

9th August 2019

Crematorium Matters – Manager's Report

Update from Previous Meeting

North Devon Council is currently evaluating the benefits of solar panels on several buildings. The crematorium will be considered as part of this process. The Joint Committee will be updated as the process develops.

The current cremator equipment company have been asked to provide estimates for life expectancy and replacement costs of the key equipment to enable a review of the level of the existing fund being built (currently at £100,000 a year).

The figures will be based on total replacement as it is unclear whether a process of progressive upgrading or a radical replacement of all equipment (a different manufacturer or entirely different 'cremation' process) are the most likely course of action in the future.

Staffing

The bereavement administrator post has been advertised and the selection for interview process will have been completed by the date of this meeting. Interviews will be completed later this month (probably 20th August).

Metals Recycling Charity Award

The existing rota has remained unchanged since 2015 and is as follows:

Families in Grief

North Devon Children's Holiday Foundation

North Devon Hospice

Cruse

Children's Hospice SW

North Devon Cancer Care Centre Trust

Awards have progressively increased over the last 5 years from about £4,500 to £8,000 at least twice a year.

The committee are asked to consider two additional charities (as the next in the rota) to reflect two areas that are strongly bereavement associated but not currently reflected in the range of charities.

1. The North Devon Hospital '**Over and Above**' charity's aim is to raise funds for a new Bereavement Suite on the labour ward in which to care for women and their families who experience a loss.

The loss of a baby at any gestation or age is a devastating experience. The aim is to be able to facilitate the birth and immediate postnatal period and potentially provide counselling in a room dedicated to this process.

This crematorium frequently provides funeral services at no cost to parents who have lost a baby during pregnancy. This charity's work is clearly bereavement based and reflects well on the importance our service places on supporting parents in these circumstances. Acceptance of this charity onto the rota is recommended.

2. **CLARITY** is a 'North Devon only' mental health charity with centres in Barnstaple and Torrington providing services and support to people experiencing mental health and emotional issues (including bereavement through suicide support). It is staffed entirely by volunteers (including professional therapists). They aim to help people before they harm themselves or others as well as post-bereavement support.

Their spectrum of services, dedicated team of volunteers and specific North-Devon based centres (both boroughs) makes them a strong candidate for support through the metals recycling scheme. Acceptance of this charity onto the rota is also recommended.

Cremation Figures

	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020
April	125	109	102	161	125	139	163	117	150	121
May	90	111	123	117	135	118	126	138	136	137
June	103	129	116	102	123	143	125	129	127	127
July	99	107	111	121	106	111	126	142	133	
Aug	83	116	106	117	100	109	114	120	106	
Sept	111	88	104	107	122	127	121	127	106	
Oct	97	102	101	98	125	140	127	137	132	
Nov	115	116	129	96	120	108	157	135	127	
Dec	107	88	100	98	120	128	123	131	119	
Jan	169	143	159	164	142	131	158	182	169	
Feb	140	127	121	116	154	136	137	175	143	
Mar	117	132	144	127	157	151	162	164	145	
Total	1356	1368	1416	1424	1529	1541	1639	1697	1593	

Note: 2018/2019 figures adjusted slightly from last report.

Children's Funeral Fund for England

North Devon Crematorium (together with all local funeral directors) currently follow the industry norm practice of not charging for funeral services relating to a child up to and including the age of 17. Typically this has included extended services at no cost.

From 23rd July 2019 a Ministry of Justice scheme becomes available enabling Parents/Crematoria/Burial Authorities/Funeral Directors to reclaim the funeral costs relating to children prior to their 18th birthday, but not 'pre-term babies'. The number of child & stillborn funerals (cremation) a year is stable at about 7 a year.

This raises the issue of whether to claim the new MoJ payment or to continue to provide the service without charge and without claiming from the new payment MoJ.

There are three obvious choices:

1. Claim the MoJ fee for all service up to the age of 17.
2. Never claim the MoJ fee.
3. Charge the Funeral Director for services to enable them to claim under the MoJ scheme.

It is recommended that the basic cremation fee & medical referee fee be claimed in all cases (option 1) with additional services which are supplied (such as extended services, professional video services etc.) not being claimed or charged.