



## REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 20TH SEPTEMBER 2016

**SUBJECT: INTERMENT OF CREMATED REMAINS**

**REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR - COMMUNITIES**

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### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To seek the views of the Scrutiny Committee prior to a further report being considered by Cabinet on the fee structure for the interment of cremated human remains.

### **2. SUMMARY**

- 2.1 On the 28th June 2016, members considered a report on the introduction of a new scale of charges for additional service provision across the Community & Leisure Services division.
- 2.2 Members requested further information on two points and an information report was e-mailed to all members of the Committee.
- 2.3 One of the members requested a further report relating to the charges for the interment of cremated remains in grave spaces where there were previous interments.

### **3. LINKS TO STRATEGY**

- 3.1 The Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing of Wales. It requires public bodies to think more about the long term, working with people and communities, looking to prevent problems and take a more joined up approach. This will create a Wales that we all want to live in, now and in the future. The Act puts in place seven wellbeing goals and the contents of this report fits into “a more equal Wales”. This will assist us to deliver our services effectively whilst ensuring value for money for residents and service users at probably one of the most difficult times of their lives.

### **4. THE REPORT**

- 4.1 During 2015/16, the Authority dealt with 797 interments within its municipal cemeteries. This is broken down as follows:-

1. Interment of full coffins	=	527
2. Interment of cremated remains	=	270

- 4.2 Of the 270 interments of cremated remains, 152 of these were within existing full grave spaces or cremated remains plots.

4.3 The current charging structure for cremated remains is as follows:-

- |    |   |            |
|----|---|------------|
| 1. | New/Reopen cremated remains plot  | = £ 505.00 |
| 2. | Reopen an existing full grave<br>(where there will be no further coffin burials)  | = £ 505.00 |
| 3. | New/Reopen full grave space, where there are future coffin burials=<br>(2 depth). The grave has to be excavated to full depth and the<br>remains placed in a position which will not obviate the excavation<br>in the future. | £1,739.00  |

4.4 The current fee structure was agreed by members at the inception of Caerphilly County Borough Council in 1996. These fees have been incremented annually in line with members' approval.

4.5 Members will be aware of the Cross Party Task & Finish Group, which considered a raft of issues facing the Authority's bereavement service. In relation to fees and charges, members endorsed the recommendation of the Task & Finish Group that fees should be increased annually by 18.5% plus inflation for five years to ultimately make the service self-financing. This approval ended in 2015/16 and fees for this current financial year (2016/17) have not been increased.

4.6 Caerphilly County Borough Council is an active member of the Continuous Improvement Forum for Bereavement Services in South East Wales. The table below sets out a comparison with neighbouring local Authorities fees for the same services:-

	<b>Reopen for Interment Within an Existing Grave</b>	<b>Interment Within a New Cremated Remains Plot</b>
Blaenau Gwent	£234.00	£304.00
Merthyr Tydfil	£421.00	£421.00
Torfaen	£256.00	£256.00
Cardiff	£230.00	£230.00
Caerphilly	£505.00	£505.00

Members should note that these fees only relate to the interment and in the case of new cremated remains plots do not include the purchase of the Exclusive Rights of Burial.

4.7 In light of members' wishes to review this particular aspect of the Authority's burial fee structure, officers have developed a number of options which can possibly be considered by the committee. These are as follows:-

1. The Authority retains its existing fee structure for the interment of cremated remains within full graves, which is currently set at £505.00 (this option will not affect current income levels).
2. The Authority reduces the reopen fee to £250.00 for interments within cremated remains plots and full graves as the Exclusive Rights of Burial (EROB) would have already been purchased previously and contributed towards maintenance costs. This will make Caerphilly comparable with the charges levied by our neighbouring local authorities. However, should a family wish to inter cremated remains in a new full grave where there will be coffin interments in the future, the fee structure set out in 4.3 bullet point 3 should apply. Members should note that the proposed reduction of this particular fee would affect the overall income levels for the Bereavement Service by £38k per annum.

3. In relation to additional interments within the new cremated remains vaults, (a report on which members considered in June 2016), it is suggested that the reopen fee be set at £100.00. This reduced fee reflects the simpler process whereby the plot is reopened and will generate additional revenue as this is a new service. Caerphilly County Borough Council is the first local authority in South East Wales to install such a facility so therefore benchmarking costs against our neighbouring authorities is not possible.

## **5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 There are no potential equalities implications within this report for specific groups or individuals. Therefore there is no requirement for an Equalities Impact Assessment to be undertaken.

## **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 Reducing the charges as outlined within paragraph 4.7, bullet point 2 of this report, will lead to a potential loss of income for the service in the sum of £38k. This will require a review of savings needed from the service area as part of the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) process going forward.

## **7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 There are no personnel implications associated with this report.

## **8. CONSULTATIONS**

- 8.1 The report reflects the views of the listed consultees.

## **9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 9.1 Members views are sought on the options outlined at 4.7 above.

## **10. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 10.1 To seek the views of the Scrutiny Committee prior to a further report being considered by Cabinet.

## **11. STATUTORY POWER**

- 11.1 Local Authorities Cemeteries Order 1977  
Local Government Act 2003

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Background Papers:  
Report to Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee – 28th June 2016  
Information report e-mailed to all members on 8th July 2016.