

<b>Committee(s):</b>  Port Health and Environmental Services Committee – For decision	<b>Date(s):</b>  14/01/2019
<b>Subject:</b> Cemetery and Crematorium – Fees, Charges and Marketing	<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Director of Open Spaces Department	<b>For Decision</b>
<b>Report author:</b> 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 2020/21. It also sets out the marketing activities which have been undertaken in 2019 and outlines those for 2020.

The report proposes price increases of 4.5% for cremations, 5% for new graves and burials and 2.6% on most other items and services such as grave permits, urns and caskets, memorial garden dedications, book of remembrance 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 and ensure our fees are in line with other providers in the local area.

### **Recommendation(s)**

Members are asked to:

- Agree the fees and charges as set out in this report and shown in the Appendix for implementation with effect from 1 April 2020, and;
- Note the marketing activities undertaken in 2019 and those planned for 2020 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 1<sup>st</sup> April each year. This report sets out the proposed fees and charges for the year 2020/21 for your Committee's approval. This report also details the promotional activities undertaken in the year 2019 and outlines those planned for 2020.

### **Marketing and Promotion – Year 2019 Activities**

2. The Cemetery and Crematorium Service carried out the following marketing and promotional activities in 2019.
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 2020.
4. The cemetery and crematorium continued to provide education, advice and training to schools, universities, hospital trusts and industry partners such as Highgate, Brompton and LB Lambeth. We 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 in November.
5. The City Corporation 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 Corporation 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 Barking and Havering, Redbridge, Newham and the City, along with the Wanstead Village Directory and South Woodford Village Gazette. 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 receive an average of 4000 hits a month on our website.

9. 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. This was successfully used by a researcher to discover the burial place of Joseph Merrick (the Elephant man) and we are currently in the process of adding more burial records to this on-line offer.

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

10. The Cemetery was able to produce its biannual newsletter and it has been confirmed through last year's GDPR communications that it is well received and that in general, most cemetery users like to receive a paper version rather than an electronic version, although an electronic version is available.

### **Year 2020 Activities**

11. The Cemetery will continue to produce biannual newsletters to promote and provide information about the service, will continue to advertise in the aforementioned publications and websites and offer history tours and educational visits. The Christmas Carol Service remains extremely popular and will be repeated in 2020.
12. 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**

13. 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 3% for cremations, new graves, burials 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.
14. 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 and January but most wait for the City to set its fees and use them as a benchmark.
15. 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 carried out a National questionnaire and follow-up questions based on the findings of an interim report in 2018 which highlighted significant concerns regarding price increases of funeral directors and crematoria 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. The City of London Corporation provides choice and prices to ensure that burial and cremation remains affordable (see paragraph 17 below).

16. 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. The Children’s Funeral fund went live earlier this year and the Superintendent has been working with the Ministry of Justice to help clarify the limitations of the fund. This work continues.
17. 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 2016	Total Cremations 2017	Total Cremations 2018	Standard Cremation Fees (Current)
East London	520	451	499	£844
Manor Park	380	465	407	£845
Croydon	1758	1772	1762	£857
New Southgate	807	836	786	£895
South Essex	3193	3211	3012	£905
Enfield	2024	1874	1879	£913
Forest Park	1321	1234	1312	£930
Harlow	1824	1719	1517	£940
<b>City of London Proposed Fee for 2020/21</b>	2432	2474	2536	<b>£930</b>
<b>City of London Residents receive a reduction of £465 on the above fees</b>				

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 inflationary increases and provide service improvements.

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

Cemetery & Crematorium & Lease (in years)	New Lawn grave Resident & Non-Resident (including 1 <sup>st</sup> interment) 19/20	Burial Fee (Current)
East London	Not publicly available No non-res fees	Not Publicly Available
Manor Park	£3,950 No non-res fees	£1,665
Forest Park	(Res) £3,030  (Non-Res) £6,984	(Res) £770  (Non-Res) £1,100
South Essex	(Res) £3,492  (Non-Res) £6,984	(Res) £1,360  (Non-Res) £2,720
Enfield	(Res) £6,045  (Non-Res) £8,695	(Res) £1,640  (Non-Res) £1,640
Croydon	(Res) £4,587  (Non-Res) £8,546	(Res) £1,067  (Non -Res) £1,506
New Southgate	Standard Grave £6,250 Heritage Grave £4,500 No non-res fees	£1,650
City of London (Heritage Grave)	£3,542	£1,607
City of London (virgin soil) Lawn	£4,805	£1,607
<b>Proposed fee for 2020/21</b>	<b>Heritage £3,718</b> <b>Virgin Soil Lawn £5,047</b>  <b>City of London Residents receive a reduction of £465 on the above fees</b>	<b>£1,687</b>

18. Table 2 illustrates that there is a significant variation between fees, but 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 burial location choice for many.
19. 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 £465 in 2020/21).

20. 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

21. Having considered the information set out above and 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.
22. The general level of increase proposed is 4.5% for cremations, 5% for burials and ancillary services and 2.6% (the department's recognised inflation figure) for memorial gardens, book of remembrance and grave care. There will also be some rounding of fees. This will increase our cremation fee to £930 which will provide the income required to meet the inflationary increases in goods and services and service improvements that are 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.
23. 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 of £465 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 £465 up to £1330 for those with a full service in our chapel at the weekend.
24. 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 (reuse) Graves and the fee for this option mirrored that of the lawn graves that they 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.
25. 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 20 years and research shows that this is a national trend. We have held the price of this choice static for the last two years but feel that it no longer represents the cost of operating the provision. We therefore propose to increase the fees for memorial garden dedications by 2.6%. Similarly, we propose to increase the fees for grave care and book of remembrance entries by the same level.

26. A list of the main items of the proposed scale of charges for the year 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 is attached as an appendix to this report. A full printed list is available on request.

### **Corporate & Strategic Implications**

27. The Cemetery and Crematorium services actively contribute to the following Corporate Plan 2018-23 aims and outcomes:

#### **Contribute to a flourishing society**

- People are safe and feel safe
- 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**

- Businesses are trusted and socially and environmentally responsible

### **Financial Implications**

28. 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 expenditure 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 £70,000. However, it must be stressed that the services that we provide are at the point of need and whilst we may retain our percentage share of the market, any regional trend in death rates may create unpredictability around the achievement of income.

### **Legal Implications**

29. 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**

30. 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.

31. The above factors have been considered in setting the fees and charges for the Cemetery and Crematorium for implementation in financial year 2020/21 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 2020/21

**Gary Burks**

Superintendent & Registrar

Cemetery and Crematorium. Open Spaces Department

T: 0208 530 9831

E: [gary.burks@cityoflondon.gov.uk](mailto:gary.burks@cityoflondon.gov.uk)