

Notice of Non-key Executive Decision

Subject Heading:	Restructuring of fees for funeral tribute products to reflect new supplier – Bereavement Services
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Viddy Persaud, Cabinet Member for Public Protection & Safety
SLT Lead:	Barry Francis, Director of Neighbourhoods
Report Author and contact details:	<i>Louise Roast</i> <u><i>Louise.roast@haverling.gov.uk</i></u> 01708 433498
Policy context:	This decision proposes a variety of new or re-structured fees within the Bereavement Service, to reflect a change in supplier for Funeral Media Tribute products.
Financial summary:	The changes to the fees support income generation within the Bereavement & Registration Service
Relevant OSC:	Towns & Communities
Is this decision exempt from being called-in?	Yes.

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The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives

Communities making Havering	<input type="checkbox"/>
Places making Havering	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Opportunities making Havering	<input type="checkbox"/>
Connections making Havering	<input type="checkbox"/>

Place an X in the [] as appropriate

Part A – Report seeking decision

DETAIL OF THE DECISION REQUESTED AND RECOMMENDED ACTION

To allow for the introduction of new and better quality funeral media tribute products this paper is seeking permission to introduce new and restructured fees within Bereavement Services to reflect a change in supplier.

This paper also seeks permission to correct an error to the fees & charges schedule submitted for 21/22

AUTHORITY UNDER WHICH DECISION IS MADE

Constitution -2.5 The following Functions may be delegated to individual Cabinet members by the Leader

. (x) To approve all in year changes to both fees & charges

STATEMENT OF THE REASONS FOR THE DECISION

To allow for the introduction of new and better quality funeral media tribute products this paper is seeking permission to introduce new and restructured fees within Bereavement Services to reflect a change in supplier (from 'Wesley Media' to 'Obitus').

To provide some background and context, it was determined during the first peak of Covid that Wesley Media were no longer able to offer the high standard of service expected by bereaved families. As a company they were not geared up to deal with the high volume demand of funeral media products, exacerbated by the pandemic, that bereaved families require and internal changes within the company meant they were not offering a high standard of customer care, leading to complaints.

An assessment of the options has taken place which has determined that to offer the full range of funeral media products, it has to be through a bespoke funeral media system (an assessment by ICT determined that it would not, for example, be possible to offer webcasting via Zoom, as this is just a platform only and would not offer the full end to end service, audio would not be possible to use due to music licence issues therefore any webcasting of a funeral through zoom would be silent. Additional staffing resources would be required in each chapel to run zoom calls as well as administer zoom invites and scheduling)

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In assessing the market, the service has explored other providers and determined that the 'Obitus' is the preferred alternative supplier. Whereas Wesley were the only supplier of this kind at one time, they have now been superseded within this market by Obitus, who have a greater ability to cope with high volume demand in busy Crematoriums and provide a much better customer service, for example, they offer a dedicated after sales service, a monitoring service for webcasts that should mitigate webcast failures and therefore complaints, a dedicated customer service to funeral professionals along with an easy to use on-line booking portal. Feedback from other crematoria who use Obitus has been very positive and they have a greater ability to cope with high volume demand in a very busy crematorium like ours.

The change in supplier will help to protect our reputation going forward particularly during these pandemic times as these funeral media products are very popular with restrictions currently in place on mourner numbers and it being permissible to attend a funeral with Covid, also means there are many people that would prefer to watch a funeral remotely due to risk. The service is going live with Obitus on a year long trial basis before any longer term decisions are made (agreed via Procurement exception due to low value of contract).

The recommendation is to replace the existing media funeral product fees with Obitus RRP prices (see appendix). It is believed the products and fees will meet customer needs and expectations and this is in line with other Crematoria, surrounding South Essex Crematorium who also offer Obitus at RRP prices.

This will therefore afford South Essex Crematorium a more competitive edge as our current Wesley offering is less superior, more expensive, causes complaints, bad publicity and potentially damages our reputation. Furthermore, the customer will ultimately receive a better service with the Obitus offering, who are much more customer focussed, will meet the needs of our residents and the Government's position on child funeral poverty as Obitus provide specific products for child funerals.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

Not changing fees & charges to reflect Obitus RRP was considered and rejected as it would mean existing fees & charges would not reflect the new product range and we would not be offer the additional products without published fees with the change in supplier.

PRE-DECISION CONSULTATION

Councillor Viddy Persaud has been consulted

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NAME AND JOB TITLE OF STAFF MEMBER ADVISING THE DECISION-MAKER

Name: Louise Roast,

Designation: Head of Registration & Bereavement Services

Signature:

Date: 8.4.21

Part B - Assessment of implications and risks

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

None

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

It is estimated that that the impact on the budget is neutral. The new fees are based on the new product range, which differs slightly from the previous offering but will not have any significant impact overall.

The offer of funeral tribute products also ensures the South Essex Crematorium retain its market share of cremation business, as both the family of the deceased and Funeral Directors expect the provision of such products, and this is particularly so in these pandemic times when mourner numbers are restricted.

The budget impact factors the above in:

Income Budget 2021 (*Cremation & Funeral Tributes*) £2.838m

Income Forecasted 2021 (*Cremation & Funeral Tributes- Wesley*) £3.060m

It is not anticipated that the change to Obitus fees will make any significant difference to overall budget position. If anything the service expects increased sales with a more reliable product offering and less time dealing with complaints and other issues from the previous supplier.

Costs in 20/21 to provide the Wesley service are £0.055m (products, licencing & maintenance) and this will remain the approximate costs going forward with the Obitus products.

HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS (AND ACCOMMODATION IMPLICATIONS WHERE RELEVANT)

None

EQUALITIES AND SOCIAL INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

The recommended change to fees & charges to reflect the new product range provides affordable, high quality funeral media products that are available to all. They meet customer's diverse needs and requirements in a variety of ways, for example, recognising that it is not always possible to attend a funeral in person, this could be due to illness or disability; due to the current need to socially isolate; or due to fear/risk

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arising from the pandemic. The ability to purchase these products means customers are not socially excluded from participation in funerals and ultimately, helps with the grieving and bereavement process.

The change in fees to match the new product range enables and supports all of the above and will be monitored for any unintended equality implications.

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires the Council, when exercising its functions, to have 'due regard' to:

- (i) The need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- (ii) The need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share protected characteristics and those who do not, and;
- (iii) Foster good relations between those who have protected characteristics and those who do not.

Note: 'Protected characteristics' are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnerships, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex/gender, and sexual orientation.

The Council is committed to all of the above in the provision, procurement and commissioning of its services, and the employment of its workforce. In addition, the Council is also committed to improving the quality of life and wellbeing for all Havering residents in respect of socio-economics and health determinants.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

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Part C – Record of decision

I have made this executive decision in accordance with authority delegated to me by the Leader of the Council and in compliance with the requirements of the Constitution.

Decision

Proposal agreed

Details of decision maker

Signed



Name: Councillor Viddy Persaud

Cabinet Portfolio held:

CMT Member title:

Head of Service title

Other manager title:

Date:

Lodging this notice

The signed decision notice must be delivered to the proper officer, Debra Marlow, Principal Democratic Services Officer in Democratic Services, in the Town Hall.

For use by Committee Administration

This notice was lodged with me on _____

Signed _____