

Agenda



Greater Gwent Cremation Joint Committee

Date: Wednesday, 24 January 2018

Time: 2.00 pm

Venue: Committee Room 4 - Civic Centre

To: Councillors Clark (Chair), Evans, D Davies, R Jeavons, Edwards, Daniels, Jones, Williams, Simmonds, Taylor and Tom

Item		Wards Affected
1	<u>Apologies for Absence</u>	
2	<u>Declarations of Interest</u>	
3	<u>Minutes of the Previous Meeting</u> (Pages 3 - 6)	
4	<u>Review of Fees and Revenue Estimates for 2018/19</u> (Pages 7 - 10)	
5	<u>Facilities Management</u> To receive an oral update from the Newport Norse representative	
6	<u>Funeral Director's Report</u> To consider any issues raised by local Funeral Directors	
7	<u>Manager's Report</u> (Pages 11 - 12)	
8	<u>Meetings for 2018</u> To agree the following meeting dates: 14 March 13 June 12 September 12 December	

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Minutes



Greater Gwent Cremation Joint Committee

Date: 13 September 2017

Time: 2.00 pm

Present: Councillors Evans, D Davies, R Jeavons, Simmonds and Taylor

In attendance:

Gareth Price (Head of Law & Regulation), Joanne Hazlewood (Finance Business Partner), Paul Dundon (Superintendent Registrar) and Anne Jenkins (Democratic Services Officer)

1 Apologies for Absence

Councillors R Clark (Torfaen) and B Jones (Monmouthshire), K Crawley (Deputy Manager) and S Tom (Association of Funeral Directors).

2 Declarations of Interest

Nothing to declare.

3 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting of 14 June 2017 was accepted as a true record.

4 Audited Accounts for 2016/17

It was explained by the Finance Business Partner that due to the change in the accounts and audit regulations in 2015, smaller local government bodies that met the qualifying condition were able to complete a simplified annual return rather than a full Statement of Accounts.

It was felt that the board would not gain from receiving both a full set of accounts and the annual return and that only the annual return would be completed for the Crematorium and delivered to the board for sign off. It was therefore proposed and recommended that a full set of accounts would no longer be produced and the smaller body annual return would be the only return to bring to the board.

Agreed:

That in future only the annual return be provided to the Greater Gwent Joint Cremation Committee to be signed off.

5 Budget Monitoring Report

The Finance Business Partner gave a brief overview of the report, highlighting the out turn and variances. Rates revaluation had risen substantially resulting in a dispute with the valuation office. The Finance Business Partner would however report back to the committee once she received a response. The additional income was actual to date.

Finally, a further report would be brought to committee at a future meeting to discuss the surplus.

Agreed:

That the monitoring report was noted.

6 **Manager's Report**

The Superintendent Registrar went through the report for the committee.

- The Crematorium website had a recent spike in viewing over the past month peaking at over 600 views a day.
- Memorial sales in July and August were down.
- Cremation figures for the first eight months of the year were higher than the corresponding period in 2016.
- The Crematorium was successful in retaining their Green Flag status for the second year running. The Green Flag report noted that the site was immaculate. The Superintendent Registrar praised the grounds staff for their outstanding work.
- There were six large burial plots currently being created to give 20 years extra life for the grounds. Once however the site had reached capacity, expansion could be reverted to civic scattering.

Chair asked whether the expansion works of burial plots would affect the operation of the crematorium. The Chair was advised that in the short run there would be minor disruption.

In response to Councillor Davies' query the maximum cremations carried out was 15 a day, which had been reached in the past but not this winter.

Councillor Davies went on further to ask whether the crematorium had the capacity to manage the demographic expansion in Gwent. There was an increase in the provision of a service at the crematorium, with double and triple bookings; this was probably due to secularisation.

Lengthy discussion ensued on how to alleviate the high volume of cremations, including weekend working. The Superintendent Registrar advised that this was not a consideration due to the additional staffing costs that the crematorium would incur. There was a private crematorium under construction in Llanwern, which would have benefits in relation the concerns discussed.

The committee suggested that a Forward Plan be brought to a future meeting.

- There was an increasing trend for cremated remains to be collected from the crematorium for short periods to allow for the remains to be made into individual keepsake items. The cremated remains were then returned for the interment in the burial plots at the crematorium. This had caused an increase in costs in terms of the supply of containers and certificates as well as increasing the administrative burden on the crematorium. Additionally, where cremated remains were being transported from one crematorium to another for interment, there was a charge of £78.

It was therefore considered that an imposing fee for the subsequent interment of any remains be agreed by the committee.

Agreed:

- That an additional fee of £78 to cover the cost for the return of the remains from one crematorium to another be enforced.
- To recommend a forward plan at a future meeting.

7 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting would take place on 6 December at 2pm in Room 4.

The meeting terminated at Time Not Specified

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REPORT TO : GREATER GWENT CREMATORIUM JOINT COMMITTEE

DATE : 24 JANUARY 2018

PURPOSE : REVIEW OF FEES AND REVENUE ESTIMATES FOR 2018/19

1. Introduction

This report outlines the draft revenue estimates for 2018/19, which are included in detail at Appendix A, and proposes cremation fee increases commencing on the 1 April 2018, in Appendix B.

2. Revenue estimates 2018/19

The draft estimates for 2018/19 outlined at Appendix A show a planned surplus of £751,002. Key factors to note are:

- Employee costs reflect a 1% increase which applies to the local government sector.
- The only inflationary increases applied are:
 - a) Energy costs 3.7%
 - b) Rates 2%
 - c) Refuse collection 8.2%
 - d) Insurances 2%

** No increase in cremation fees has been reflected in these figures, so further surpluses could be generated by an increase in fees.

3. Fee Increases 2018/19

- a) A number of options for fee increases are considered at Appendix B. Having considered the Cremation Society of Great Britain published statistics, we would recommend a fee increase of 2% at this time, which we project to increase revenues by £29,000

4. Recommendations

It is recommended that :-

- a) the estimates for 2018/19 are approved,
- b) crematorium fees are increased by 2%, excluding memorial items
- c) the increase of £2 for medical referee fees from £18 to £20 is approved
- d) a distribution of £750,000 be made, prior to the financial year end

Meirion Rushworth
Honorary Treasurer

GREATER GWENT CREMATION JOINT COMMITTEE

ESTIMATES 2018/19

	Estimate 2016/17 £	Estimate 2017/18 £	Draft Estimate 2018/19 £ (Based on no cremation fee increase)	Draft Estimate 2018/19 £ (Based on 2% cremation fee increase)
Employees	278,127	280,896	283,705	283,705
Premises	284,067	290,959	297,582	297,582
Transport	3,134	3,157	2,000	2,000
Supplies & Services	204,321	204,821	201,931	201,931
Mercury Abat.Capital Costs	110,000	110,000	110,000	110,000
Capital Financing	62,000	62,000	62,000	62,000
EXPENDITURE	941,649	951,833	957,218	957,218
INCOME	(1,763,199)	(1,820,639)	(1,646,220)	(1,675,639)
Operating (Surplus)/Deficit	(821,550)	(868,806)	(689,002)	(718,421)
Capital Charge Adjustment	(62,000)	(62,000)	(62,000)	(62,000)
(SURPLUS)/DEFICIT for year	(883,550)	(930,806)	(751,002)	(780,421)

REPORT TO : GREATER GWENT CREMATORIUM JOINT COMMITTEE

DATE : 24 JANUARY 2018

PURPOSE : TO REVIEW THE CREMATION FEES FOR 2018/19

1. INTRODUCTION

The Joint Committee received a report on the review of fees for 2017/18, in March 2017, and decided to implement an increase of 3% from 01 April 2017.

It is now necessary to review fees for the coming year in light of our recent review of fees elsewhere in the country. It is proposed that any increase in fees as a result of this report will be actioned from 01 April 2018.

2. FEES in 2017/18

The table below shows the current cremation fee in Gwent, in relation to our geographically nearest competitors.

	Basic adult Cremation fee*	TOTAL Crematorium Charges**
CARDIFF	530.00	530.00
BRIDGEND	623.00	644.00
GWENT	671.00	671.00
ABERDARE	655.00	764.00
PONTYPRIDD	655.00	655.00
HEREFORD	684.00	684.00
GLOUCESTER	810.00	810.00
BARRY	750.00	790.00
FOREST OF DEAN	845.00	845.00
LANGSTONE VALE	795.00	795.00

* Cremation fee, plus medical referee's fee and environmental surcharge

** Cremation fee plus medical referee's fee, environmental surcharge, use of chapel, music (recorded), and scattering/strewing of cremated remains

In 2016/17 Gwent was the 14th busiest crematorium out of 281 nationwide, and the busiest single chapel crematorium. It was the busiest in Wales, carrying out 12.79% of the 23,215 cremations in Wales.

Only 74 crematoria have lower cremation fees than Gwent. 209 are higher.

The 5 lowest fees nationwide are:

Belfast	Local Authority	£364.00
London (City of)	Local Authority	£407.00
South West Middlesex	Local Authority	£490.00
Greenock	Local Authority	£522.00
Cardiff	Local Authority	£530.00
West Hertfordshire	Local Authority	£540.00

and the 5 highest fees nationwide are:

Beckenham	Private	£999.00
Chichester	Private	£999.00
Crawley	Private	£999.00
Dundee	Private	£999.00
Friokheim	Private	£999.00

3. CREMATION FEES for 2018/19

The new crematorium in Langstone, opened on 20 November, and during its first month of operation, our cremation numbers were 50 lower than expected. Our cremation numbers for 2016/17 were 3013, but we are basing our fee increase projections on 2263 cremations (750 less)

The following table shows the impact of various increases in the fees

% increase	Revised Fee	Additional estimated income
1%	£678	£15,841
2%	£684	£29,419
3%	£691	£45,260
4%	£698	£61,101
5%	£705	£76,942
10%	£738	£151,621
15%	£772	£228,563
20%	£805	£303,242

4. MEDICAL REFEREE FEES 2018/19

We currently pay a fee of £18 per adult cremation. This fee was set in 2006, and has never been reviewed. Our medical referee has asked for an increase to £20 for each form signed, which seems acceptable. Based on 16/17 cremation figures, the increase would have an impact of around £6,000, which can be contained within the existing budget provision.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

- a) To approve the 2% adult cremation fee increase. This would cover the cost of inflation and allow the Committee to maintain its level of distribution to constituent authorities.
- b) To approve the increase of £2 per form signed for medical referee fees.

Meirion Rushworth
Honorary Treasurer

Manager's Report

Statistics

Website

In the past 30 days to date, there have been approximately 14500 views of the crematorium web pages.

MEMORIAL SALES

MONTH	VASE BLOCKS	SANCTUM 12	LEASE RENEWALS
September 2017	1	1	8
October 2017	3	4	6
November 2017	8	4	2
December 2017	3	0	0

CREMATIONS

	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006
Jan	268	240	262	278	220*	254	278	254	283	298	279	263
Feb	258	243	262	254	200*	268	256	226	262	227	239	225
Mar	299	277	287	241	267	279	249	235	253	218	250	241
Apr	229	268	245	222	268	237	193	229	222	246	227	227
May	266	266	230	234	274	270	232	198	204	236	224	226
Jun	260	264	241	239	218	193*	232	235	206	201	224	202
Jul	219	211	237	257	211	175*	204	208	205	206	247	202
Aug	236	244	187	206	183	168*	241	198	191	223	220	215
Sep	228	228	232	204	194	158*	221	218	204	210	211	211
Oct	240	224	225	243	234	186*	233	232	225	251	241	210
Nov	251	239	249	222	226	176*	220	219	212	200	225	217
Dec	191	244	266	248	200	182*	234	227	238	234	207	186
TOTAL	2945	2948	2913	2848	2695	2546*	2793	2679	2705	2750	2794	2625

**Figures marked with an asterisk are at times with reduced service provision due to the installation of mercury abatement plant.*

The figure for December 2017 was 53 lower than the same period in 2016 and 34 lower than the 12 year average (excludes 2013)

The figure for January 2018, although still subject to change, is likely to be 239, 29 lower than the corresponding period in 2017 and 30 lower than the 12 year average (excludes 2013)

SINGLE USE PLASTICS

With a view to improving the crematorium's environmental footprint, and in line with recent moves by central government, it is proposed that we stop using single use plastic containers for cremated remains. The alternative proposed is the sole use of locally manufactured cardboard containers. This will succeed lowering carbon emissions in the transport of the containers, and benefitting the local economy.

Likewise, it is proposed to cease the use of plastic bags, moving over to environmentally friendly paper bags.

INTERMENT OR CREMATED REMAINS

In recent years, there has been a very large increase in the percentage of cremated remains removed from the crematorium. As a result, the number of sets of cremated remains being interred in the garden of remembrance each week has diminished greatly. It is proposed that the weekly burials are moved to fortnightly, which would have the benefit of diminishing the amount of ground being used, and hence greatly extend the useful life span of the gardens.

GROUNDS MAINTENANCE

The work to create a further six large burial plots in the garden of remembrance is nearly complete. The benefits are improved visual amenity, and a long extension of the useful life span of the garden of remembrance. The ground has now been fully levelled, and a new evergreen laurel hedge has been planted (grown in-house). Once the worst of the winter weather has passed, the corners of the new plots will be marked with trees and the ground will be laid to its finished, lawned surface.