

MANSFIELD AND DISTRICT JOINT CREMATORIUM COMMITTEE

24 May 2021

OPERATIONS UPDATE REPORT

1. SUMMARY

1.1 This report seeks to provide an update on staff and current operational issues.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That members note the report and discuss with a view to approving the following proposals from information set out in the report.

- 2.1 The Infant Charge for under 18 cremations
- 2.2 To Implement the Hold over Policy
- 2.3 To Agree to have a memorial tree in the grounds of the crematorium
- 2.4 To agree new way of operation for the BOR
- 2.5 To Agree to change the retention of Ashes from 48hrs to 7days
- 2.6 Setting up of a friends group for the crematorium
- 2.7 That the new memorial options and fees are agreed to implement mid-year with further information brought to the next meeting.

3. STAFFING

3.1 The new Crematorium and Cemeteries Manager is now in post started on the 22nd February 2021 and work has been handed over from Julie Snowdon the Interim manager to ensure continuous work flow.

3.2 There is currently no sickness within the service.

3.3 The service has recruited 2 Administration posts at the crematorium to help with the increasing workload, one permanent post to backfill a recent leaver part time 15 hours per week and a temporary part time post fixed term for 6 months at 22 hours per week.

3.4 A new Gardener/Relief Technician post has been filled and the successful candidate has started on the 19th April 2021. (This was a back fill post of a leaver from March 2021).

4 COVID-19

- 4.1 The number of funerals have decreased however services are still being booked across both Chapels due to the higher capacity and ability for web casting,
- 4.2 The majority of available slots are still either morning or Saturday's, which funeral directors are telling us families do not want, however, due to the number of services being booked there has been a small increase in bookings for the early and late slots over the last week.
- 4.3 The staff continue to work in a Covid secure way, maintaining bubbles where possible and adhering to additional measures when this is not possible due to staff numbers. They remain flexible and committed to ensuring that services are not affected and are operated in a safe manner.
- 4.4 They continue to work outside as much as possible with the available resources to keep the grounds in good condition and are just implementing spring bedding and new borders at the main entrance. A further gardener/relief tech has been appointed to the crematorium to assist with ground works.
- 4.5 Witnessed strewing's continue in line with the latest government guidance on permitted numbers of attendance.
- 4.6 The Book of Remembrance has continued to remain open Monday to Friday through the second lockdown due to the safety measures that have been implemented to reduce the risk to staff and visitors. However, the floral hall remains closed to visitors, other than service attendees.

Moving forward out of the Covid pandemic new ways of working has become apparent in all operations of how the crematorium is operated. The BOR has been closed throughout on weekends and bank holidays and 97% visitors have accepted this and found it easier to visit online rather than physically visit the crematorium Book of Remembrance. A proposal moving forward would be to continue with the BOR closed on Sundays and bank holidays (potentially except Christmas Day) and have this available to view and remember online only. Other crematoria are also investing in this way of working to reduce staff time on site in turn reducing expenditure, also with an example being one crematoria

has been designed that no physical books are on site and only an online version has been made available (Westerleigh crematorium). This way of operating this facility also fits in with each Authorities Technology/Digital planning for the future (Ashfield's Technology Strategy, Mansfield's Digital by Design Strategy and NSDC's Common Digital Strategy).

4.7 Face coverings in all public areas are still requirement for both staff and visitors, in line with MDC procedures / government guidelines and QR Track & Trace codes are in place at all entrances as well as hand sanitiser and appropriate signage.

4.8 The crematorium staff are looking to set up a friends group for the crematorium to allow extra ground work to be completed and bringing the grounds to a higher standard with the help of volunteers. If a friends group is formed this will allow the crematorium to apply for the Green Flag going forward.

5 New Proposals

5.1 Internet and Phone contract has now been reviewed by the service manager with a view of having the expenditure reduced to the service which has now been complete. The monthly figure has been reduced with just the dedicated broadband line now being paid for by the service in turn saving on average £300 per quarter.

5.2 The Crematorium and cemeteries booking system is now being reviewed as it has been 20 years since this was last looked at. Options would be to either upgrade the existing system to have more functionality or to have a complete new system. Both options are being investigated by the service. This will allow for online booking to take place and link all systems together in turn streamlining the booking and Administration process.

5.3 The fee for the splitting of ashes has been removed, this doesn't stop families or funeral directors splitting the ashes if that is the family wish but it does mean staff at the crematorium cannot undertake this task further.

5.4 The infant charge for the cremation and burial of infants needs a decision as we need to place a charge on the fees and charges list so that we can claim the income back from the children's funeral fund. As we don't have a charge we cannot not back date any claim. Recommended that a new charge be agreed so that going forward claims can be made against the children's funeral fund to generate further income to the service. Charges are in the table below for reference from other Authorities.

| | NCC | Bramcote | Chesterfield | Mansfield |
|--|-----------|-----------|--------------|-----------|
| Pre term Babies under 24 weeks gestation | No Charge | No Charge | No Charge | To Decide |
| Pre term babies per casket | £46 | | | |
| Pre term babies 24 weeks – 2 years | £175 | £210 | £436 | To Decide |
| 2 Years – 17 Years | £350 | £210 | £603 | To Decide |
| | | | | |

The above gives us an indication as the charges local and a decision is needed for Mansfield Crematorium to start making a charge so that these can be claimed back through the child funeral fund. (Please note families will NOT be charged any monies for this service).

The table below shows the potential income from these services, (proposed costs are to the child funeral fund which equates to income for the Crematorium).

| Infant cremations at Mansfield | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|----------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|--|--------------------|--------------------|--|--|--|--|
| Year | No of NVF Cremations | Proposed NVF cost £80 totals | Proposed NVF cost £100 | Number of under 18 year old cremations | Proposed cost £200 | Proposed cost £100 | | | | |
| 2015 | 23 | £1,840 | £2,300 | 20 | £4,000 | £2,000 | | | | |
| 2016 | 33 | £2,640 | £3,300 | 20 | £4,000 | £2,000 | | | | |
| 2017 | 35 | £2,800 | £3,500 | 21 | £4,200 | £2,100 | | | | |
| 2018 | 31 | £2,480 | £3,100 | 16 | £3,200 | £1,600 | | | | |
| 2019 | 33 | £2,640 | £3,300 | 17 | £3,400 | £1,700 | | | | |
| 2020 | 25 | £2,000 | £2,500 | 24 | £4,800 | £2,400 | | | | |
| The above table shows the children's funerals over the past 5 years and the potential income examples that could have been claimed back through the child funeral fund each year. However this does depend on what charge is to be implemented to what the return will be. | | | | | | | | | | |

- 5.5 Management would like to advise members of the implementation of the hold over policy for cremation. This will allow services to take place at the crematorium giving more options to families on service times however with the added saving of overtime and saving of natural resource (gas/electric) will be saved. Hold over is where the deceased is securely held at the crematorium overnight and cremated the following day. Consent is gained from the applicant before the funeral takes place for this process to happen and will allow the service to save unnecessary expenditure.
- 5.6 Cremated remains retention at the crematorium will change from 48 hours to 7 days. Ashes that are to be scattered by staff with no family present at the scattering are held at the crematorium for 48 hours after the cremation then scattered in grounds with the location recorded. The proposal is that this is changed to 7 days to allow families reasonable time if they change their minds and either want to be present at the scattering or to collect the ashes.
- 5.7 Crematorium visits have been scheduled at Lincoln and, Trent Valley by officers and there will be an invitation for the committee members to have a tour if they so wish at these sites on the easing of restrictions in and around July 2021.
- 5.8 A virtual tour of the crematorium has been conducted by Mansfield communication team and the finished product is available to view soon.

6 Commercial Innovation

- 6.1 New memorial lines are to be introduced at the crematorium to offer more memorials to clients in turn generating further surplus income. These new memorial lines are in appendix 2 where each memorial can be viewed with, proposed costings to the client and data on how these memorials may be received. (While every effort has been taken it is difficult to judge how well the take up will be for various memorials as people have different views on trends).
- 6.2 Memorial Tree – Please see appendix 3 for cost information on memorial tree for the former manager as well as income generation from this memorial with photos. Another option would be to provide a forget you not garden in the crematorium grounds whereby forget me not seeds are planted in a particular area and form a garden in memory of those who wish to plant the seeds there.

6.3 Electric equipment being trialled at Crematorium for staff to reduce carbon emissions from grounds machinery with 2 brands of equipment being tried to find out which suits the service best for value for money and most fit for purpose. This includes hedge trimmers, leaf blowers and strimmers. Once these trials have been completed a review of this technology will take place within the Authority to discover which system is best suited with a few then to purchase new equipment for use. Costs for this new equipment can be provided to the officers meeting once received as this work is part of a larger scheme of works within Mansfield in different departments.

7. Cremation Data

7.1 The number of cremations carried out between 1 January 2021 and 31 March 2021 is 838, which is an increase compared to 660 over the same period in 2020.

The number of cremations estimated for 2020/21 was 2400, which was amended due to the impact of Covid-19 and increased number of cremations to 2734.

The throughput figures will continue to be reviewed monthly and any further changes will be reflected in the budgetary forecasts.

The table below shows a comparison per Quarter over the last 2 years.

Cremation Data

| Year | 2019/20 | | 2020/21 |
|-------|---------|----|---------|
| Q1 | 565 | Q1 | 745 |
| Q2 | 505 | Q2 | 511 |
| Q3 | 579 | Q3 | 640 |
| Q4 | 660 | Q4 | 838 |
| Total | 2309 | | 2734 |

8. Recommendation

8.1 That members note the report and discuss with a view or approving the new proposals set out in the report as per below.

To Implement the Hold over Policy

To Agree to have a memorial tree in the grounds of the crematorium

To agree new way of operation for the BOR

To Agree to change the retention of Ashes from 48hrs to 7days

Setting up of a friends group for the crematorium

That the new memorial options and fees are agreed to implement mid-year with further information brought to the next meeting.