

Committee(s): Port Health and Environmental Services Committee – For decision	Date(s): 15/01/2019
Subject: Cemetery and Crematorium – Fees, Charges and Marketing	Public
Report of: Director of Open Spaces Department	For Decision
Report author: Gary Burks – Superintendent & Registrar	

Summary

Fees and charges for the services provided at the City of London Cemetery and Crematorium are reviewed annually and this report presents the proposals for 2019/20. It also sets out the marketing activities which have been undertaken in 2018/19 and outlines those for 2019/20.

The report proposes price increases of 3% for cremations, new graves and most other items and services such as grave permits and urns and caskets. No increase for memorial garden dedications, book of remembrance, grave care and baby burials are recommended. There has also been some rounding of fees. The Cemetery & Crematorium continues to offer a wide range of cremation and burial options to ensure that both services cater to a range of needs and budgets.

The proposed increases are set to meet increased operational costs, support service improvements and help us in our aim to maintain a break-even position for the service.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked

- Agrees the fees and charges as set out in this report and shown in the Appendix for implementation with effect from 1 April 2019, and;
- Notes the marketing activities undertaken in 2018 and those planned for 2019 for the Cemetery and Crematorium service.

Main Report

Background

1. The City of London Cemetery and Crematorium reviews the fees and charges that it makes for the services provided each year and the new fees come into force on the 1st April each year. This report sets out the proposed fees and charges for the year 2019/20 for your Committee's approval. This report also details the promotional activities undertaken in the year 2018 and outlines those planned for 2019.

Marketing – Year 2018 Activities

2. The Cemetery and Crematorium Service carried out the following marketing and promotional activities in 2018.
3. The staff provided heritage tours throughout the summer months and again took part in Open House London in September. All publicised tours of the cemetery grounds and buildings were well attended, and feedback continues to be very positive. We will therefore continue with our tours in 2019.
4. The cemetery and crematorium continued to provide education and training to schools, universities, hospital trusts and industry partners. The Cemetery also hosted two Christmas Carol services in its burial chapel as well as allowing our modern crematorium to be used by the local Catholic community for a memorial service.
5. The City has continued to lead the way in the reclamation and re-use of graves and the Superintendent has been interviewed for television and newspapers regarding the burial space crisis and grave reuse. The Superintendent also continues to represent the City of London at BCAG (Burials and Cremations Advisory Group) which was set up to advise government in December 2001 following the report on cemeteries by the Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs Committee.
6. The Superintendent has also promoted the work of the City Corporation though providing advice to several London Local Authorities and international cemetery operators.
7. The cemetery and crematorium service is promoted in the bereavement guides and websites for Havering, Redbridge, Newham, Waltham Forest, Westminster and The City as well as the One-Stop-Shops in council offices across East London. All the above have links to the cemetery website.
8. The service has made good use of the internet by providing a great deal of information on its website, including fees and charges, our colour brochure (detailing the services provided), visitor information, newsletters, contact telephone numbers, opening times and so on. Our times of opening are displayed on Google My Business and this has ensured that information retrieved from the internet is more up-to-date. We have also introduced a pilot

on-line search facility to allow people to carry out genealogy searches of our historic register information from their own homes.

<https://col-burialregisters.uk/>

9. The Cemetery was unable to post out its biennial newsletter this year due to GDPR requirements. However, a letter was sent regarding this to the 6,000 or so permit holders also offering an electronic version and the response has been very encouraging and demonstrates significant support for the newsletter and the permit scheme.

Year 2019 Activities

10. The Cemetery will continue to produce biannual newsletters to promote and provide information about the service, will continue advertise in all local bereavement publications and websites and offer history tours and educational visits. The Christmas Carol Service remains extremely popular and will be repeated in 2019.
11. The service will continue to develop closer links with funeral directors through visits and liaison meetings and will continue to work with schools, universities, health trusts and industry bodies to improve education and training in all matters relating to cemetery work. We will also continue to work with the City's Communications Team promoting the use of the grounds and buildings for filming purposes when it does not conflict with our core functions of providing funerals.

Fees and Charges

12. The strategy used when setting fees and charges in previous years has been to keep prices affordable, maintain choice and increase income to meet the needs of the service and operate as close to a break-even position as possible. Last year fees were increased by 6% for cremations, 5% new graves and most other items and services such as grave permits, urns and caskets. But no increase for memorial gardens, book of remembrance, grave care and baby and child burials.
13. In setting fees in a competitive market it is critical to consider those charged by our competitors. We have therefore reviewed the fees and charges amongst other authorities and private companies in the surrounding areas; details are given in tables 1 and 2 below. It should be noted that several of our competitors increase fees in October but most wait for the City to set its fees and use them as a benchmark.
14. Another factor that the cemetery and crematorium consider when setting fees is the affect that our charges place on funeral debt and funeral poverty. The CMA (Competition and Markets Authority) recently published an interim report after carrying out a market study into the funeral sector and the findings highlighted significant concerns regarding price increases over the last decade, it is likely that further investigations will follow. The cost of funerals has climbed significantly in recent years and the City of London Corporation has considered

this when offering a range of funeral choice and in the setting of fees and charges. We provide choice and prices to ensure that burial and cremation remains affordable.

15. There was a government announcement at Easter 2018 regarding the creation of a Children’s Funeral Fund for England, and that there would be no charge for the burial or cremation of anyone under the age on 18 years. Sadly, there has been no guidance issued since this statement and therefore fees still apply where historically they always have, until there is guidance from government and a central funding structure is in place to manage this. Advice from central government is that authorities should continue to charge fees as usual until there is time for consultation and a clear way forward regarding government funding.
16. The following tables provide analysis of cremation and lawn grave costs. These have been provided in detail as indicative benchmarks. A full list of all the proposed burial and cremation charges at the Cemetery & Crematorium is provided in the appendix and these include a wide variety of funeral options ranging from early morning “drop off” cremation slots with no service to longer weekend funeral times and from burial in a public or woodland grave through to large fully constructed graves with 100year leases. This wide range helps to ensure choice and that more affordable options remain despite price increases.

**Table 1 – Cremation Statistics and Fees for Other London Crematoria
Current Position**

Crematorium	Total Cremations 2015	Total Cremations 2016	Total Cremations 2017	Standard Cremation Fees (Current)
City of London	2630	2432	2474	£864
Enfield	2273	2024	1874	£913
Harlow	1813	1824	1719	£895
Forest Park	1334	1321	1234	£895
New Southgate	864	807	836	£895
South Essex	3192	3193	3211	£875
Croydon	1905	1758	1772	£840
East London	596	520	451	£815
Manor Park	391	380	465	£798
Proposed Fee for 2019/20				£890

Table 1 shows that the City’s current cremation fee is competitive with other local cemeteries and crematoria and that the proposed fee is in keeping with fees within the general area and continues to provide value for money whilst providing the extra income needed to meet efficiency and inflationary increases.

Please note that City of London Residents receive a 50% reduction on the full cremation fee.

Table 2 – Residential & Non-Residential Grave Purchase and burial fees

Cemetery & Crematorium & Lease (in years)	New Lawn grave Resident & Non-Resident (including 1 st interment) 18/19	Burial Fee (Current)
East London	Not publicly available *No non-res fees	Not Publicly Available
Manor Park	£3,750 *No non-res fees	£1,587
Forest Park	(Res) £2,760 (Non-Res) £5,260	(Res) £700 (Non-Res) £1,555
South Essex	(Res) £3,390 (Non-Res) £6,780	(Res) £1,320 (Non-Res) £2,640
Enfield	(Res) £5,850 (Non-Res) £8,410	(Res) £1,590 (Res) £1,590
Croydon	(Res) £4,497 (Non-Res) £8,378	(Res) £1,046 (Non-Res) £1,476
New Southgate	Standard Grave £6,250 Heritage Grave £4,500 *No non-res fees	£1,650
City of London (Heritage Grave)	£3,440	£1,560
City of London (Virgin soil) Lawn	£4665	£1,560
Proposed fee for 2019/20	Heritage Grave £3,542 Virgin Soil Lawn £4,805	£1,607

17. Table 2 illustrates that there is a significant variation between fees but that the City of London Corporation remains in line with those of other nearby local authorities and with our nearest private competitors and that our burial fees are also broadly competitive. However, the landscape value, service provision and maintenance levels at the site means that it remains the preferred choice for many who choose burial for a loved one.
18. Residents of the City of London currently receive a reduced rate for burial and cremation which amounts to half of the cremation fee (a maximum of £432 in 2018/19).

A copy of the cemetery brochure showing the various burial options can be found using the following link:

<https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/things-to-do/green-spaces/cemetery-and-crematorium/Documents/pre-funeral-brouchure.pdf>

Proposals

19. Having considered the information set out above and also having consulted within the funeral industry and with cemetery staff we believe that the market can withstand the price increases proposed in the following paragraphs. However, memorial gardens, book of remembrance and grave care as well as baby burial fees will remain the same as evidence suggests that a further increase at this time will harm the business or create extra hardship on the bereaved families of babies and children. The cost of a child burial in an adult grave is reduced by the full adult cremation fee. (£864 in 2018/19)
20. The general level of increase proposed is 3% for cremations, burials and ancillary services, there will also be some rounding of fees. This will increase our cremation fee to £890 which will provide the income required to meet the efficiency savings and service improvements required. However, we do not envisage that this will affect our market share due to the excellent level of service provided and the likely increases that will be made by our local competitors.
21. It was highlighted in the 2017/18 fees and charges report that it was unlikely that large increases for burial and cremation fees would not be sustainable in the long term but that the Superintendent would continue to closely monitor the local increases to ensure that fees remain at the appropriate level to meet future savings whilst maintaining market position and protecting the City Corporation from significant negative media interest. This is indeed the case but it is felt that the recommended increase will ensure that the Cemetery continues to maximise income whilst keeping fees affordable to the bereaved and service users.
22. Options such as early cremation services at a lower fee ensure that those families on low income can still choose the City of London as a choice for the funeral of a loved one and our fee for funerals with no service means that families choosing to have a funeral service elsewhere (at a local church for example) can do so. This means that our proposed cremation fees range from £445 up to £1272 for those with a full service in our chapel.
23. In March of 2016 your Committee received a report from the cemetery and crematorium highlighting that some burial options would run out soon and that the cemetery would become more reliant on grave reuse. The first such option was lawn graves where that land has been previously used for burial. This was our least expensive burial option where a memorial is possible and the preferred option for the bereaved. Recognising this and wanting to continue to offer an affordable burial option to most local people we introduced a 30year option for Heritage Graves and the fee for this option mirrored that of the lawn graves that

they will replace. I am please to say that this has been successful and has brought the heritage (grave reuse) option into the mainstream of our burial offer, making it the one of the preferred options for the bereaved.

24. Cremation memorialisation, such as the memorial gardens dedications, with a living memorial in the form of a rose or shrub and small bronze plaque has been in decline for the last ten years and research shows that this is a national trend. The option of a formal memorial after cremation is simply not as popular as it once was. We therefore propose that there will be no increase for these options in 2019/20. Similarly, we propose to freeze the fees for grave care and book of remembrance entries for 2019/20 and an assessment will be made on the effect on sales.
25. A list of the main items of the proposed scale of charges for the year 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020 is attached as an appendix to this report. A full printed list is available on request.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

26. The Open Spaces Department actively contributes to the following Corporate Plan 2018-23 aims and outcomes:

Contribute to a flourishing society

- People enjoy good health and wellbeing
- People have equal opportunities to enrich their lives and reach their full potential
- Communities are cohesive and have the facilities they need

Shape outstanding environments

- We inspire enterprise, excellence, creativity and collaboration
- We have clean air, land and water and a thriving and sustainable natural environment.
- Our spaces are secure, resilient and well-maintained

Support a thriving economy

- Our land management supports local businesses and enterprises

Financial Implications

27. The Cemetery and crematorium is expected to operate as a not for profit service and to meet all costs, where possible. We will achieve this by introducing a new pricing plan rather than by a reduction in staffing as this would place significant stress on the business and risk a reduction in the quality of maintenance and the service provided to bereaved families. The above increases should generate additional income of approximately £80,000. However, it must be stressed that the services that we provide are at the point of need which creates unpredictability around the achievement of income.

Legal Implications

28. The City of London is empowered to make fees and charges for the services provided at the Cemetery and Crematorium under powers provided within Article 15(1) of the Local Authorities Cemeteries Order 1977 and section 9 of the Cremation Act 1902. Such fees must be properly incurred.

Conclusion

29. As the major provider of burial and cremation services for the City and its neighbours, the Corporation is recognised as one of the UK's leading burial and cremation authorities. In addition to meeting the needs of the bereaved, the City of London Cemetery and Crematorium is an historic and listed open space (the largest in the London Borough of Newham) and one that was originally designed as both a park and an educational resource. The Cemetery and Crematorium is however also a business in competition with several local public and privately-owned operators.
30. The above factors have been taken into account in setting the fees and charges for the Cemetery and Crematorium for implementation in financial year 2019/20 which I propose for approval by your Committee.

Background Papers:

Fees, Charges and Marketing Report 2018 – 2019

Burial Space Report March 2016

- Appendix (i) – main items of the Proposed Fees and Charges for 2018/19

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