

Dear All,

Firstly I'd like to thank you for your continuing support, I appreciate it is a very fluid situation and appreciate the support you continue to offer both families as well as my teams on the ground.

Kirklees Council has taken the very difficult decision to make further changes to funeral services in the district. As part of our commitment to managing the impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19), and taking into account new stricter and clearer government guidance relating to social distancing at funerals, the council have made the sad decision to take no further bookings for funeral services within its two crematoria from Monday 6th April. Any new bookings from the 6th April will be carried out as a 'Direct Cremation'. As you know a 'Direct Cremation' is carried out without mourners and has no service. Whilst the council will no longer offer a full funeral service or allow families to come into the crematoria, it hopes that providing the opportunity for a vicar or celebrant to say a prayer or a few words in the chapel will bring some comfort to families and loved ones. These changes are in line with those being introduced by other local authorities, including our neighbours in Leeds and Bradford.

Currently as you are aware, funerals are booked in at: 9:00, 9:30, 10:00, 10:30, 11:15, 12:30, 13:15, 14:00, 14:45 & 15:15 (Dewsbury currently reduced operation) and we have bookings up until the week commencing the 20th April. All pre-booked services will be honoured and families may still attend, current restrictions on numbers still apply. Direct cremations will move to 20 minute time slots: 9:00, 9:20, 9:40, 10:00, 10:20, 10:40, 11:00, 11:20, 11:40 and 12:00 and these new service times will start towards the end of April. We are still booking via telephone and will not be opening up the next day's available service times until we fill the existing day. We hope to also be in a position to open up the extra 4 times at Dewsbury Moor Crematorium from Monday, these too will be a direct cremation, please speak to the team to book. Once we have moved to the direct cremation times only, the online booking facility will be available to use.

We are aware of the impact this will have on the families and as such we propose the following; Direct funerals can still be attended by a vicar or celebrant of the families choice, we will still be offering a webcast free of charge and families can chose to order music, this will be limited to two songs, in/out of chapel. You will need to order this through the Obitus system as normal, we will not be allowing any other media options including slideshows at this time.

Moving forward, the times slots of 20 minutes will allow for further capacity within the crematorium and if we need to extend booking times (hopefully it won't happen) we have that ability. I would say however that whilst we will do everything in our power to continue to offer families a webcast and vicar/celebrant led service it may become impossible to do so.

As you are all aware we currently have the option of holding bodies over at Dewsbury, this is part of the booking process, I have also taken the decision to do the same for Huddersfield, if operationally we are unable to cremate we will now have the option to hold over.

Whilst I appreciate the above is perhaps not the update you had hoped for I have to ensure that the Council can manage excess deaths in a dignified way.

I would thank you in advance for your understanding in what has been a difficult decision.

Kind regards

Sent on behalf of

Peter Margrave

Bereavement Services Manager

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