

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Cabinet Member for City Services held at 11.00 am on
Monday, 10 October 2016

Present:

Members: Councillor J Innes (Cabinet Member)
 Councillor M Hammon (Shadow Cabinet Member)
 Councillor R Lakha (Deputy Cabinet Member)

Employees:

G Hood, Place Directorate
L Knight, Resources Directorate
S McGinty, Resources Directorate

Public Business

17. Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

18. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 15th August were signed as a true record. There were no matters arising.

19. Revised Burial and Cremation Fees and Charges for 2016-17

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Executive Director of Place which sought approval for an increase in burial and cremation fees and charges from 1st November, 2016 to support the on-going provision of cremation, burial and funeral services to Coventry residents over the medium term. No further increases were then proposed until 1st January, 2018 after which fees and charges would be increased on 1st January each year for three years. These fees and charges which would be increased in line with the West Midlands benchmarking group average and approval was sought to delegate these further increases to the Assistant Director for Streetscene and Regulatory Services in consultation with the Place Directorate Finance Manager.

The report indicated that there were three distinct areas within Bereavement Services where charges were applied to service users: cremations, burials and memorials. Reference was made to the Council's charging policy, whereby all charges should be at least full cost recovery and in line with benchmarking against other providers. The Cabinet Member noted that a recent benchmarking exercise showed that Coventry had the lowest charges across the region and that in 2016/16 cremations had a shortfall against budget £60,000.

It was proposed to increase adult burial fees and charges by 39% and adult cremation fees by 15%. It was also proposed to remove all fees for children's burials and cremations for children resident in Coventry up to the age of 16. It was further proposed to increase post cremation memorialisation and permit

application fees by 13% and to apply fees and charges against services currently supplied which currently did not recover their full cost. Following these increases it was recommended that fees and charges would be increased from 1st January, 2018 and on 1st January for the subsequent three years in line with the West Midlands benchmarking group average.

The report also put forward a range of additional charges including a surcharge for Saturday cremations and charges for the following services which the Council currently provided free of charge:

- Retention of ashes in the crematorium
- Scattering of own ashes in the Garden 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.

Further information regarding the fees and the benchmarking was set out in appendices attached to the report. The additional income created by these increases would assist with the overall continued maintenance of the six cemeteries and the one crematoria administered by the Council.

The members present discussed the proposed increases and clarification was provided regarding the plans to charge for excessive late arrival for a service. Councillor Hammon, Shadow Cabinet Member expressed his opposition to the proposals.

RESOLVED that:

(1) The proposed increase to burial fees with effect from 1st November 2016 as detailed in the report be approved.

(2) The proposed increase to cremation fees with effect from 1st November 2016 as detailed in the report be approved.

(3) The proposed removal of children's burial and cremation fees with immediate effect for children who are resident in Coventry be approved.

(4) Approval be given that the additional fees be introduced from 1st November 2016 to achieve full cost recovery for services which are currently supplied free of charge or at a subsidised rate.

(5) Approval be given that an increase in fees and charges is applied from 1st January, 2018 and on 1st 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 percentage uplift to be applied).

20. **Outstanding Issues**

The Cabinet Member noted a report of the Executive Director of Resources that contained a list of outstanding issues and summarised the current position in respect of each item.

21. **Any other items of Public Business**

There were no other items of public business.

(Meeting closed at 11.20 am)