

Is this the final decision on the recommendations?

Yes

Additional Inscription Charge

Final Decision-Maker	Heritage, Culture & Leisure Committee
Lead Director or Head of Service	Head of Environment & Public Realm
Lead Officer and Report Author	Head of Environment & Public Realm
Classification	Non-exempt
Wards affected	None

This report makes the following recommendations to the final decision-maker:

1. That the Committee considers the reasons for the original agreed proposal to reduce the charge for an additional subscription to £52
2. That the Committee decides whether to overturn this decision and retain the charge of £97 which was set for 2015/16

This report relates to the following corporate priorities:

Increases in fees and charges can have a significant impact on the Council's objectives. The use of the policy as a guide to assessing a correct level of increase means that the most appropriate levels are proposed in this report.

Timetable

<i>Meeting</i>	<i>Date</i>
Heritage, Culture & Leisure Committee	Tuesday 1 March 2016

Additional Inscription Charge

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Committee agreed the fees and charges for Bereavement Services at the meeting held on 5 January 2016. However have asked for the opportunity to review the charge for Additional Inscriptions which is due to be reduced from £97 to £52 in 2016/17.
- 1.2 This report outlines the reasons for the reduction, the impact of the reduction and asks that the Committee agree the charge for Additional Inscriptions for 2016/17.

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Fees and Charges for Bereavement Services were presented to the Committee at the meeting on 5 January 2016.
- 2.2 Within this report the proposed memorial permit charges were set out as follows:

Monuments	2015/16	2016/17
Headstone	£97	£140
Kerbstone	£97	£38.50
Indicator stone	£37.70	£140
Cremated remains memorial	£97	£140
Tablet (12" by 12")	£97	£140
Vase	£97	£140
Initial inscription	£97	£140
Additional inscription	£97	£52
Any other monument (Note: monument permit fees are reduced by 50% for under 16 years)	£97	£140

- 2.3 For the majority of these charges there was a 44.33% proposed increase, as research undertaken regarding other cemeteries and crematoria across Kent indicated Maidstone's charges were around £50 lower than its competitors.
- 2.4 However in light of the increased charges for headstones, kerbstones, indicator stones, cremated remains memorial, tablets, vases and initial inscriptions, it was proposed that the additional inscription charge should be reduced by £40.
- 2.5 The reduced charge for the additional inscription is an accurate reflection of the amount of staff time proportionately that is spent on processing such

applications. This is far less than the time spent processing initial memorial applications, which is particularly demanding.

- 2.6 These new charges will have a small reduction on the potential income which could be obtained from all memorial permits on a single memorial, where space has been left for a future inscription, compared to the 2015/16 charges. This would total £277 instead of £277.60 at present, a reduction of £0.60.
 - 2.7 However, it is also recognised that the reduced fee may attract more additional inscriptions than currently carried out which could increase the income generated.
 - 2.8 Should the additional inscription fee be held at 2015/16 price, the charge for all memorial permits on a single memorial, where space has been left for a future inscription, would be £322 for 2016/17.
 - 2.9 Therefore reinstating the charge from 2015/16 may generate a small additional income.
 - 2.10 In the past 12 months there have been 27 Additional Inscriptions. Assuming a similar level of uptake next year, the higher charge would result in an additional income of £1,215.
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3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 **Option 1:** The Committee could decide to retain the reduced charge of £52 for Additional Inscriptions for 2016/17 as agreed in their January Committee Meeting.
 - 3.2 **Option 2:** The Committee could decide to reinstate the previous years charge the charge of £97 for Additional Inscriptions for 2016/17.
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4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 It is recommended that the Committee consider the charge for the Additional Inscriptions and determine which is the most appropriate for 2016/17.
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5. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 5.1 The Chair of Heritage, Culture and Leisure has requested that the Committee have the opportunity to discuss and agree the Additional Inscription fee for 2016/17.
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6. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

6.1 Following agreement by the Committee, the new Fees and Charges will be published and will be provided to local Funeral Directors and Stonemasons.

6.2 The Fees and Charges will take effect from 1 April 2016.

7. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	Increases in fees and charges can have a significant impact on the Council's objectives. The use of the policy as a guide to assessing a correct level of increase means that the most appropriate levels are proposed in this report.	Head of Environment and Public Realm
Risk Management	There is a risk that if the prices are not set at an acceptable level, customers may be deterred and income levels may drop.	Head of Environment & Public Realm
Financial	Reinstating the higher charge for the Additional Inscriptions is likely to generate a small amount of additional income (in the region of £1,200) per annum.	Finance Team
Staffing	None	
Legal	None	
Equality Impact Needs Assessment	N/A	
Environmental/Sustainable Development	None	
Community Safety	None	
Human Rights Act	None	
Procurement	None	
Asset Management	None	

8. REPORT APPENDICES

None

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None