

# Public Document Pack

## Call In Committee

Thursday, 21st December, 2023

6.00 pm

Meeting Room A

Blackburn Town Hall

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### AGENDA

1. **Welcome & Apologies**
2. **Declarations of Interest Form**  
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3. **Procedure for Hearing a Call-in**  
**Call-in Meeting Procedure December 2023. B C** **3 - 4**
4. **Reasons for the Call-in**  
**Call In Form 2018 (002)** **5**
5. **Increase in charges for Burials and Cremations**  
**EMD - Increase in Charges for Burials and Cremations** **6 - 9**

Date Published: 13<sup>th</sup> December 2023  
Denise Park, Chief Executive

## DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN ITEMS ON THIS AGENDA

**Members attending a Council, Committee, Board or other meeting with a personal interest in a matter on the Agenda must disclose the existence and nature of the interest and, if it is a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest or an Other Interest under paragraph 16.1 of the Code of Conduct, should leave the meeting during discussion and voting on the item.**

**Members declaring an interest(s) should complete this form and hand it to the Democratic Services Officer at the commencement of the meeting and declare such an interest at the appropriate point on the agenda.**

MEETING:                      **CALL-IN COMMITTEE**

DATE:                              **21st DECEMBER 2023**

AGENDA ITEM NO.:

DESCRIPTION (BRIEF):

NATURE OF INTEREST:

DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY/OTHER (delete as appropriate)

SIGNED :

PRINT NAME:

(Paragraphs 8 to 17 of the Code of Conduct for Members of the Council refer)

## BLACKBURN WITH DARWEN BOROUGH COUNCIL

### CALL-IN COMMITTEE – Increase in charges for burials and cremations

(Executive Member Decision published on 1 December 2023)

#### MEETING PROCEDURE

**Chair – Cllr Kevin Connor**

**Members of the Committee: (Cllrs Dave Smith, Martin McCaughran, Elaine Whittingham, Brian Taylor, Matthew Jackson, Anthony Shaw, Neil Slater and Suleman Khonat).**

**Executive Member: Cllr Jim Smith, Environment & Operations.**

**Members who requested the Call-in: Councillors Mark Russell (representative), Paul Marrow, Derek Hardman, Jon Baldwin, Julie Slater and Jacquie Slater.**

**Supporting Chief Officer: Martin Eden, Strategic Director of Environment & Operations.**

**Legal Advisor to the Committee: Asad Laher**

**Governance Services: Phil Llewellyn**

#### **1. Welcome & Apologies**

- Chair welcomes the Committee
- Chair checks that the Committee have received a copy of the reasons for the Call-in, and the procedure
- Chair asks for any apologies.

#### **2. Declarations of Interests**

- Chair asks for any declaration of interests and whether any of the Committee Members have had any involvement in the decision which has been called in.

#### **3. Guidance on procedure**

- Chair asks the Legal Advisor to explain the process to be followed
- Legal Advisor will explain that the meeting will be held in Part 1.
- Legal Advisor will provide confirmation from himself as the Monitoring Officer and the Chief Financial Officer that the decision is within the budget and policy framework. Therefore, the options for the Committee and hearing the representations would be to accept the decision or refer the decision back to the Executive Member for Environment & Operations.

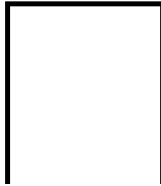
The Chair asks the representative of those Members who requested the Call- in (Mark Russell, supported by Councillor Paul Marrow) and the Executive Member (Jim Smith, supported by Martin Eden) to take their places at table.

Executive Member Decision published on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2023 – Increase in charges for burials and cremations.

- a) Chair asks Cllr Mark Russell to explain the reasons for the Call-in.
- b) Executive Member for Environment & Operations seeks clarification from Cllr Mark Russell.
- c) Members of the Committee to ask Cllr Mark Russell questions.
- d) Chair asks the Executive Member to explain the reasons for the decision made (with other supporting officers).
- e) Cllr Mark Russell to ask the Executive Member questions.
- f) Members of the Committee to ask the Executive Member and Supporting Officers questions.
- g) Sum up – Cllr Mark Russell
- h) Sum up – Executive Member for Environment & Operations.

Chair asks Cllr Mark Russell, Cllr Paul Marrow, Councillor Jim Smith and Martin Eden to leave the table.

- i) Chair requests any final contributions from Members of the Committee.
- j) Chair asks the committee to consider the representations made and decide how to proceed.
- k) Chair asks Legal advisor to go through the options:  
  
To Accept the decision; or  
To refer the decision back to the Executive Member for Environment & Operations.
- l) Named vote and recording of reasons.



**TO: THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

For the immediate attention of

Democraticservices@blackburn.gov.uk

**From COUNCILLOR MARK RUSSELL**

**Date:** 06/12/2023

**EXECUTIVE BOARD/MEMBER DECISION TO BE CALLED IN: Ref** Increase in charges for burials and cremations

**EMD**

**DATE OF PUBLICATION:** 01/12/2023

**Subject:** 1. The proposed increases are too large. The crematorium and cemeteries between them have been budgeting to make annual profits in the region of £1m so these increases make Labour appear to be profiteering from death 2. The Decision fails to get basic maths right - it states grave prices are increasing by 6.08% but they are actually increasing by an unjustifiable 10.34%.

**EXECUTIVE BOARD/MEMBER DECISION CALLED IN BY:**

(6 Members)

<b>Councillor</b>	<b>Signature</b>
1. Cllr Mark Russell	M Russell
2. Cllr Paul Marrow	P Marrow
3. Cllr Jon Baldwin	J Baldwin
4. Cllr Derek Hardman	D Hardman
5. Cllr Jackie Slater	Ja Slater
6. Cllr Julie Slater	Ju Slater

**Date Received by Democratic Services:**

## **REASONS FOR THE CALL IN**

*Please state reasons for the Call In, which will be addressed by the appropriate Executive Member.*

*As agreed at Council Forum on 26<sup>th</sup> June 2009, the lead signatory must provide detailed reasons for the Call in.*

*Council Forum resolved that it was no longer sufficient to provide limited reasons such as Lack of consultation or inaccurate information.*

## EXECUTIVE MEMBER DECISION



<b>REPORT OF:</b>	Executive Member for Environment & Operations
<b>LEAD OFFICERS:</b>	Strategic Director of Environment & Operations
<b>DATE:</b>	01 December 2023

**PORTFOLIO/S AFFECTED:** Departments

**WARD/S AFFECTED:** (All Wards);

**SUBJECT:** Increase in charges for burials and cremations

### 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The costs of delivering burial and cremation services have increased significantly in the past 12 months due to the spiralling costs of utilities and inflationary pressures on the cost of goods and services, including equipment and vehicles.

The Council reviews fees and charges on an annual basis for those services which can make a charge. Fees and Charges for burials and cremations are usually reviewed and increased each year. This report sets out the proposed increases in fees and charges to be implemented with effect from 1 January 2024 and also provides benchmarking information for surrounding local authorities which provide burials and cremations within their borough boundary.

### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Executive Member:

- Approves the proposed increases in charges for burials and cremations, to be implemented from 1 January 2024.

### 3. BACKGROUND

The cost associated with the provision of burials and cremations have increased significantly in the past year due to the spiralling costs of utilities and the increasing costs of goods and services, including the purchase and maintenance of equipment and vehicles. The Council is also having to manage broader financial challenges due to inflationary pressures on budgets, which are unfunded.

Fees and charges income makes a valuable contribution to the running costs of cemeteries and crematoria services, enabling these important services to be sustained and provided. The Council normally reviews fees and charges on an annual basis, any increases have taken place on 1 January each year for the majority of services.

The following increases in fees and charges is proposed for burials and cremations:

	2023 Charges	2024 proposed charges	Percentage increase
Grave purchase	£1,450	£1,600	6.08%
Burial – 1 space	£590	£630	6.78%
Burial - 2 space	£640	£680	6.25%
Burial – 3 space	£755	£800	5.96%
Cremation Adult	£920	£980	6.52%

As part of the process of proposing increases in fees and charges, a benchmarking exercise has been conducted with other surrounding local authorities to compare fees and charges for burials and cremations, the results of the benchmarking exercise are detailed in the table below.

It should be noted that the other local authorities in the surrounding area may also decide to increase their fees and charges for burials and cremations in 2024/25.

### Benchmarking – Cemeteries and Crematoria charges

Benchmarking Cemeteries and Crematoria charges	BwD proposed charges 2024/25	Current charges in Hyndburn	Current charges in Pendle	Current charges in Burnley	Current charges in Bolton	Current charges at Charnock Richards	Current charges in Blackpool	Current charges in Preston
Grave with Exclusive right of burial and erect memorial	1600	875	1462.50	1446	1080	N/A	1825	1115
Interment - 1 space	630	825	768	1299	804	N/A	N/A	N/a
Interment - 2 space	680	825	861	1299	898	N/A	included in purchase	576
Interment - 3 space	800	N/A	N/A	1299	1010	N/A	N/A	N/A
Large grave	N/A	1725	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Re-open fee	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	815	N/A
<b>CREMATION</b>								
Full	980	935	N/A	873	980	1150	892	792
No service	660	N/A	N/A	455	450	710	485	450
Saturday	N/A	N/A	N/A	1108	1314	1534	N/A	1078

The Council will continue to provide public health funerals for people who have passed away in the Borough and have no next of kin, or whose next of kin, relatives or friends are unable to make the necessary arrangements for a funeral to ensuring that all individuals are treated with dignity and respect, regardless of their circumstances.

#### 4. KEY ISSUES & RISKS

The cost of delivering services at the cemeteries and crematoria have increased significantly due to inflationary pressures.

The Council reviews fees and charges on an annual basis, in recent years, the increase in fees and charges has taken place on 1 January each year for the majority of services.

## 5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The increase in charges for burials and cremations and the additional income generated aligns with the Council's Corporate Plan and the supporting mission to tackle the budget challenge.

## 6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The increases in fees and charges for burials and cremations will generate an additional £130,000 income in 2024/25 based on the average number of burials and cremations conducted each year.

## 7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The Council is acting in its legal capacity as a burial authority in setting charges for burial and cremation services.

## 8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

None – this is an existing service and all resources to deliver the services are in place.

## 9. EQUALITY AND HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

**Please select one of the options below. Where appropriate please include the hyperlink to the EIA.**

Option 1  Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) not required – the EIA checklist has been completed.

Option 2  In determining this matter the Executive Member needs to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision. *(insert EIA link here)*

Option 3  In determining this matter the Executive Board Members need to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision. *(insert EIA attachment)*

## 10. CONSULTATIONS

## 11. STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE

The recommendations are made further to advice from the Monitoring Officer and the Section 151 Officer has confirmed that they do not incur unlawful expenditure. They are also compliant with equality legislation and an equality analysis and impact assessment has been considered. The recommendations reflect the core principles of good governance set out in the Council's Code of Corporate Governance.

## 12. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

All Declarations of Interest of any Executive Member consulted and note of any dispensation granted by the Chief Executive will be recorded and published if applicable.



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<b>VERSION:</b>	<b>1</b>
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<b>CONTACT OFFICER:</b>	<b>Joanne Byrne/Martin Eden/Tony Watson</b>
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<b>DATE:</b>	17 November 2023
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<b>BACKGROUND PAPER:</b>	
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