

West Rainton Parish Council - 15 March 2018

Item 13:

Review of fees / charges - West Rainton Cemetery

Report of G Keedy, Project Officer

Background

Under the provisions of the Local Authorities' Cemeteries Order 1977, burial authorities may charge such fees as they think proper.

Parish Council will recall that in 2016, Cemetery Development Services were engaged to undertake a review of West Rainton Cemetery. This included identification of potential burial capacity, record keeping, environmental maintenance and longer term aspects for development.

Their findings included a recommendation that costs associated with the management, maintenance and development of the cemetery should be self-financing instead of being funded from the Parish Council's mainstream budget.

Approach to review

In reviewing charges, there is inevitably a desire to compare arrangements with nearby burial authorities. This approach should be viewed with caution as each cemetery is different in terms of layout, facilities, design, management, operational requirements and staff resources.

However, in compiling this report, Project Officer has examined charges applied by Parish Councils operating cemeteries within the Durham Area Action Partnership catchment (Belmont, Pitlington, Shadforth and Sherburn) as well as Durham County Council and Sunderland City Council.

Due to nuances in charging structures, it has not been possible to compile a table showing direct comparisons. But to give an indication of the level of variances based upon Project Officer's understanding, the lowest fee identified for a single burial plot is £60.00, the highest £1200.00.

Turning to memorial headstones, the lowest fee identified is £20.00, the highest £347.00.

Income from fees - West Rainton Cemetery

Burials		Memorials
2014-2015 (Sep-Mar) x 7	£1500.00	£100.00
2015-2016 x 7	£1400.00	£300.00
2016-2017 x 7	£1300.00	£200.00
2017-2018 x 4	£1200.00	£100.00

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Expenditure

Annual cemetery expenditure is circa £7000.00 (excl. associated staff costs).

Due to the unpredictability of demand for burials and memorials, it is not possible to provide an income forecast. However, it is clear that based upon recent historic information and current charges, cemetery income falls far short of fully meeting cemetery costs and expenditure.

Current and suggested fee levels

With continued pressure on the Parish Council budget, Project Officer suggests revised fees to contribute to costs associated with upkeep and development of West Rainton Cemetery.

The current scale of fees and charges has been in place since April 2014 without review. The table below shows existing fees and suggested new levels:

	Current	Suggested
Double	£300.00	£500.00
Single	£200.00	£300.00
Cremated Remains	£100.00	£150.00
Re-open	£100.00	£150.00
Child under two years	No charge	Increase age to 16 years
Memorial Fees	£50.00	£75.00
Search fee	N/A	£25.00

The above burial and memorial fees to be applicable to those who were residents of the parish at the time of death and include those former residents in residential nursing care homes.

For non-residents (ie. those living outside of the parish area), the costs to be doubled.

Recommendation:

Parish Council is asked to:

Consider and approve the suggested revisions to fees and charges applicable to West Rainton Cemetery and implement these with effect from 1 April 2018.

Agree to review the fees, charges and scope on an annual basis.