

Report Title: OHS Burials & Cremations – Proposed Fees & Charges 2025/26

Date of Issue:	7 January 2025
Date of Decision:	15 January 2025
Report to:	Cabinet Member – Cleansing and Street Scene
Report of:	Assistant Director, Operational In-House Services
Portfolio:	Cleansing & Street Scene
Wards affected:	All
Is this a key decision:	No
Included in Forward Plan:	No
Exempt/confidential report:	No

Summary:

Burial and Cremation fees and charges for 2025/26 are set out in the report and are proposed to adoption and enactment from 1st April 2025.

Recommendation:

That Cabinet Member consider the information and rationale provided and approve the proposed increase in fees & charges.

1. The Rationale and Evidence for the Recommendations

This report presents the proposed fees and charges for the Burials and Cremations Service for 2025/26 due to the increasing costs placed upon the service, primarily due to the rise in the cost of energy usage within the UK.

Given the financial circumstances the Council continues to find itself in, it is important to ensure that income is recovered and maximised to increase income, offset costs and/or reduce further any subsidies.

Background

Cabinet Member is aware that the Burials and Cremations Service apply a range of charges for its service and facilities and this income is critical to setting a balanced budget. Our fees and charges cover a range of services, such as:

- Cremations
- Full Body Burials
- Cremated Remains Burials
- Exhumations
- Memorialisation
- Administrative Searches
- Memorial Services

The annual review of fees and charges is an important consideration for the service to ensure income generation is maximised while delivering a high standard of service.

Proposed Fees and Charges 2025/26

The information provided highlights current and proposed fees with the percentage increase identified for each item.

Increases within this service area are usually aligned to the Consumer Price Index (CPI) which is currently 2.3% as at October 2024. However, it is proposed to only increase fees and charges by 2%. The rationale for this is to ensure the service charges are pitched appropriately within the market and recognise the current hardship that people face due to inflation.

Factors Influencing Fees and Charges

An increase in fees and charges would ensure full cost recovery is applied to the services and facilities, provide sustainability and maintain a quality service to the bereaved.

In recommending fees and charges in 2025/26, the following has been considered:

- Would any increase impact the ability of the public to use services?
- What charges do commercial competitors or other local authorities make?
- Is there a demand for the service?
- Are there any statutory responsibilities concerned with the setting of charges?

Key Changes

The attached appendix outlines current fees and charges made by the Burials and Cremation Service in 2024/25, the increase if CPI at 2.3% was applied, and also the proposed increase for 2025-26 at 2%.

1. Financial Implications

There are no costs associated with this report, but fees and charges form a key part of the overall Council budget. Income that is generated will contribute towards income targets and the associated costs of running the service. There are no direct capital costs associated with the recommendations in this report.

Failure to increase fees will result in an increased budget pressure on the service.

2. Legal Implications

None

3. Corporate Risk Implications

None

4. Staffing HR Implications

None

5. Conclusion

Sefton Council is under pressure to balance budgets, therefore we have sought to increase Burial and Cremation fees and charges, and to increase memorial fees for commercial income. This is to ensure that full cost recovery is applied which will ensure that energy prices and material prices are covered.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

An alternative option considered was to have all fees and charges remain the same as per 2024/25 with no increase or decrease.

Equality Implications:
Options of varying types of services have been identified and proposed so that everyone has an option when choosing the bereavement services of Sefton Council following the death of a loved one. (N.B. The Council have agreed care experience should be treated as a protected characteristic).
Impact on Children and Young People:
None
Climate Emergency Implications:
The recommendations within this report will have a positive outcome for the service.

The content of this report sets out the fees and charges associated with the work and projects undertaken by the Burial and Cremation Service to manage the disposal of the deceased in Sefton through avenues such as burial and cremation and memorialisation.

The cremation and burial aspect can largely contribute to the climate emergency in terms of mitigation and adaptation. Climate change mitigation broadly refers to limiting the amount and pace of future climate change, by reducing overall greenhouse gas emissions and removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere i.e. by planting more trees, shrubs, wildflowers etc, and by proactively changing the way in which the service undertakes activities and provides facilities and services such as emission to air from the cremation process.

Climate change adaptation refers broadly to the measures needed to adapt our society to the climate changes that we cannot avoid, even with perfect mitigation. These include increases in temperature, more severe weather events, and associated risks to infrastructure, human health, and natural ecosystems.

The fees and charges associated with the service are fundamental to its financial management, the development of the service, and the benefits this brings to the climate emergency.

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

The Executive Director of Corporate Services and Commercial and the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

FD (7852/24)

LD (5952/24)

(B) External Consultations

Not applicable

Implementation Date for the Decision:

With effect from 1st April 2025

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Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Proposed Fees and Charges for 2025-26