



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council

MARGAM JOINT CREMATORIUM COMMITTEE

JOINT REPORT OF THE CLERK AND THE TREASURER – C.GRIFFITHS and H.JONES

16th February 2024

Matter for Decision

All Wards

Fees for Saturday Services at Margam Crematorium

Purpose of the Report:

To consider the additional fee applied to Saturday services at Margam Crematorium and agree a revised fee to be implemented from the 1st April 2024

Background:

At its meeting in December 2023, members of the Joint Committee considered the proposed budget for 2024/2025. Joint Committee Members agreed of the recommendations contained within the circulated report, but requested that additional work be undertaken, in respect of the justification for the extra charges for Saturday cremations (currently £356 extra fee for Saturday bookings). It was agreed that officers would bring a further report, explaining the basis of the calculations, and options for costings, to the next meeting of the Joint Committee.

For a significant number of years, Margam Crematorium has charged a small fee for cremations at Margam Crematorium that take place, currently set at £356 for 2023/2024.

This has been standard practice throughout the Crematorium sector in South Wales with all neighbouring crematoriums applying a small fee for a Saturday service:

| Crematorium | 2023/2024 Fee for Saturday Services |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Margam Crematorium* | £1,004.50 (inclusive of a £356 Saturday Fee) |
| Coychurch Crematorium, Bridgend | £1,172.50 (inclusive of a £348 Saturday Fee) |
| Llanelli Crematorium (Private) | £1,250 (inclusive of a £240 Saturday Fee) |
| Narbeth Crematorium | £1,059.50 (inclusive of a £253.50 Saturday fee) |
| Swansea Crematorium | £1,180 (inclusive of a £375 Saturday Fee) |
| Llwycoed and Glyntaff | No weekend funerals |

*NB – the fee agreed for 2024/2025 will be £1,014.50 (which includes a £360 Saturday Fee)

A Saturday fee was initially intended to enable services to still be offered at Margam Crematorium at weekends but recognising that there were additional costs and pressures incurred in providing such services. For example, in line with Council HR practices, any colleagues working on a Saturday or Sunday are entitled to an additional payment of £30% of any time worked. To ensure cremations can take place on the day of the service, where possible, a qualified cremator operative is also required to be in attendance over and above any weekend attendant that is in place. Margam Crematorium operates a reduced staffing presence at weekends, with only two members of staff present.

The number of Saturday services has seen a slight increase in recent years, and the table below provides an overview of the number of services within the last three financial years:

| Year | Number of Saturday Funerals | Income from Saturday Fees |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 2021/22 | 17 | £5,882 |
| 2022/23 | 26 | £8,996 |
| 2023/24 (April to December) | 23 | £8,188 |

Members therefore are invited to consider whether they wish to either (a) retain the Saturday fee, (b) remove the Saturday fee; or (c) reduce the Saturday fee.

There are several factors to consider in relation to the setting of the Saturday fee:

- Gas Usage – As long as there is a cremation on a Friday, the gas consumption is comparative to weekdays. This is because there is residual heat held in the brickwork of the Cremators.
- Organist Fees – There is an increase of £4.50 for a Saturday.
- Cleaning – There is no cleaning service provided on a Saturday. If there was increase in the number of Saturday services additional cleaning would be required.
- Lighting – The lighting is on in the chapel during the weekend, irrespective of there being a Saturday funeral. The public have access to visit the Memorial vase blocks.
- Staff – To date there are two staff members on duty at weekends (one of which is a qualified cremator operator, whilst the other is undertaking training), compared to the five staff (who are all qualified cremator operators) who are present throughout the week and under the supervision of the Superintendent or Deputy Superintendent. If there were to be an increase in Saturday services because of health and safety requirements and to meet service delivery, additional staff would be required to ensure the service can be delivered to the appropriate standard. This would result in either additional recruitment being necessary to facilitate increase demand at weekends, increased overtime payments as well as weekend working allowances being applied.

Members must consider therefore the advantages and disadvantages associated with any potential changes.

| Advantages | Disadvantages |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There will be a consistent fee for all services for members of the public. • Members of the public will be able to have a service at Margam Crematorium on a Saturday at the same cost as a weekday. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Given the prospect for additional services, consideration would have to be given to additional cleaning services and an additional staff member to ensure service delivery. There will be additional employment costs to |

| | |
|--|--|
| | <p>meet this demand between the region of £5,000 per year.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional costs in energy consumption if cremations were to take place. • An increase number in services, could see cremations having to be delayed until the following Monday, which could have an impact on cremation timings the following week. • An increase in the deficit to which Margam Crematorium would operate (because of a removal of the fee and the increased capacity that would be required to address service delivery), which could reduce the potential development and investment opportunities that could be open to the Joint Committee. |
|--|--|

It would be proposed therefore that, taking on board the advantages and disadvantages above that a revised additional fee of £175 be implemented at Margam Crematorium for all Saturday services from the 1st April 2024. This will enable notification to be provided to Funeral Directors and to update the appropriate information throughout March 2024 in anticipation of the change.

This fee has been calculated by identifying the cost of cremations over the weekend (i.e. energy usage), the additional staff members that might be needed for larger funerals, increased cleaning requirements that may prove necessary.

In order to mitigate against the disadvantages referenced above, it would be proposed that the number of Saturday services be capped at the number of three (3) services. This figure being reviewed after six months to determine the impact on the operation at Margam Crematorium.

Financial Impacts:

The revised budget position for 2023/24 showed a net deficit for transfer from the General Reserve (after £100,000 contribution to the cremator reserve and £100,000 payment to contributing authorities) of £4,250, which was predicted to be a deficit of £215,800 when the original budget was agreed in February 2023. It should be noted that any removal of the Saturday fee could have the potential of a deficit in future financial years. If members of the Joint Committee were to look at a removal or reduction of the Saturday fee, it would be appropriate to undertake a review of all fees to ensure no losses would be incurred in future years and to ensure a balanced budget that continues to facilitate the investment and development that the Joint Committee wishes to pursue.

Integrated Impact Assessment:

There is no requirement for an integrated impact assessment for this report.

Valleys Communities Impacts:

There are no impacts associated with this report.

Workforce Impacts:

There are no impacts associated with this report.

Legal Impacts:

There are no impacts associated with this report.

Consultation:

There is no requirement for external consultation as part of this report.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that the Joint Committee reduce the additional fee for Saturdays to £175 and agree a cap on the number of Saturday services of three, subject to a review in six months time.

Appendices:

None

List of Background Papers:

None

Officer Contact:

Mr Craig Griffiths
Clerk to the Joint Committee of Margam Crematorium

Mr Huw Jones
Treasurer