

Title of EIA – Policy Proposal		Increase in Bereavement Costs
EIA Author	Name	Sarah Elliott
	Position	Strategic Lead for Environmental Services
	Date of completion	22/11/2024 Post-consultation update 04/02/2025
Director	Name	Andrew Walster
	Position	Director for City Services
Cabinet Member	Name	Patricia Hetheron
	Portfolio	City Services

PLEASE REFER TO [EIA GUIDANCE](#) FOR ADVICE ON COMPLETING THIS FORM

SECTION 1 – Context & Background

1.1 In summary, what is the background to this proposal?

This proposal relates to a 5% increase to bereavement costs. By implementing this proposal Coventry City Council could generate up to £350,000 per year.

SECTION 2 – Consideration of Impact

Refer to guidance note for more detailed advice on completing this section.

In order to ensure that we do not discriminate in the way our activities are designed, developed and delivered, we must look at our duty to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conflict that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
- Advance equality of opportunity between two persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not

2.1 Baseline data and information

After benchmarking completed for 2024/5 the November increase places us currently at top of the benchmarking group regards our cremation fees (this includes Birmingham, Wolverhampton and Solihull). Benchmarking is no longer a viable process regards our fees and charges as we are no longer comparable.

Nationally we are the most expensive Local Authority crematorium in the Country. (There are only 4 Crematoria with a higher cost than our which are all privately owned).

BUDGET SETTING 2025-26 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA)

In the surrounding areas there are crematoria located in Yardley, Solihull, Rugby Nuneaton and work to build a crematorium is underway in Hinckley.

We carry out approx. 2600 cremations per year covering all denominations and religions including Hindu, Sikh, Christian, and non-religious services.

Bereavement Services currently supply approx. 50 Public Health Funerals for the provision of burial or cremation for deceased with no family or for those families who are unable to cover the costs of a funeral due to low income or being in poverty.

The data shows the increase applied for post cremation memorials (10% for the last 2 years) has resulted in a loss of income for 2 years running due to a reduction in memorial uptake.

The drop in income for memorialisation for 2023/24 & 24/25 is lower than pre pandemic times 2018/19 & 2019/20.

Impact

Bereavement Services increase fees and charges on an annual basis in November as per the industry norm. To apply a 2nd increase after 6 month of applying one on 1st Nov 2024 is unprecedented and will bring immediate negative response from our main stakeholders - Funeral Directors, bereaved families and ministers etc. Complaints may be generated at a local level by the Coventry Funeral Directors Guild. Given the City's position already in the pricing for cremations there is a chance that this will also attract the attention of the National Association of Funeral Directors, providing a national profile for any negative reputational risk.

Negative comments and complaints regards our fees and charges have the potential to spread via social media, news features and local tv and radio as 'funeral poverty is a national topic at present and within the last five years the competition and markets authority have nationally investigated funeral costs. Coventry was required to be part of this enquiry.

Bereaved families / Funeral Directors and other stakeholders could raise the lack of choice and options for the availability of cremation within Coventry City stating the local authority has an unfair monopoly on the provision of cremation.

Funeral Directors and bereaved family could consider utilising neighbouring Authority crematoria as the potential to pay 'extra mileage costs' will be cheaper than the difference in the cost of cremation re the provision of Canley compared to B'Ham or Rugby cremations etc. This will have a direct impact on income generated by the crematorium and also indirectly for the post cremation memorials budget.

If cremation services reduce as a result of families taking their loved ones to neighbouring Authority facilities as they are seen as more cost effective we will see a reduction in the number of ashes scattered in the Gardens which will have a negative impact on our income generated for the crematorium budget as well as we will see a reduction in the number of burial of ashes in the cemeteries which will reduce income generated for the cemeteries budget.

Analysis of the consultation feedback has shown that overall, respondents expressed concern about the increased financial pressures on bereaved families if this proposal is implemented. The assessment of potential equality impact has therefore remained as negative for this proposal.

Within the last two years the City Council has opened an in-house funeral director service to assist with the provision of funeral to everyone within the City, but with specific emphasis on helping to tackle funeral poverty. This service will be able to help residents that could be adversely affected by this proposal.

BUDGET SETTING 2025-26 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA)

2.2 On the basis of evidence, complete the table below to show what the potential impact is for each of the protected groups of residents/service users

- Positive impact (P),
- Negative impact (N)
- Both positive and negative impacts (PN)
- No impact (NI)
- Unknown impact (UI)

Protected Characteristic	Impact type P, N, PN, NI, UI	Nature of impact and any mitigations required
Age 0-18	NI	Childrens funerals and cremations remain free of charge for Coventry residents in these proposals.
Age 19-64	N	May be affected if increases in charges proves difficult to afford.
Age 65+	N	May be affected if increases in charges proves difficult to afford.
Disability	UI	
Gender reassignment	UI	
Pregnancy and maternity	UI	
Race (Including: colour, nationality, citizenship ethnic or national origins)	UI	
Religion and belief	UI	
Sex	UI	
Sexual orientation	UI	
Care-Experienced	UI	

**2.3 Will there be any potential impacts in relation to health and/or digital inequalities?
*Please think about issues such as socio-economic groups, areas of deprivation etc***

Heath inequalities.

The data from the SunLife Cost of Dying Report 2024 highlights the impact on the wide of health for families paying for a loved one's funeral.

The cost-of-living crisis and the impact of paying for a funeral on our wellbeing

- Over 4 in 10 (44%) people say the cost-of-living crisis impacted how they organised and/or paid for the funeral.
- And for 1 in 4 (24%), paying for a funeral affects standard of living. 6% struggle to pay essential bills or rent, and 1 in 10 (10%) have to cut back on essential items such as food.

BUDGET SETTING 2025-26 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA)

- Of those who experience notable financial difficulties when paying for the funeral, over 3 in 4 (76%) people say it impacted their mental health. And 67% say it impacted their physical health.

The data above highlights the direct impact on people and families paying for a funeral. This impact will be significant for households and families who are more likely to experience health inequalities, who are more likely to be receiving a low income, who could be impacted by price increases and be unable to meet the costs of burial/cremation, impact their health and wellbeing.

3.0 Will there be any potential impacts on Council staff from protected groups? If yes complete the table below:

Protected Characteristic	Number of Employees impacted	Impact type P, N, PN, NI, UI	Nature of impact and any mitigations required
Age 16 -18		NI	
Age 19-64		NI	
Age 65+		NI	
Disability		NI	
Gender reassignment		NI	
Pregnancy and maternity		NI	
Race (Including: colour, nationality, citizenship ethnic or national origins)		NI	
Religion and belief		NI	
Sex		NI	
Sexual orientation		NI	

4.0 How could you monitor and evaluate the effect of this proposal?

The way the impact of this proposal will be monitored is through complaints and comments received during both the consultation exercise and if/once the change is implemented (if adopted).

**BUDGET SETTING 2025-26
EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA)**

5.0	Action Planning	
Issue Identified	Planned Actions	Timeframe

6.0 Completion Statement

The potential equality impact of this proposal is as follows:

- No impact has been identified for one or more protected groups
- Positive impact has been identified for one or more protected groups
- Negative impact has been identified for one or more protected groups
- Both positive and negative impact has been identified for one or more protected groups
- The potential impact of this proposal on protected groups is not yet known

7.0 Approval

Name of Director: Andrew Walster	Date: 23rd November 2024 Post-consultation approval: 11/02/25
Name of Lead Elected Member: Cllr P Hetherton	Date sent to Councillor: 02/12/24 Post-consultation approval: 11/02/25