

Motion 3: Extend Burial Times in Oldham Cemeteries

To be moved by Cllr Arooj Shah

Seconded by Cllr Chris Goodwin

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We believe that Oldham Council needs to cater to the diverse needs of our communities and enhance the quality of life for all Oldhamers. ~~extend the operational hours of all cemeteries within the Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council area to 22:00, seven days a week. This proposal aims to introduce a fixed tariff for burial services during operational hours (9:00—17:00) at all hours of operation, benefiting all Oldham's residents.~~

Currently, Oldham cemeteries operate from 09:00 to 16:00, Monday to Friday. The costs associated with burials within these hours vary, with additional fees applied for out-of-hours services, such as evenings and weekends. These fees can unfortunately significantly increase the financial burden on grieving families and at a time of cost-of-living crisis. ~~we believe it is important to have one fee throughout the week.~~

~~Currently, we have a booking system which is Monday to Friday and the cut-off time to book a burial slot for the same day is 10:00. Furthermore, the documentation required by the registration office has a cut-off time of noon, this bureaucracy of paperwork and facilitation of burials is needlessly time restricted, this motion is seeking to extend both the booking for burials and the registration of burials to 17:00 in line with all other council services, giving the family of the bereaved sufficient time to arrange same day burials.~~

~~This motion aligns with our commitment to cater to the diverse needs of our community and enhance the quality of life for all Oldhamers.~~

This Council notes that:

The council works hard to sensitively and supportively meet the funeral needs of all Oldham residents, taking into account a wide range of cultural and religious requirements.

- The council offers same day, evening and weekend burials, on request, at a surcharge.
- The team currently meets all reasonable requests for same day, evening and weekend burials.
- The additional charges for out of hours burials are used to pay additional costs of staff overtime and call out fees.
- In September last year the Leader of the Council met representatives from the Oldham Mosques Council and other key representatives to discuss how the service could better support the needs of Muslim community.

- Since that meeting, the cemeteries team have been reviewing their policies and have already started implementing changes. It has supported burials outside of the hours published in the policy where this has been required.

- Having reviewed the demand for out of hours burials, in consultation with the Oldham Mosques Council and key community representatives we have extended hours of notification for same day funerals from 10am to 1pm, the deadline for submission of essential paperwork from 12noon to 3pm and the time for the last available burial service to 8pm during the summer months (April - September) and 4.30pm during the winter (October - March) or light dependent. This will remain under review with a view to making additional adjustments where possible.

- Wherever possible the team will continue to work flexibly to meet any reasonable needs outside of these deadlines as we understand the sensitivities and the complexity in making funeral arrangements.

- Between now and the end of March 2025 the additional charges will remain the same. The Council will use data to inform the costs of out of hours burials. The Council will continue to proudly run its burial service on a not-for-profit basis.

The Council will remain in dialogue with the Oldham Mosques Council on this issue and will consult Oldham Mosques Council on any changes to additional burial charges before implementing them.

- ~~These changes mirror other boroughs and councils throughout the Northwest and West Yorkshire and bring Oldham in line with these councils.~~
- ~~Extended hours provide greater flexibility for all Oldham residents, accommodating those with varied schedules, and allowing families to plan funerals outside of standard working hours.~~
- ~~Weekend and evening options reduce the stress of arranging burials during the workweek, fostering a more compassionate approach to bereavement.~~

Comparative Analysis:

Service Hours	Current Times	Proposed Times
Weekdays	9:00 — 16:00	9:00 — 17:00
Weekdays Out of Hours	15:00 — 17:00	17:00 — 22:00
Weekends	Out-of-hours	9:00 — 22:00
		-
Cost Structure	Current Costs Proposed Fixed Tariffs	
-	Standard fees Fixed (9:00 — 17:00)	Same (may require readjustment of out of hour fees to incorporate additional cost of extended times — subject to review)
Weekdays	-	
-		
-		
-		

Evenings/Weekends	Out-of-hours fees	Out of Hour Fees (may require readjustment of out of hour fees to incorporate additional cost of extended times — subject to review)
-		

The Council resolves to:

- Bring forward a pilot scheme at cemeteries across the Borough to explore the possibility of further extending operational hours. ~~Immediately begin a pilot scheme in Chadderton Cemetery for twelve months and run a comprehensive review to ascertain the feasibility of the new timings.~~
- ~~That from the comprehensive review the Council will~~ determine the appropriate ~~fixed~~ tariff, using the data from the pilot scheme, ensuring it covers the operational costs while remaining affordable.

Following the outcome of the pilot scheme the Council will further resolve:

- To continue to run inclusive, supportive and an equitable burial service for all residents, by giving more time for bookings and paperwork, we are enabling funeral directors and families to be able to book a burial within the same day.
- To continue to meet the needs of residents of all faiths and none, that cemeteries in the Metropolitan Borough of Oldham will continue to offer same day burials seven days a week.
- To continue to remain in dialogue with Oldham Mosques Council, and other representatives of Oldham's faith communities, regarding changes to burial charges

~~Following a successful outcome of the pilot scheme the Council will further resolve:~~

- ~~To extend burial times to 10:00 daily and introduce the fixed tariffs so that Oldham Council can provide a more inclusive, supportive, and equitable service for all residents. By giving considerably more time for bookings and paperwork, we are enabling funeral directors and families to be able to book a burial within the same day.~~
- ~~That cemeteries in the Metropolitan Borough of Oldham are to remain open until 22:00, seven days a week.~~
- ~~That the extension includes evening and weekend services without the need for special out-of-hours arrangements.~~
- ~~To introduce a fixed tariff for burial services during the extended hours. This fixed rate aims to provide transparency and financial predictability for all families. The changes will remain cost neutral and not add extra costs to the council and in the long run save the Council money.~~

Amended Motion to read:

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- Since that meeting, the cemeteries team have been reviewing their policies and have already started implementing changes. It has supported burials outside of the hours published in the policy where this has been required.
- Having reviewed the demand for out of hours burials, in Consultation with the Oldham Mosques Council and key community representatives we have extended hours of notification for same day funerals from 10am to 1pm, the deadline for submission of essential paperwork from 12noon to 3pm and the time for the last available burial service to 8pm during the summer months (April - September) and 4.30pm during the winter (October - March) or light dependent. This will remain under review with a view to making additional adjustments where possible.
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- Determine the appropriate tariff, using the data from the pilot scheme, ensuring it covers the operational costs while remaining affordable.

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