

## Notice of Non-key Executive Decision

<b>Subject Heading:</b>	Increase to Bereavement Services Fees & Charges
<b>Decision Maker:</b>	Councillor Paul Middleton, Cabinet Member for Digital, Transformation & Customer Services.
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Councillor Paul Middleton, Cabinet Member for Digital, Transformation & Customer Services.
<b>SLT Lead:</b>	Paul Fisher, Director of Customer Services
<b>Report Author and contact details:</b>	Louise Roast, Assistant Director Registration & Bereavement Services <a href="mailto:Louise.roast@havering.gov.uk">Louise.roast@havering.gov.uk</a>
<b>Policy context:</b>	Charging for Services
<b>Financial summary:</b>	The decision supports income generation for the Council's Bereavement Service.
<b>Relevant OSC:</b>	
<b>Is this decision exempt from being called-in?</b>	The decision will be exempt from call in as it is a Non key Decision

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

People - Things that matter for residents

Place - A great place to live, work and enjoy

Resources - A well run Council that delivers for People and Place. X

***Place an X as appropriate***

**Part A – Report seeking decision**

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### **DETAIL OF THE DECISION REQUESTED AND RECOMMENDED ACTION**

This report seeks approval from the Cabinet Member for Digital, Transformation & Customer Services to:

- Approve the in year increase of cremation fees within Bereavement Services, to take effect from 1 December 2023.

### **AUTHORITY UNDER WHICH DECISION IS MADE**

Constitution: Part 3 – Responsibility for functions

Corporate Functions of Cabinet

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 and charges.

### **STATEMENT OF THE REASONS FOR THE DECISION**

The Council's Bereavement Services wish to increase their Cremation fees effective from 1 December 2023, the background and reasons for this decision are outlined below.

Bereavement Services are responsible for the running of the South Essex Crematorium and 4 Cemeteries based at Upminster, Romford, Hornchurch and Rainham; for the maintenance and upkeep of extensive memorial grounds and visitor facilities and the selling of a wide range of memorial products.

South Essex Crematorium is among the tenth busiest Crematorium in the country, In 22/23 the service carried out 2872 cremation generating £2.7m. This year however, the service is experiencing a downturn in demand due to a lower than normal death rate in Havering (to put that into context, in 2023 up to week 35, there were 1472 deaths in Havering compared to 1606 up to the same week in 2022.).

This is directly impacting upon the numbers of cremations being carried out, which as at the end of September 2023 was 12% down comparing the period April – Sept 2023 to the same period in 2022.

Whilst the lower number of deaths is positive there is a negative financial impact on the revenue budget and the service has been seeking ways to address this. It is therefore recommending a fee increase on Cremation charges, to help address this

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and other inflationary pressures and rising costs of energy. The recommendation is to increase fees as follows:

<b>Current fee for adult cremation</b>	<b>Proposed Fee</b>
£995 fee for a 40 minute service in the East Chapel	£1,060
£1,060 fee for a 60 minute service in the South Chapel	£1,115

A recent benchmarking exercise demonstrates the above proposed fees are in line with the market and competitive. For example, the proposed fees for a 60 minute service brings us in line with comparable fees at our 2 neighbouring Crematoria (with whom we are in direct competition)– Bentley (Brentwood) and Basildon who both charge £1,115 for a 60 min slot and we would still remain cheaper than Forest Park who charge £1,170.

Having the luxury of 2 chapels, which not every Crematoria has, also means we can offer a shorter, slightly cheaper slot for £1,060 in our smaller (East) chapel which has a capacity of 40 (as opposed to 150 in our South Chapel) providing a more cost effective alternative for families. We know from feedback from Funeral Directors this is a welcomed alternative for those with a smaller number of mourners. Approximately 55% of families opt for the smaller chapel.

It is felt the above proposed increase on fees (which is capped at 6.5%) are fair and justifiable in these current challenging economic times.

### **OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED**

Not increasing cremation fees has been considered and rejected due to the negative financial impact it would have on the budget.

### **PRE-DECISION CONSULTATION**

Councillor Paul Middleton, Cabinet Member for Digital, Transformation & Customer Services.

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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:

Handwritten signature of Louise Roast in cursive script.

Date: 01.11.23

## Part B - Assessment of implications and risks

### LEGAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Generally and in terms of charges, the Local Authorities have the power to charge for discretionary services as per Section 93 of the Local Government Act 2003.

Under Section 214 of the Local Government Act 1972, the Council as a Local Authority can provide burial services (burial authority). Additionally, the Local Authorities' Cemeteries Order 1977 (1977 Order) has added functions with respect to cremation to the functions of burial authorities. Therefore, the above regulations can confirm that the Council has such power to provide cremation services.

As per Section 15 of the 1977 Order, burial authorities have the power to charge such fees as they think proper:

- a) for or in connection with burials in a cemetery;
- b) for any grant of a right to place and maintain a tombstone or other memorial in a cemetery otherwise than in a chapel provided as mentioned in article 6(1)(b);  
or
- c) for any grant of a right to put an additional inscription on such a tombstone or other memorial.

Moreover, as per Section 9 of the Cremation Act 1902, a burial authority may demand payment of (any such) charges or fees, for the burning of human remains in any crematorium provided by them, as may be authorised by any table approved by the Local Government Board, and such charges or fees, and any other expenses properly incurred in or in connection with the cremation of a deceased person, shall be deemed to be part of the funeral expenses of the deceased.

Generally, Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 allows the Council to do anything which is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to, the discharge of any of its functions, or through its general power of competence. Additionally, through its general power of competence under Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011, the Council can do anything that individuals generally may do, subject to statutory limitations.

For the reasons set out above and throughout the report, the Council may proceed to the increase of fees for their cremation services.

### FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Increasing the fee will support income generation within Bereavement Services whilst remaining competitive in the market.

The full impact of this increase cannot be fully detailed as it is wholly dependent on demand.

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	Current (£)	Proposed (£)	Increase (£)
40 minute service in the East Chapel	995	1,060	65
60 minute service in the South Chapel	1,060	1,115	55

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

There are no human resources implications or risks

### **EQUALITIES AND SOCIAL INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS**

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, sex, race, disability, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnerships, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity and gender reassignment.

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.

The new fees & charges proposed will be open and available to all and will ensure the service continues to offer a good selection of pricing options for customers.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS**

There are no environmental and climate change implications or risks

### **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None

### **APPENDICIES**

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

*Delete as applicable*

Proposal NOT agreed because

**Details of decision maker**

Signed

*Paul Middleton*

Name: Paul Middleton

**Cabinet Portfolio held: It, Digital Transformation, Customer Services and Bereavement**

CMT Member title:

Head of Service title

Other manager title:

Date: 01/11/23

**Lodging this notice**

The signed decision notice must be delivered to Democratic Services, in the Town Hall.

**For use by Committee Administration**

This notice was lodged with me on \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_