

---

Cabinet Member for City Services

10<sup>th</sup> October 2016

**Name of Cabinet Member:**

Cabinet Member for City Services - Councillor Innes

**Director Approving Submission of the report:**

Executive Director, Place

**Ward(s) affected:**

All

**Title:**

Revised Burial & Cremation Fees and Charges 2016/17

---

**Is this a key decision?**

No

---

**Executive Summary:**

This report seeks approval for an increase in Burial and Cremation Fees and Charges from 1<sup>st</sup> November 2016, to support on-going provision of cremation, burial and funeral services to Coventry residents over the medium term. No further increase will then be proposed until 1<sup>st</sup> January 2018. After which fees and charges will be increased on 1st January each year for the next 3 years. The fees and charges will be increased in line with the West Midlands benchmarking group average, and the report seeks to delegate these further increases to the Assistant Director for Streetscene and Regulatory Services in consultation with Place Directorate finance manager.

This increase in burial fees is required to support the capital costs to undertake the extension of the burial grounds, support the continued maintenance required to maintain cremators and mercury abatement equipment at Canley Crematorium. In addition this increase will allow the City Council to reduce the fee for children's burials and cremations to zero.

In addition the changes to fees return Coventry to the mid-point for fees and charges within the benchmarking group, this is in-line with the City Councils charging policy.

It should be noted that Coventry currently has the lowest fee level amongst its benchmarking group and this is because there was no increase in fees and charges for 2015/16. And only a minimal increase of 5.7% was applied 1<sup>st</sup> February 2016.

**Recommendations:**

The Cabinet Member is asked to:

- a) Approve the proposed increase to burial fees with effect from 1 November 2016, as detailed in this report.
- b) Approve the proposed increase to cremation fees with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> November 2016, as detailed in this report.
- c) Approve the proposed removal of children's burial and cremation fees with immediate effect, for children who are resident in Coventry.
- d) Approve additional fees from 1<sup>st</sup> November 2016 to achieve full cost recovery for services which are currently supplied free of charge or at a subsidised rate.
- e) Approve that an increase in fees and charges is applied from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2018, and on the 1<sup>st</sup> January for the subsequent three years in line with the West Midlands Benchmarking Group average, and that the communication and implementation of these increases is delegated to the Assistant Director for Streetscene and Regulatory services in consultation with the finance manager for the Place directorate. (Benchmarking exercise will be completed and a briefing note sent to the cabinet member on the % uplift to be applied).

**List of Appendices included:**

Appendix 1: Benchmarking Comparator Adult Burials  
Appendix 2: Benchmarking Comparator Adult Cremations  
Appendix 3: Benchmarking Comparator Children's services  
Appendix 4(a & b): Additional fees for extra services supplied  
Appendix 5: List of Fees and Charges Table

**Other useful background papers:**

Equality impact assessment – 2016/17 Bereavement Fees and Charges

**Has it or will it be considered by Scrutiny?**

No

**Has it, or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?**

No

**Will this report go to Council?**

No

**Report title:  
Revised Burial & Cremation Fees and Charges 2016/17**

**1. Background**

- 1.1 There are three distinct areas within Bereavement Service where charges are applied to service users; these are Cremations, Burials and Memorials.
- 1.2 There was no increase made to Bereavement Services fees and charges at the beginning of 2015/16. However, a blanket increase of 5.7% was implemented from February 2016, and a further increase is recommended from 1<sup>st</sup> November 2016.
- 1.3 As part of the Commercialisation and Income Maximisation Review, the charging policy for the Council was reviewed. The revised policy approved by the Cabinet Member 'Strategic Finance and Resources' at his meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> July 2013 confirmed that all charges should be at least full cost recovery and in line with benchmarking against other providers.
- 1.4 The recommendations in this report are based on the application of this policy to the charges for burial and cremation services.
- 1.5 The benchmarking exercise shows that Coventry Bereavement Services has the lowest charges across the region. The proposed increase will raise the fees and charges in line with other local authorities. (See appendix 5 for current and proposed table of charges)
- 1.6 Due to there being no price increase for burials and cremations for 2015/16, cremations had a shortfall against budget of £60k (3.9%).
- 1.7 Additional income created will assist with the overall continued maintenance of the six cemeteries and one crematoria administered by Coventry City Council. This will include reinstatement of road surfaces in London Road and Canley cemeteries. Providing additional drainage solutions to the existing sections of Lentons Lane Cemetery, and contribute towards the new extension at Lentons Lane Cemetery in preparation for burial activity in the future.

**2 Options considered and recommended proposal**

To increase fees and charges in line with the City Council's policy, and approve a mechanism for increases over the following three years starting on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2018 – ***recommended***

- 2.2 Burial costs can be covered under two main headings, interment fees and Exclusive Right of Burial (EROB) fees. When comparing full adult burial fees, Coventry's fees are the 7<sup>th</sup> lowest in our regional group (out of 8) and 26% less than the average fees. By increasing the adult fees and charges by 39% overall this will place Coventry in 3<sup>rd</sup> place regarding the current benchmarking group, 10% above the average.
- 2.3 Adult cremation fees when compared to the benchmarking group are positioned 13<sup>th</sup> (out of 14). An increase of 15% to £737 would place Coventry 6<sup>th</sup> within the current table, 6% above the benchmarking average.
- 2.4 Children's EROB when compared to the benchmarking group are positioned 6<sup>th</sup> (out of 8). It is proposed to remove all fees for children's EROB, for those children resident in Coventry (see appendix 3). For children's cremations Coventry is currently the most extensive in the

benchmarking group, again it is proposed to remove all fees for children's cremations for those children resident in Coventry at the time of death.

- 2.5 Post cremation Memorialisation and permit application fees should be increased by 13% (It is not possible to supply comparison charges for post cremation memorialisation due to authorities all supplying different products. The permit fees should be increased in line with any increase % applied for all other memorialisation).
- 2.6 Apply fees and charges against services currently supplied which currently do not recover their full cost (see appendix 4a & 4b).
- 2.7 To approve the increase of fees and charges to be applied on the 1<sup>st</sup> January each year for the next three years commencing on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2018 in line with the West Midlands Benchmarking Group average. (Benchmarking exercise will be completed and a briefing note sent to the cabinet member on the % uplift to be applied).
- 2.8 To help improve the efficiency of the cremator operation and to increase the availability of the cremation slots, this report also considers a range of additional services and changes to the associated charges. These areas are as follows:
  - **Surcharge for Saturday cremations** – the City Council currently levy the same charge for cremations Monday – Saturday. However, this charge does not represent the additional cost of providing cremation outside of the normal working week (Monday – Friday). All other authorities apply either a percentage surcharge or an additional fee for adult Saturday cremations. It is proposed that the City Council introduce a 50% surcharge for cremations which take place on a Saturday. This would increase the standard cremation fee from £737 to £1106. Full details of surcharge fees levied by benchmarked authorities are provided in appendix 4a.
- 2.9 Additional service charges – as part of the benchmarking exercise it is clear that other Authorities levy charges for a number of additional services which the City Council provides without further charge, these include:
  - Retention of ashes in the crematorium
  - Scattering of own ashes in the Gardens of Remembrance
  - Late cancellation fee for the chapel
  - Provision of temporary markers for new graves
  - Excessive late arrival for service or excessive over run of a service
- 2.10 To bring the City Council in line with its benchmarked authorities it is proposed to introduce a charge for each of the above services. Details of the proposed charges and those currently levied by benchmarked authorities are given in appendix 4b.
- 2.11 To not increase fees and charges in line with the Council's policy – ***not recommended***.
- 2.12 The City Council policy is clear that fees and charges should be set to recover the full cost of providing a service as well as being at the mid-point of the most appropriate benchmarked data. Therefore to not increase fees and charges would be a direct deviation from this policy.

### **3. Results of consultation undertaken**

- 3.1 Coventry Bereavement Services has consulted with its regional group to compare burial prices for adult interments and cremations (See Appendices).

- 3.2 Bereavement Services continues to consult Funeral Directors on a regular basis in meetings and through a regular newsletter. Further communication with Funeral Directors will take place prior to the implementation of the proposed fees and any significant issues will be reported to the Cabinet Member prior to implementation.

#### **4. Timetable for implementing this decision**

- 4.1 It is proposed to apply the above increase in fees from 1st November 2016, except for removal of Children's burial and cremation fees, it is proposed that this would be with immediate effect.

#### **5. Comments from the Executive Director, Resources**

##### **5.1 Financial Implications**

The full list of fees and charges for 2016 is shown at appendix 5. This increase in fees is based on benchmarking undertaken with the nearest geographical neighbours (appendices 1,2 & 3).

##### **5.2 Legal implications**

The Local Authorities Cemeteries Order 1977 made under the Local Government Act 1972 provides a power for burial authorities to charge such fees as they think proper for or in relation to burials in Cemeteries provided by the authority. Furthermore a similar power is given under the Cremation Act 1902 in relation to cremations provided for in the authority's Crematoria.

While other charging powers exist which the City Council could utilise, the proposed charges are either for burials or cremations or are reasonably related to burials and so are within the scope of 1977 Order.

#### **6. Other implications**

##### **6.1 How will this contribute to achievement of the Council's key objectives / corporate priorities (corporate plan/scorecard) / organisational blueprint / LAA (or Coventry SCS)?**

The fee increase detailed in this report will contribute to the continuing of burial and cremation provision in the City over the medium term.

##### **6.2 How is risk being managed?**

Risk will be managed in accordance with the City Council's risk management process.

##### **6.3 What is the impact on the organisation?**

If fees were not increased funding to provide future bereavement services provision would need to be found from the Council's wider budget, reducing the Council's ability to invest in other frontline services.

##### **6.4 Equalities / ECA**

An impact assessment has been completed for the increase in fees and charges, as the increase in burial fees is greater than that for cremations, the assessments highlights the adverse effect of this decision on communities that favour burial over cremation.

Whilst this impact is note and officers will work with affect communities to communicate these changes effectively, to not increase the fees would leave Coventry as the lowest cost provider in the region, and potential put future burial provision at risk.

In addition, the fee increases in both cremations and burial fees for adults will allow the City Council to reduce the fees for children to zero, helping families at the greatest time of need.

#### 6.5 Implications for (or impact on) the environment

Better use of cremation availability, as proposed in section 2 of this report will improve the profile of gas usage, reducing idle time, and therefore improve the carbon performance of the cremation service.

#### 6.6 Implications for partner organisations?

None

#### Report author(s):

**Name and job title:** Graham Hood, Head of Streetpride and Greenspace

**Directorate:** Place Directorate

**Tel and email contact:** 024 7683 2194, [graham.hood@coventry.gov.uk](mailto:graham.hood@coventry.gov.uk)

Enquiries should be directed to the above person.

<b>Contributor/approver name</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Directorate or organisation</b>	<b>Date doc sent out</b>	<b>Date response received or approved</b>
<b>Contributors:</b>				
Cath Crosby	Lead Accountant Business Partner	Place	26 <sup>th</sup> Sept 16	27 <sup>th</sup> Sept 16
Wendy Ohandjanian	Equalities and Diversity Officer	Chief Executives	26 <sup>th</sup> Sept 16	27 <sup>th</sup> Sept 16
Liz Knight	Committee Services Officer	Resources	26 <sup>th</sup> Sept 16	27 <sup>st</sup> Sept 16
<b>Names of approvers for submission: (officers and members)</b>				
Sam McGinty	Place Team Leader	Resources	26 <sup>th</sup> Sept 16	27 Sept 16
Andrew Walster	AD Streetscene and Regulatory Services	Place	26 <sup>th</sup> Sept 16	27 <sup>th</sup> Sept 16
Martin Yardley	Executive Director	Place	27 <sup>th</sup> Sept 16	28 <sup>th</sup> Sept 16
Julie Fairbrother	Communications	Chief Execs	26 <sup>th</sup> Sept 16	27 <sup>th</sup> Sept 16
Cllr Jayne Innes	Cabinet Member for City Services		28 <sup>th</sup> Sept 16	29 <sup>th</sup> Sept 16

This report is published on the council's website: [www.coventry.gov.uk/meetings](http://www.coventry.gov.uk/meetings)

## Appendix 1 Comparison of Adult Burial Fees and Charges

The table below compares costs across the regional benchmarking group, the benchmarking was undertaken in May 2016.

Authority Regional Benchmarking Group	Exclusive Right of Burial (EROB) (Current) £	Interment Fee (Current) £	Interment Fee plus Exclusive Right of Burial £	EROB Proposed £	Interment Fee Proposed £	Interment Fee plus Exclusive Right of Burial Proposed £
Wolverhampton	1790	993	2783			
Dudley	1860	903	2763			
Solihull	2000	850	2850			
Sandwell	1684	902	2586			
Birmingham	2160	655	2815			
Walsall	1870	1051	2921			
Oakley Wood	1040	750	1790			
<b>Coventry</b>	<b>1257</b>	<b>790</b>	<b>2047</b>	<b>1885</b>	<b>964</b>	<b>2849</b>
<b>Regional Average</b>	<b>1707</b>	<b>862</b>	<b>2569</b>			
Coventry's fees are below regional average by →	26%	8%	20%	<b>9% Above</b>	<b>11% Above</b>	<b>10% Above</b>

## Appendix 2 Comparison of Adult Cremation Fees and Charges

The table below compares costs across the regional benchmarking group, the benchmarking was undertaken in May 2016.

Authority Regional Benchmarking Group	Adult Cremation Fee £	Adult Cremation Fee Proposed £
Wolverhampton	649	
Dudley	752	
Woodlands (Chelmsley Wood)	690	
West Bromwich	657	
Solihull	690	
Sandwell	657	
B'Ham Sutton/Yardley	685	
B'Ham L/Hill	745	
Birmingham (Perry Barr) Private	810	
Walsall	723	
Oakley Wood	630	
Nuneaton Private	956	
Rugby	775	
<b>Coventry</b>	<b>641</b>	<b>737</b>
<b>Regional Average</b>	<b>719</b>	
Coventry's fees are below regional average by →	11%	<b>2.5% Above</b>



### Appendix 3 Comparison of Children's Burial Fees and Charges

The table below compares costs across the regional benchmarking group, the benchmarking was undertaken in May 2016.

Authority Regional B.marking Group	Exclusive Right of Burial (EROB) Current £	Interment Fee Current £	Interment Fee plus Exclusive Right of Burial Current £	EROB Proposed £	Interment Fee Proposed £	Interment Fee plus Exclusive Right of Burial Proposed £	Cremation Fee Current £	Cremation Fee Proposed £
W/Hampton	Free	175	175				Free	
Dudley	210	180	390				90	
Solihull	300	150	450				160	
Sandwell	836	359	1195				113	
Birmingham	1185	150	1335				120	
Walsall	331	323	654				253	
Oakley Wood	475	128	603				120	
<b>Coventry</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>201</b>	<b>440</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>319</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Regional Average</b>	<b>447</b>	<b>208</b>	<b>655</b>	<b>447</b>	<b>208</b>	<b>655</b>	<b>147</b>	

### Appendix 4a Additional Fees for Extra Services Supplied

Saturday Surcharge Fees

Benchmarking Examples	Saturday Fees applied for Adult Cremation	% Added	Fee added £	
Sandwell	631	15		
Mortlake	575		325	
Poole	758		652	
Torbay	800		200	
Liverpool	745	50		
Peterborough	745		431	
Rugby	775		475	
Banbury	795		275	
Leicester	750	50		
<b>Coventry</b>	<b>737</b>	<b>NIL</b>	<b>NIL</b>	
<b>Recommendation</b>				
<b>Coventry</b>	<b>737</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>1106</b>	

## Appendix 4b Additional Services

### Additional Service Charges

Authority Example	Retention of ashes in crematorium	Scatter in Own ashes in Gardens of Remembrance	Late cancellation fee	Temp. Marker (New Grave)	Late Arrival fines / over run service fines
	£	£	£	£	£
Oakley Wood	20 per mth (after 3 mths)	Nil	Nil	Nil	120 after 10 min. and every 15 min
Solihull	Nil	36	245	Not supplied	245 every 15 min + 385 after 1 hr
Birmingham	60 per mth	45	245	70	315 15 min + 430 after 1 hour
Dudley	Nil	51	Nil	Not supplied	No charge
Walsall	No fees listed	No fees listed	No fees listed	No fees listed	No fees listed
Sandwell	Nil	Nil	Nil	23	287
Wolverhampton	No fees listed	34	No fees listed	No fees listed	No fees listed
Bedford	108 after 1 mth	102			
Mortlake	20 after 1 mth				
Taunton Dean	25 after 1 mth the 29 per mth				
Bournemouth	24 per mth	31			
Poole		50			
Torbay		50 on Saturdays			
Liverpool	37 after 1 mth				
Gloucester		46.50			
Boston	7 after 1 mth	25			
Peterborough	17 after 1 mth				
Leicester	33 after 2 mths				
City of London	25 after 1 mth				
Stoke on Trent		25 on Saturdays			
<b>Coventry</b>	<b>NIL</b>	<b>NIL</b>	<b>NIL</b>	<b>NIL</b>	<b>158 after 15 min. No further charge</b>
<b>Recommendation</b>					
<b>Coventry</b>	<b>25 after 1 mth</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>135 (chapel fee charge)</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>Late fee applied after every 15 minutes</b>

## Appendix 5

## Full Table of Current and Proposed Fees and Charges

Service Function	New or Existing Charge	Activity Des.	Basis	Current Charge (last increased Feb. 2016 £)	Proposed Charge	Price Increase	% Increase
Cemeteries	Existing	Purchase of Exclusive Right of Burial (Resident)	Per Unit	1,257	<b>1885</b>	628	50% Discretionary
Cemeteries	Existing	Purchase of Exclusive Right of Burial (Non-Resident)	Per Unit	2,514	<b>3771</b>	1257	50% Discretionary
Cemeteries	Existing	Purchase Rights for cremation plot (Resident)	Per Unit	1,151	<b>1726</b>	575	50% Discretionary
Cemeteries	Existing	Purchase Rights for cremation plot (Non-Resident)	Per Unit	2,300	<b>3450</b>	1150	50% Discretionary
Cemeteries	Existing	Pre Purchase of Exclusive Right of Burial (Resident)	Per Unit	1936	<b>2691</b>	755	40% Discretionary
Cemeteries	Existing	Pre Purchase of Exclusive Right of Burial (Non-Resident)	Per Unit	3871	<b>5380</b>	1509	40% Discretionary
Cemeteries	Existing	Purchase Rights for cremation plot (Resident)	Per Unit	1724	<b>2396</b>	672	40% Discretionary
Cemeteries	Existing	Purchase Rights for cremation plot (Non-Resident)	Per Unit	3448	<b>4793</b>	1345	40% Discretionary
Cemeteries	Existing	Interment Fee for Adult (Resident)	Per Unit	790	<b>964</b>	174	22% Discretionary
Cemeteries	Existing	Interment Fee for Adult (Non - Resident)	Per Unit	1,673	<b>2042</b>	369	22% Discretionary
Cemeteries	Existing	Interment Fee for Cremation Plot (Resident)	Per Unit	268	<b>402</b>	134	50% Discretionary
Cemeteries	Existing	Interment Fee for Cremation Plot (Non-Resident)	Per Unit	536	<b>804</b>	268	50% Discretionary
Cemeteries	Existing	Strew on any grave	Per unit	77	<b>107</b>	30	40% Discretionary
Cemeteries	Existing	Cardboard coffin	Per unit	286	<b>398</b>	112	40% Discretionary
Cemeteries	Existing	Use of Canley Chapel for burial service	Per unit	135	<b>188</b>	53	40% Discretionary
Cemeteries	Existing	Search Fee for family history	Per Hour or part	80	<b>111</b>	31	40% Discretionary
Cemeteries	Existing	Exhumation full grave	Per unit	2556	<b>3553</b>	997	40% Discretionary
Cemeteries	Existing	Exhumation – ashes	Per unit	661	<b>919</b>	258	40% Discretionary

Cemeteries	Existing	New Memorial Permit Fee	Per Unit	251	<b>284</b>	33	13% Discretionary
Cemeteries	Existing	Additional Inscription on a memorial permit fee	Per Unit	104	<b>118</b>	14	13% Discretionary
Cemeteries	Existing	Temporary marker – replacement	Per unit	55	<b>76</b>	21	40% Discretionary
Cemeteries	New	Temporary marker (New grave)	Per Unit	N/A	<b>25</b>	N/A	New Fee
Cemeteries	New	Late Arrival/ Over run service	Per unit of 15 minutes	158	<b>158 per 15 minutes</b>	0	New Fee
Cemeteries	New	Late cancellation fee (Chapel Charge)	Per unit	135	<b>188</b>		40% Discretionary New Fee
Crematorium	Existing	Cremation Fee	Per Unit	641	<b>737</b>	96	15% Discretionary
Crematorium	New	Saturday cremation fee	Per unit	737	<b>1106</b>		50% Discretionary New Fee
Crematorium	Existing	Medical referee's fees	Per unit	26	<b>30</b>	4	15% Discretionary
Crematorium	New	Strewing in Gardens of remembrance	Per unit	0	<b>45</b>		New Fee
Crematorium	Existing	Strewing of ashes from elsewhere	Per unit	80	<b>92</b>	12	15% Discretionary
Crematorium	Existing	Provision of urn	Per unit	34	<b>40</b>	6	18% Discretionary
Crematorium	New	Retention of ashes	Per month after 1 month	0	<b>25</b>		New Fee
Crematorium	Existing	Use of Canley Chapel	Per unit	135	<b>188</b>	53	40% Discretionary
Crematorium	Existing	Search Fee – family history	Per hour of part of	80	<b>111</b>	31	40% Discretionary
Crematorium	New	Late Fee / Over run service	Per unit of 15 minutes	158	<b>158 Per 15 minutes</b>	0	New Fee
Crematorium	New	Late cancellation Fee (chapel fee)	Per unit	135	<b>188</b>		40% Discretionary New fee
Memorialisation	Existing	Various Memorial Fees	Per Unit	Various			13% Discretionary