

# North Yorkshire Council

## Environment Executive Members

26 January 2024

### Fees and Charges for the Registrar, Coroner and Bereavement Services

#### Report of the Assistant Director – Regulatory Services, Registration, Coroner and Bereavement Services

#### 1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To approve Fees and Charges for Registration, Coroner and Bereavement Services for the financial year 2024-2025, and for ceremonies for the financial year 2025-2026.

#### 2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 Approval is sought for fees and charges for the Registration Service for 2024/2025 and for 2025/2026 in respect of ceremonies. In addition, approval is sought for the Coroner Service and the Bereavement Service for 2024/2025. Consideration of inflation, potential harmonisation of former district fees, and comparison with competing other neighbouring local authority provision has been made in recommending a part harmonised approach. The services will undertake further detailed analysis over the next year to monitor the impact of these changes to determine any future harmonisation or rationalisation of fees and charges.

#### 3.0 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Registration, Coroner and Bereavement Services provide a range of statutory, judicial, and elective services to the people of North Yorkshire and beyond. This includes in the Registration Service, birth and death notifications, notices of marriage, and ceremonies including citizenship, baby naming, civil partnership, and weddings. The Bereavement Service provide cremation, interment of both the deceased and cremated remains, service tributes and memorialisation.
- 3.2 The Registration Service provides a range of statutory services with fees set by the General Registration Office (a division of the Home Office). Elective ceremonies fees are set by the Council one year in advance to allow prospective couples to book ceremonies both at Council and external venues.
- 3.3 North Yorkshire and York Coroner jurisdiction covers both North Yorkshire and City of York with North Yorkshire Council acting as the lead authority. Most fees and charges are those charged to the Councils for post-mortem and specialist medical investigatory work and fall outside the scope of this Fees and Charges structure, however fees payable to Funeral Directors are set by the Council.
- 3.4 The Bereavement Service provides funeral, cremation and burial services with a further substantial memorialisation offer which differs in each locality. Prior to April 2023 the crematoria were operated independently by former district councils.

## **4.0 DETAILED PRESENTATION OF THE SUBSTANTIVE ISSUE**

### **4.1 Registration Service**

Statutory fees for birth and death certificates are set by the General Registration Office. There has been no published change for 2024/2025 and they will remain at £11 per certificate unless the Council is directed to change these by central government.

### **4.2 Ceremonies**

Elective fees for weddings and civil partnerships including those levied on venues requiring new or continued registration to hold ceremonies will be raised by 6% for 2025/2026. These fees are set one year in advance to ensure that couples planning weddings can book ceremonies registrars to undertake their ceremony. Further work will be undertaken over the year in benchmarking fees against other regional authorities to provide comparative data for future fees and charges. Work is underway to expand the range of ceremony types on offer to the people of North Yorkshire and beyond, and any additional fees and charges will be presented for approval as required.

### **4.3 Coroner Service**

The fees payable to Funeral Directors for transportation of the deceased to a hospital as required by the coroner will be increased by 6% with, for example an out of hours local request resulting in an increase of £6 per callout. The scale of charges will be distributed to all funeral directors from 1<sup>st</sup> April.

### **4.4 Bereavement Service**

The four crematoria currently operate four independent fees and charges structures. In addition, a fifth former district council set fees for interment in its cemetery. Officers have considered that harmonisation of fees for cremation, direct (or unattended) cremation, purchase of burial plots and interment fees would result in a significant cost increase for some crematoria and cemeteries. A staged approach has been proposed with a combination of harmonisation, increase by inflation, and stand-alone pricing with inflationary increases as follows.

- Fees for purchase of burial rights which are subject to inflation will be based on demand and capacity of locality cemeteries.
- Cremation fees will be based on current locality fees and operating costs with consideration given for local demand and neighbouring crematoria.
- Video and audio tributes displayed during funeral services will be harmonised across the Council and increased by inflation and in line with supplier costs.
- Memorialisation fees will be increased by inflation and harmonised where applicable. Further work will be carried out over the next year to determine a Council wide strategic approach to memorialisation.
- Administrative fees will be harmonised across the Council, with inflationary increases applied.

## **5.0 CONTRIBUTION TO COUNCIL PRIORITIES**

5.1 These proposals contribute to the following Council priorities. A well led and managed, financially sustainable and forward-thinking council.

- To deliver a successful transformation programme, maximising the benefits of bringing eight councils into one.
- To operate on a commercial basis where it is appropriate to do so and invest in council owned assets to drive revenue generation opportunities to fund Corporate Plans.

## **6.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

6.1 Three options were considered by officers, the harmonisation of all fees across the Bereavement Services, part harmonisation and finally individual uplifting of fees for inflation.

## **7.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 Registration Service statutory fees for birth and death registrations, notices of marriage and superintendent registrar weddings are set by the General Registration Office. These fees will be updated in accordance with any direction by central government.

7.2 Registration Service fees for weddings and civil partnerships are applicable for 2025/2026. The service is implementing a marketing campaign to promote ceremonies in North Yorkshire. The impact of this campaign alongside inflationary increases will be reported on as part of usual financial performance reporting.

7.3 The impact of the mixed approach to Bereavement Services fees will be monitored as part of the transformation process. Future Fees and Charges proposals will report on the impact of part harmonisation alongside progress made towards harmonisation of utility and service contracts and the impact on service costs.

7.4 Fees have been increased by an inflationary 6% in line with Council Policy with specific fees set out in Appendix A

## **8.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

### **8.1 Timeframe for publication of Fees and Charges**

The Funerals Market Investigation Order 2021 requires the Local Authority to supply local Funeral Directors with price information as specified in the Order no later than 15 working days before such change has effect.

### **8.2 Competition and Markets Authority**

The Funerals Market Investigation Order 2021 requires crematoria operators to display in pdf format on their website certain price information. These prices will, once approved be updated on 1st April to comply with this order.

### **8.3 Exhumations**

Exhumations require a Ministry of Justice licence and the attendance of an Environmental Health Officer. For remains interred in closed Church of England churchyards approval (faculty) from the diocese is also required. The individual circumstances of exhumations (which are not common) require a calculation of charge in each case. The service will provide a bespoke quote based on the individual circumstances of any request.

### **8.4 Children's Funerals**

The cost of burial and cremations fees for children under 18 or a baby stillborn after the 24<sup>th</sup> week of pregnancy can be claimed back by the Local Authority through the Children's Funeral Fund for England. No costs are incurred by bereaved families for cremation or burial by the Council. The fees to be claimed back are required to be published but will not be levied on intermediary Funeral Directors or bereaved families.

## **9.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 There are no significant equalities implications arising from this report.

## **10.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 All four crematoria operate within Defra's Process Guidance Note 5/2 (12), Statutory Guidance for Crematoria. A consultation on updating this guidance was held by Defra in late 2023. Should Defra update the guidance the service will work with Environmental Health and Climate Change colleagues to ensure that the crematoria continue to operate at best practice and within the emissions limits.

## **11.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

11.1 These recommendations increase fees in line with inflation, and within Bereavement Services take a pragmatic staged approach to harmonisation of fees

## **12.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

12.1 It is recommended that the Corporate Director of Environment, in consultation with the Executive Member for Managing our Environment approve the fees and charges, uplifting by 6% and harmonising where appropriate.

### **APPENDICES:**

Appendix A – Fees and Charges Registration Service –Ceremonies for 2025-2026

Appendix B – Fees and Charges Coroner Service 2024-2025

Appendix C – Fees and Charges Bereavement Service 2024-2025

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Northallerton

22 February 2024

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Presenter of Report – Callum McKeown, Assistant Director, Regulatory Services, Registrar, Coroner and Bereavement Services

Note: Members are invited to contact the author in advance of the meeting with any detailed queries or questions.



## REGISTRATION SERVICE

### FEES AND CHARGES FOR CEREMONIES

**EFFECTIVE 1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026**

A Statutory Notice Fee of £35.00 per person is payable for all marriage and civil partnership ceremonies in addition to the charges listed below. This Notice Fee is non-refundable.

A £55.00 deposit is required for all ceremony bookings which is non-refundable after 14 days have elapsed from the date the booking is made.

Statutory fees may change without notice.

The Service does not conduct ceremonies on Christmas Day or Boxing Day.

#### A. Civil Marriages and Civil Partnerships at APPROVED PREMISES

Monday – Friday	£510.00
Saturday/Sunday/Public Holiday	£610.00

**Please note: The above fees are charged by the Registration Service for attendance at ceremonies only. Further costs will be charged by the venue.**

#### B. Civil Marriages and Civil Partnerships at ALL REGISTRATION OFFICES (Including Thornborough Hall and Selby Town Hall)

Monday – Friday	£265.00
Saturday	£345.00
Sundays/Public Holiday	£380.00

#### C. Ceremonies in the OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT REGISTRAR and standard ceremonies at other offices

Available one day per month	£57.00
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**All the above fees include the cost of one certificate and are payable in advance when notice is given, no later than 3 months prior to the ceremony.**

#### D. Celebratory Services

##### Baby Naming and Renewal of Vows in local authority or approved premises

Monday – Friday	£265.00	Saturday / Sunday / Bank Holiday	£320.00
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#### E. Certificates

Standard Certificates	£11.00 per certificate
Priority Certificates (same day if ordered before 3.00 p.m.)	£35.00 per certificate

**North Yorkshire and York Coroner Service**  
**SCHEDULE OF CHARGES**  
**FOR THE REMOVAL AND TRANSPORTATION OF THE DECEASED**  
**1 APRIL 2024 – 31 MARCH 2025**

	<b>Monday – Friday 8:00am to 5:00pm (excluding Public Holidays)</b>	<b>Other Times</b>
Call-Out Fee ( 2 persons)	£64	£102
Call –out Fee ( 1 person)	£48	£75
Extra Person	£16	£27
Additional mileage (over first 10 miles)	123p	123p

**NOTES:**

1. Payment for “extra person” will not normally be made where the journey is from a chapel of rest or mortuary to a chapel of rest or mortuary. Exceptions include Bank Holidays, Out of normal hours e.g. weekends where a bariatric body is involved.
2. Mileages are to be calculated from the “garage” to place of collection to the Chapel of Rest or mortuary. If the Senior Coroner requires a subsequent journey, e.g. the deceased is moved from the Chapel of Rest to the mortuary, a separate payment can be charged.
3. Transport of the body from the mortuary is not the responsibility of the Coroner Service and should not be charged for. The exception is where the deceased is being returned to a hospital because the pathologist is requiring further testing e.g. after CAT scanning at Bradford etc.
4. Claims will be considered for additional payment for:-
  - i. dealing with badly traumatised bodies (up to £22)
  - ii. exceptional waiting time (over 1 hour) at the scene (not at the mortuary) (up to £40 per hour)
  - iii. attendance at a Police ID (up to £40 per hour)
  - iv. provision of a standard body bag and 2 pairs of gloves ( up to £13 excluding VAT)
5. In “multiple” cases where more than one body has to be moved at the same time, and where this is done with one vehicle in one journey, the charges should be as above for the first body plus 50% of that call out fee for the second or subsequent body. An additional mileage cost should not be charged.
6. All invoices should be **submitted to the appropriate HM Coroner and must be itemised to show the breakdown of costs. They must always show each journey and its cost separately Non-itemised invoices will not be passed for payment.** Invoices are to be submitted on no more than a monthly basis. Failure

to submit invoices regularly may lead to removal of the firm from the list of approved contractors.

7. The above rates are exclusive of VAT, which should be charged, where appropriate, at the prevailing rate.
8. Attendance at the scene should be within 90 minutes of the request to attend.
9. The presence of a Police officer on the scene does NOT indicate it will be a Coroners removal. You should satisfy yourself that the Police are instructing you to remove on behalf of the Coroner
10. If you are requested by police to transport the deceased direct to a mortuary for continuity of evidence purposes, because the death is an RTC, a suicide or a potential drugs death, this must be adhered to. Other cases can be taken to your chapel of rest for transportation to the mortuary as soon as practicably possible when requested by the Coroner's officer.
11. Please ensure that the deceased is tagged with 3 points of identification. These should be: name, date of birth and home address. If any of these are not known, then please use date of death and place of death.

### **Other terms and conditions**

#### **12 Family only requests**

Where the family request a specific undertaker to do the removal, this will be honoured where possible.

#### **13 Mobile Phone number**

You should supply a mobile phone number that the Police can contact you on.

#### **14 Terms of Business**

The Standard Terms of business the Council operates is for payment within 30 days of receipt of the invoice. The time will start from the date the invoice is received at Library Headquarters for processing. However, the Council does have 10-day payment terms that small and medium-sized enterprises can apply for.

#### **15 Out of Hours Attendance**

Firms listed on the approved contractors list must be able to attend 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. We accept that there will obviously be occasions when a firm will be unable to respond but this must be the exception, rather than the rule. It is appreciated that particularly with smaller firms, there may be a problems responding during busy times or when staff are on holiday but firms cannot pick and choose which jobs they wish to attend. If this requirement does cause problems, an option may be to nominate another firm or carriage master to do this work on your behalf.

#### **16 Advertising for Business**

Touting' for funeral business whilst carrying out Coroners' removals will not be tolerated and it is unacceptable for funeral directors to leave business cards with bereaved families or promote their business in these circumstances. Any evidence of conduct of this nature will result in removal from the approved contractors' list.