



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot  
Neath Port Talbot Council

## **MARGAM JOINT CREMATORIUM COMMITTEE**

### **JOINT REPORT OF THE CLERK TO THE JOINT COMMITTEE OF MARGAM CREMATORIUM AND THE SUPERINTENDENT AND REGISTRAR**

**21 July 2020**

#### **Matter for Information**

**Wards Affected:** All Wards

#### **Service Provision at Margam Crematorium during the Covid-19 Pandemic**

#### **Purpose of the Report:**

1. To provide an overview to members of the arrangements for funeral services that have taken place during the Covid-19 Pandemic

#### **Executive Summary:**

2. To provide an overview to members of the arrangements for funeral services that have taken place during the Covid-19 Pandemic and to provide information to Members on the number of services held compared to previous years and the number that have arisen directly due to Covid-19

## **Background:**

3. In March 2020, Wales entered into a lockdown following the direction of the UK and Welsh Governments which various legislation passed curtailing certain activities.
4. The Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (Wales) Regulations 2020 (“the Regulations”) impose temporary restrictions on gatherings and movement of people in Wales. This has been done to minimise the extent to which people leave their homes to help protect the public from the spread of Covid-19.

### Margam Crematorium Grounds

5. The Regulations made provisions that apply both to those responsible for a crematorium, place of worship or cemetery at which a funeral or burial is held, and to members of the public who may wish to attend a funeral or burial. A person responsible for a crematorium must ensure that, during the emergency period, the crematorium is closed to members of the public. However, if all reasonable measures were taken to ensure a distance of 2 metres is maintained between every person in the crematorium (except between two members of the same household, or a carer and the person assisted by the carer), the crematorium may open to members of the public for funerals or burials (and to broadcast a funeral or burial whether over the internet or otherwise).
6. As a result this on the 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020, Margam Crematorium closed its grounds and only allowed access those attending funeral services to have access.
7. Following clarification being raised with the Welsh Government, the Regulations were amended and allowed for the grounds to be reopened and a reopening took place on the 8<sup>th</sup> April 2020 with suitable signage being present to remind the public on the

need to ensure social distancing and to keep 2m apart. The change being that crematorium grounds and gardens of remembrance were allowed to be open and it would be a reasonable excuse for individuals to leave their home in order to pay their respects to a loved one.

### Book of Remembrance

8. The Book of Remembrance Chapel remains closed to the general public at present because of the difficulties in maintaining social distancing in this venue but consideration is now underway for the development of a system of appointments for access to view the Book of Remembrance

### General Office

9. During this period the general office has remained closed to the general public and funeral directors are required to make an appointment to attend the office in order to provide paperwork (a drop box having been provided) though measures have been put in place to allow funeral directors to provide forms and paperwork electronically. Members of the public are still able to contact crematorium staff via telephone or email and all services to which the public might have chosen to attend the office to undertake (i.e. renewal of memorials or to obtain further information) so all elements of the service have continued to function.
10. In order to protect staff during this period a number of updated risk assessments have been prepared, which included, for example, separate workstations for all staff and increased cleaning. All of these being in line with the Neath Port Talbot Risk Assessments.

### Funeral Services

11. Death of a family member or friend is a very distressing event which is why the Regulations recognised the need to attend funerals in certain circumstances. The overarching advice, was that people should only attend the funeral of their closest family and friends, and only if they have been invited. People were also encouraged not to attend a funeral if doing so would involve extensive travel. In accordance with separate Welsh Government guidance, those experiencing coronavirus symptoms or are self-isolating were advised not attend. In addition those considered most vulnerable to the coronavirus were encouraged not to attend.
12. The Regulations only allowed a small number of individuals to attend a funeral those being where they were:
  - the person organising the funeral,
  - the person has been invited to the funeral, or
  - the person carer of a person who is attending the funeral (either because they are the organiser or they have been invited).
13. Due to the different sizes of Crematoria within Wales, each individual Crematorium was required to determine the maximum number that would be allowed in order to ensure a suitable 2m distance between mourners (taking into account that some mourners may have been part of the same household). Following consideration with the Council's Health and Safety section, a maximum number of 15 was identified. In the event that the Welsh Government chose to reduce restrictions and the requirements of social distancing change, a new assessment will be undertaken to determine maximum numbers.

14. In order to ensure adequate safeguards were put in place, additional PPE was provided for staff, hand sanitizers were made available for staff on entering and leaving the Chapel and the area is cleaned between services. A one way system has also been devised to reduce one service meeting another.
  
15. In order to allow individuals greater choice and flexibility in planning a service, attempts were made to offer the additional services that Margam Crematorium can provide:
  - Funerals can be recorded so people who cannot be physically present are able to view the service. The recording is now available as a downloadable file with a reduced fee. The Council's service provider for webcasting is presently improving the system to allow for further webcasting services to be provided.
  - Family and friends may also want to consider holding a memorial service or celebration of life once the coronavirus pandemic is over. Enquiries are being made by the public as to the holding of such services when social distancing restrictions come to an end
  
16. Since the Margam Crematorium grounds have reopened, it has been noted that members of the public have chosen to pay their respects in a very different way and often members of the public can be seen lining the drive at Margam Crematorium when a funeral is taking place.
  
17. The witness burial service has also now recommenced as of the 20<sup>th</sup> July 2020 and an appointment system has been put in place with Funeral Directors and families in order to perform this service and to ensure social distancing can be complied

with at all times. Presently, 4 individuals (plus any clergy and crematorium officials) will be present at such burial.

### Funeral Directors

18. Margam Crematorium has always had a strong relationship with local funeral directors and during the Covid-19 pandemic this has continued with regular updates being provided on changes in legislation and practice and when new guidance is issued from Welsh Government it is communicated to funeral directors.
19. New protocols have been put in place to assist funeral directors in service provision, including:
  - The ability to submit forms electronically to negate the need to travel and hand deliver such documents
  - Appointment systems for the collection of cremated remains
  - Assistance in obtaining PPE where necessary via the Council's systems.
  - Allowing greater use of online or telephone payments

### Number of Services

20. Members will of course receive within their papers for this Committee meeting the report of the Medical Referee for Margam Crematorium. However, the following table provides a comparator as to the number of services in 2019 and 2020 during the previous 6 months along with an indication of the number of those that are as a result of Covid-19

YEAR	MONTH						Total
	January	February	March	April	May	June	
2019	126	143	127	120	130	115	761
2020	149	131	147	178	174	147	926
Difference	23	-12	20	58	44	32	165
COVID 19 cases	0	0	0	30	56	10	96

### Resilience

21. As part of ensuring resilience and business continuity during the Covid-19 pandemic, a number of staff were seconded to Margam Crematorium to undertake training at Margam Crematorium in the event that additional resource was necessary. Strategies were put in place to ensure that regardless of any circumstances that may have arisen during the Covid-19 pandemic Margam Crematorium could continue to function and meet any service needs.
  
22. 5 employees of Neath Port Talbot Council have now undertaken training and in the event that they are required in the future to ensure future resilience they are capable of being redeployed to assist core Margam Crematorium officers.

### **Financial Impacts:**

23. Additional expenditure has been incurred for the purchase of additional PPE but all within existing budgets.

### **Integrated Impact Assessment:**

24. An Integrated Impact Assessment is not required for this report.

**Valleys Communities Impacts:**

25. No implications

**Workforce Impacts:**

26. No implications

**Legal Impacts:**

27. No implications

**Consultation:**

28. There is no requirement for external consultation on this item

**Recommendations:**

29. That Members note the arrangements for funeral services at Margam Crematorium during the Covid-19 pandemic.

**Reasons for Proposed Decision:**

30. To inform Members of the arrangements for funeral services during the Covid-19 Pandemic

**Implementation of Decision:**



31. Not applicable

**Appendices:**

32. None

**List of Background Papers:**

33. None

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