

ADULTS AND PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES PORTFOLIO DECISION RECORD

1st February 2010

The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

Present:

Councillor Gerard Hall (Adult and Public Health Services Portfolio Holder)

Officers: Dave Stubbs, Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods
Sylvia Pinkney, Consumer Services Manager
Sylvia Tempest, Environmental Standards Manager
Jo Wilson, Democratic Services Officer

**31. Revision of 2010/2011 Fees and Charges –
Cemeteries and Crematorium** (*Assistant Director
(Neighbourhood Services)*)

Type of decision

Non-key

Purpose of report

To consider the annual review of fees and charges in respect of services provided by the Cemeteries and Crematorium Team.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The level of fees and charges for the Cemeteries and Crematorium Services were reviewed on an annual basis. Details of the proposed charges for 2010/11 were outlined in an appendix to the report. A 2.5% inflation increase in fees for burials and cremations was recommended. This would increase gross income by approximately £23,000.

The Portfolio Holder was also reminded that in December 2005 approval had been given in principle to the replacement of both cremators at Stranton Crematorium with associated gas cleaning equipment, and replacement of inadequate electricity supply, at a total cost of approximately £1,000,000. Most, if not all, of the cost of these works would need to be funded through prudential borrowing, meaning a substantial increase of fees would be required in 2011/12. The Portfolio Holder queried whether an earlier increase would be beneficial given low interest rates at the present time. The Director of Regeneration and

Neighbourhoods confirmed that the earlier the increased charge was levied the more monies would be accrued. It was suggested that agreement be given 'in principle' to a rise in fees for cremations by £90 from 2011/2012. The Portfolio Holder was happy to support this. Concerns at such a large increase were acknowledged but it was felt that such fees were subsumed in a package levied by funeral directors and that the majority of people accepted these charges had to be paid. Monies were usually available to pay these costs such as funeral plans and in extreme cases where people were unable to pay these fees contract funerals were available through the council to cover them.

The Portfolio Holder also highlighted the reminder within the report that the cemeteries and crematorium services operated as a business and was therefore subject to competition from neighbouring authorities. The Environmental Standards Manager confirmed this but advised that such a risk was felt to be minimal. There would need to be a substantial disparity in fees to persuade people from one town to be interred in another.

Decision

That the suggested charges be agreed and implemented from 1st April 2010

That the Portfolio Holder was minded in principle to increase cremation fees by £90 from April 2011.

32. Revision of 2010/2011 Fees and Charges – Public Protection (*Assistant Director (Community Safety and Protection)*)

Type of decision

Non-key

Purpose of report

To consider the annual review of fees and charges in respect of services, licences and registrations undertaken by the Public Protection section of the Community Safety and Protection Division.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The level of fees and charges in respect of various services offered by Public Protection were reviewed on an annual basis. Details of the suggested charges for 2010/11 were outlined in an appendix to the report. These were based on an average rise of 2.5%. This would increase gross income by £6,750, however costs including staff costs had also increased in proportion.

The Portfolio Holder queried how Hackney Carriage licence charges compared to neighbouring authorities. The Consumer Services Manager advised that they were generally on a par although Stockton Borough Council's charges were significantly higher. Attempts were being made

through the licensing department to agree a scheme for standards and charges across the Tees Valley authorities. This was felt to be of particular concern in Berwick where licences were cheaper and standards required of drivers and vehicles lower than in other areas.

In terms of pest control the Portfolio Holder highlighted a previous decision to charge for removal of domestic pests such as rats, mice, fleas, bed bugs and cockroaches. This charge had then been withdrawn. The Environmental Standards Manager indicated that these pests are considered public health pests and for this reason it is recommended there is no charge. The Portfolio Holder also commented on the lack of variation in market charges. The Environmental Standards Manager felt that given the recent and anticipated changes to the market itself it was felt that the charges should remain static.

Decision

That the suggested fees and charges be agreed and implemented from 1st April 2010.

The meeting concluded at 10:20am

P J DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

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