

Enhancements to Burial Arrangements in Walsall Cemeteries

Current Arrangements

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Statutory Holidays	Religious Holidays New Years Day, Good Friday, Christmas Day, Boxing Day
9.30am – 3pm (2.15pm December and January) Normal Services					Standby 8.30am – 12noon Burial from 9.30 am up to 3pm (2.15 December and January) For one burial only	No service	One hour standby on one day at Easter and Christmas Bank Holiday For one burial only	No service
3pm – 6pm May – August inclusive (when staff available) For one burial only								

Proposed Arrangements

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Statutory Holidays	Religious Holidays New Years Day, Good Friday, Christmas Day, Boxing Day
9am – 3pm (2.15pm December and January) Normal Services					Standby 8.30am – 12noon Burial from 9.30 am up to 3pm (2.15pm December and January) For up to two burials	One hour standby. Burial from 9.30 am up to 3pm (2.15pm December and January) For up to two burials	One hour standby. Burial from 9.30 am up to 3pm (2.15pm December and January) For up to two burials	No service
3pm – 6pm Hours May – August inclusive For up to two burials Subject to staff negotiations and recruitment								