

Report of the Executive Director

CREMATION NUMBERS AND INFORMATION ON CREMATIONS1. Purpose of the report

To provide the Joint Committee with the latest update on cremation numbers and information on the different types of cremations.

2. Background

In accordance with the Joint Committee's request shown below is a table detailing the number of services on a year by year basis.

Month	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
April	249	310	262	190	228	190	302	229
May	233	229	231	230	251	230	283	187
June	206	299	246	253	198	212	188	241
July	236	233	213	200	178	196	178	183
August	234	210	201	181	201	194	179	180
September	233	219	233	198	153	175	182	
October	261	236	212	207	191	207	202	
November	268	237	255	221	221	210	222	
December	298	295	257	235	196	202	262	
January	309	261	315	298	273	272	224	
February	321	305	315	269	241	204	303	
March	323	300	263	263	217	240	272	
Total	3171	3134	3003	2745	2548	2532	2797	1020

The first five months of 2021/22 show that there have been 1020 cremations. Whilst this is below the numbers achieved for the same time period in 2020/21 it is comparable with the numbers achieved in 2019/20. It is there anticipated that the target of 2450 cremations for the year 2021/22 will be achieved.

Further information relating to the cremations together with the different types of cremations are shown in the appendix.

3. Financial Implications

There are financial no implications at this stage.

Recommendation

The Joint Committee is asked to NOTE this report.

Background papers

Nil

APPENDIX

Types of Services breakdown

The table below shows the different types of cremations which have taken place between April and August 2021.

The key for the information in the table is show below:

Total Cremation: A normal cremation involving a 45 minute service.

Extended Service: A normal cremation involving a 90 minute service.

Hospital Body: The cremation of a body received direct from the hospital.

Hospital Body Part: The cremation of body parts received direct from the hospital.

Committal Service: A cremation where the main service was held at a church/chapel

Under 18s: A normal cremation involving a 45 minute service which is free of charge.

NVF/Stillborn: A normal cremation involving a 45 minute service which is free of charge.

Direct Services: A normal cremation but where there is no service.

Weekend Service Plus Same day Cremation: A normal cremation involving a 45 minute service with the cremation taking palce on the same day as the service

Weekend Service Plus Cremation: A normal cremation involving a 45 minute service with the service taking place on a Saturday.

Month	Total Cremations £730.00	Extended Services £806.00	Hospital Body £516.00	Hospital Body parts £49.00	Committal Service £730.00	Under 16 Yrs £0.00	16-18 Yrs £0.00	NVF/Still Borns £0.00	Directs £500.00	Weekend Service Plus Same day Cremation £1085.00	Weekend Service Plus Cremation £825.00	Weekend Service Chapel Only £195.00	Chapel Hire £100.00	Epilog Numbers
April-21	198	10	1	0	12	0	0	3	5	0	0	0	4	229
May-21	138	8	6	17	11	0	0	2	4	1	0	0	6	187
June-21	200	9	1	19	10	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2	241
July-21	169	3	0	0	5	0	0	2	4	0	0	0	4	183
August-21	152	9	1	0	9	1	0	1	7	2	0	0	5	180
September-21														
October-21														
November-21														
December-21														
January-22														
February-22														
March-22														
Totals	857	39	9	36	0	0	0	8	0	3	0	0	0	1020

As is evident the majority of cremations are 'total cremations' with 'extended services' and 'hospital body parts' being the other main services provided.

Alternatives to Cremation

At the last committee Members requested information relating to alternatives to cremation. The information below provides basic information on what alternative methods are available.

Resomation (Bio-Cremation)

Within a stainless steel tank called a Resomator, the body is immersed in an approximate 1:20 solution of potash lye and water. Gas-powered steam generators build up pressure within the tank with the temperature rising up to around 170 degrees Celsius. Due to the high pressure involved no boiling actually takes place with rather a chemical reaction (alkaline hydrolysis) separating the body into two main forms.

The two forms are 1) a "bio-fluid" which is a collection of all our building blocks: salts, sugars, peptides, amino acids, and 2) "bone ash" from the bones which is pure white calcium phosphate. Any metal implants or prosthetics will remain intact and are therefore potentially reusable. All this is achieved using about 1/3 the energy consumption of cremation, without any of the harmful emissions. At the moment this process is still in its infancy and is not a commonly used process within the cremation industry.

Green Burial

The concept of a green burial (also known as a Natural or Woodland Burial) is to keep the burial as simple and natural as possible. The vision for green burials is for the body to return to nature in a way that will not harm the environment but will actually preserve the landscape and enhance opportunities for wildlife. This option is seen as the most environmentally friendly choice.

The general principals of this kind of burial are that the body is not to be embalmed (as the main chemicals involved in this process can be environmentally hazardous), and a biodegradable coffin (cardboard, bamboo, seagrass, willow or sustainable wood) or shroud is used. The final part to the process is that often a native tree or shrub is then planted on, or close to, the grave instead of a large stone memorial.

Cryomation

Cryonics is the speculative practice of cooling people immediately upon the pronouncement of legal death with the intention that in the future point, and with the development of new technology, the person will be able to be resuscitated and restored to full health.

The facilities available for cryomation are at present only available in the USA but with the assistance of dedicated groups it is possible for a body originating in the United Kingdom to be preliminarily prepared and then transported to the USA for the full procedure to be carried out.

Approximately 150 people have gone through the cryomation process and are now stored in the specially designed liquid nitrogen tanks at -196° Celsius. Cryonic preservation is expensive (whole body preservation is in the region of £90,000 and for just a head is around £45,000).

Promession

The body and coffin are placed into a chamber where it will be slowly frozen to -18°Celsius. Once frozen the coffin is placed on to a moving platform that will transport the coffin through the different stages of the process; this part of the process takes place within a sealed unit called a Promator.

The coffin is weighed to determine how much liquid nitrogen is required to freeze the body to -196°C. This cooling process takes 2 hours and the liquid nitrogen will meanwhile harmlessly evaporate into the atmosphere.

Once the body has fully cooled it will be mechanically transported onto a belt which using ultrasonic vibration shatters the frozen body into powder. The powder will then move into a vacuum chamber where clean water (70% of the body's composition) will evaporate and be dispersed into the atmosphere as natural steam.

The dry powder passes through electrical currents which will extract any metals that exist, such as dental fillings. The metal can then be recycled. The dry powder residue, which will weigh approximately one third of the original body weight and is still within the sealed unit, will then be placed into a small bio-degradable coffin. The remains are then ready for a burial in the top soil or cremation.