

Title of meeting: Resources - Decision Meeting

Date of meeting: 19 January 2017

Subject: Cemetery Fees - Fees and Charges for 2017-2018

Report by: Director of Culture and City Development

Wards affected: All

Key decision: No

Full Council decision: No

1. Purpose of report

1.1 To seek Member approval to the proposed revision of Cemetery Fees for 2017/18 as permitted by Local Authority Cemeteries Order 1977.

2. Recommendations

2.1 That charges for burials and associated services be increased as per Appendix 1.

3. Background

3.1 The City Council currently owns and operates three Cemeteries within the city of Portsmouth. These are Milton Cemetery, Kingston Cemetery and Highland Road Cemetery.

3.2 Charges are made to those who wish to use the services of these facilities. The service carries out approximately 450 burials per year.

3.3 At the Full Council meeting on 11th December 2012 it was decided that the budget for the Cemeteries Service was to become cost neutral over a two year **period which at that time had a net cost to the city council of approximately £85,000.** At the Environment and Community Safety Decision Meeting on 27th February 2013 it was subsequently agreed to increase fees and charges over the two year period and for 2014/15 to increase the period of Rights of Ownership on a newly purchased grave. The additional income generated enabled the department to work to a cost neutral budget.

3.4 There were no increases in the fees and charges for Cemeteries for the following two years 2015/16 and 2016/17. A saving of £32k from the Cemeteries budget was agreed at the Full Council meeting on 13th December 2016.

4. Reasons for recommendations

- 4.1 In line with Audit Commission recommendations charges have been compared to other Local Authorities and based on comparisons the proposed increase will remain competitive and in most cases is below the overall average. The current and proposed charges are identified in Appendix 1 and it is expected that this will generate an additional £22k income.
- 4.2 To ensure the identified savings target savings will be met the current budgetary allocation for grounds maintenance will be reduced. The reduction in this budget by £10k will be applied with the aim of not compromising the overall maintenance or infrastructure of the Cemeteries and will be monitored and implemented by prioritising works and deferring low level improvements if needs be.

5. Equality impact assessment

- 5.1 An equality impact assessment is not required as the recommendation does not have a negative impact on any of the protected characteristics as described in the Equality Act 2010.

6. Legal implications

- 6.1 The Council as a Local Authority, by virtue of section 214 of the Local Government Act 1972 is a 'burial authority'. Further, the functions with respect to cremation were added to the functions of burial authorities under the Local Authorities Cemeteries Order 1977.
- 6.2 Paragraph 15 of the said Order provides the 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 tombstone or other memorials".
- 6.3 In addition, under section 11A a burial authority may charge such fees as they think proper for the making by them of searches, and the provision of certified copies of entries in the register of burials or the record of disinterment.
- 6.4 Under section 9 of the Cremation Act 1902, the Council as a burial authority may demand payment of charges and fees for cremating human remains in any crematorium provided by it.
- 6.5 The Local Authorities Cemeteries Order 1977 requires the Council to keep a table of fees available for inspection by the public at all reasonable times.

7. Director of Finance's comments

- 7.1 The schedule of current and proposed fees and charges is shown at Appendix 1.
- 7.2 All Cemetery services will be increased by 5%. This will generate additional income of £22,000 and will contribute to the Cemeteries 2017/18 savings target of £32,000.

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Signed by:
Stephen Baily
Director of Culture and City Development

Appendices:

Appendix 1 - Current and proposed fees and charges.

Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/ rejected by on

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Signed by:

Councillor Lee Mason

Cabinet Member for Resources