



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

21ST NOVEMBER 2019

DIRECT CREMATIONS

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH, PROTECTION & COMMUNITY SERVICES IN CONSULTATION WITH CLLR RHYS LEWIS, CABINET MEMBER FOR STRONGER COMMUNITIES, WELL-BEING & CULTURAL SERVICES

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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to propose that the Council pilot a reduced cremation fee for funeral directors offering direct or simplicity cremations in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Cabinet:

- 2.1 Approve a twelve month pilot of a reduced cremation fee for funeral directors offering a direct cremation in Rhondda Cynon Taf; and
- 2.2 Subject to 2.1, the Council set this fee at £560 with effect from 1st December 2019.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Funeral costs have increased substantially and are becoming increasingly unaffordable to those on the lowest incomes. Many funeral directors are now offering alternative options to families that are lower in cost and allow for those who wish to have a simpler, less formal funeral. These are known as “direct” or “simplicity” cremations.
- 3.2 Several burial and cremation authorities across Wales have introduced the facility to accept direct cremations from funeral directors by introducing a reduced cremation fee for such services. This proposal would ensure that this Council is offering a range of services that reflect demand and providing assistance to those who struggle to meet funeral costs.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 A “direct”, “simplicity” cremation or “cremation without ceremony” is where a funeral director arranges a service with no mourners and brings the deceased directly to the crematorium with no religious service or attendees. The fees and charges to the family of the deceased are significantly reduced making the service more affordable, particularly for those on low incomes.
- 4.2 The average cost of the essential elements of a funeral in the UK was estimated to be nearly £4,300 in 2018 (£3,744 for a cremation and £4,798 for a burial) with another £2,000 being spent on discretionary items such as flowers and catering. In Wales, the average cost of a burial is £3,934 and the average cost for a cremation is £3,142¹. Although these are below the national average, costs have increased substantially across Wales and the UK and are likely to continue to do so.
- 4.3 There is increasing concern that the overall costs applied by the funerals industry have been increasing substantially and have become unaffordable for many. The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) launched a review of the funerals industry on 1st June 2018, publishing its final report and decision on a market investigation reference on 28th March 2019². The CMA found that over the past 14 years the price of the essential elements of a funeral is estimated to have grown by 6% annually, twice the inflation rate over this period. The average spend on a funeral varies very little by household income, which means that the poorest are disproportionately affected by funeral costs. The cost of a funeral will amount to nearly 40% of the annual expenditure of someone on the lowest income².
- 4.4 In response to the increasing demand and price sensitivity of customers, funeral directors are increasingly offering low cost options to families. These services are often called “direct” or “simplicity” cremations or “cremations without ceremony”. A direct cremation is a disposition option in which the body of the deceased is cremated in the days immediately following the death without a funeral service beforehand or the viewing of the deceased. This option significantly reduces the cost to the family.
- 4.5 In addition to being more affordable, this also meets the requirements of families or the wishes of the deceased who prefer the lack of fuss and formality that a direct cremation can offer and the flexibility to choose how to celebrate the life of a loved one at a later date if they wish.
- 4.6 With a direct cremation there is no service or mourners present at the crematorium; the cremation takes place at a crematorium of the funeral

directors choosing and may not be restricted to a particular time of the day. Many crematoriums that accept direct cremations often do so in the early morning at times that are seldom utilised for full services.

4.7 At Glyntaff and Llwydcoed Crematorium, direct cremations could be offered during the 9am period of operation as this is rarely requested by families.

4.8 It is proposed that the Council offer funeral directors the option of a direct cremation at both Glyntaff and Llwydcoed Crematoria (subject to approval of the Joint Management Committee) at a reduced charge.

4.9 Similar services are currently on offer at other crematoria in Wales, including Cardiff, Margam, Swansea, Narbeth, St Asaph, Colwyn Bay and the privately run crematoria in the Vale of Glamorgan.

5. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 An equality impact assessment screening form has been completed and identified that there are no equality or diversity issues arising from this proposal.

6. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

6.1 There are no consultation implications arising from this report.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

7.1 It is difficult to anticipate the likely level of demand for direct cremations in Rhondda Cynon Taf. Enquiries with other burial and cremation authorities that already offer this service have indicated that although requests for direct cremations are increasing, there does not yet appear to have been a significant change in the overall number of services provided or the income received from those services.

7.2 The Council currently charge a cremation fee of £710. It is proposed that the Council offer a reduced fee of £560 for a direct cremation. This is comparable with other crematoria in Wales that offer this service.

7.3 As this is a new service and it is impossible to anticipate the level of demand or financial impact, it is proposed that the Council pilot this initiative for a twelve month period after which it will be reviewed.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

8.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

9. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT.

- 9.1 This proposal contributes to the Council's well-being goals of people, place and economy. The growing costs of funerals across the UK has meant that funerals have become increasingly unaffordable for the poorest in society. This proposal supports our local people by making funeral costs more affordable to those in the greatest need.

10. CONCLUSION

- 10.1 This proposal will introduce an option for funeral directors to offer direct cremations utilising both crematoria in Rhondda Cynon Taf. This is consistent with current practice at crematoria across Wales and the UK, is in response to growing demand from families seeking low cost, simpler funerals and will support the Council's commitment to assist those with the lowest income who may struggle to meet funeral costs.

Other Information:-

Relevant Scrutiny Committee

Public Service Delivery, Communities & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

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Background Papers

- ¹ Cost of Dying Report 2018, 12th edition; Sun Life
- ² Funerals market study, final report and decision on a market investigation reference; Competition & Markets Authority; 28th March 2019

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¹ [https://www.sunlife.co.uk/siteassets/documents/cost-of-dying/cost-of...](https://www.sunlife.co.uk/siteassets/documents/cost-of-dying/cost-of-...)

² <https://www.regulationtomorrow.com/eu/cma-final-report-on-its-funerals-market-study/>