



CABINET - 1ST FEBRUARY 2017

SUBJECT: INTERMENT CHARGES FOR CHILDREN (UP TO AND INCLUDING THE AGE OF 16 YEARS)

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR - COMMUNITIES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek the views of Cabinet on the current pricing policy for the interment of children within our municipal cemeteries and to provide options for members to consider.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 Members will be aware of the recent campaign led by Carolyn Harris (MP for Swansea East) to abolish charges imposed by local Authorities for the interment of children. This report sets out Caerphilly's current policy along with those of other local Authorities in Wales.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 The Authority currently has "bronze status" in the "Charter for the Bereaved", which is promoted by the Institute of Cemetery & Crematorium Management (ICCM). The Charter sets out a number of "Rights", which should be available to the bereaved at all times. In addition, it sets out a number of targets to which the Authority should aspire.
- 3.2 The division's aim in relation to bereavement services is to "provide a customer focused, sensitively delivered bereavement service and to achieve excellent standards in cemetery management and maintenance".
- 3.3 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 content of this report links into three i.e. "a more equal Wales, a prosperous Wales and a healthier Wales".

4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 Bereavement services is probably one of the most sensitive frontline services provided by the Authority and deal with circa 750 interments per annum.
- 4.2 The statutory arrangements for the management of municipal cemeteries is contained in the Local Authorities Cemeteries Order 1977 (LACO).
- 4.3 Article 15(1) of LACO permits local Authorities "to charge such fees as they think proper for or in connection with burials in a cemetery".

4.4 Caerphilly's current policy on charging for the interment of children is as follows:-

(i)	Stillborn and those up to the age of one month	FREE
(ii)	Interment within any of our children's sections (one depth only)	£145

Currently there are Children's Sections located within three municipal cemeteries, Bedwellty, Bedwas and Brithdir cemeteries.

However, should a bereaved family opt for an interment in a conventional section (where the parents could be interred in the same plot in the future), the normal pricing structure would apply.

In terms of a new three depth grave, this would equate to £1,807.

- 4.5 The Authority is an active member of the Continuous Improvement Forum for Bereavement Services in Wales. Attached an Appendix 1 to this report is a "straw poll" of charges levied by other local Authorities in Wales. Members are asked to note that Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council, Newport City Council and Conwy County Borough Council do not levy any charges for the interment of children under the age of 16 years.
- 4.6 Members should note that at the time of preparing this report (December 2016), the Leader of the City and County of Swansea Council announced that they would remove the charges for parents when it sets the budget in February stating "the small costs could be easily absorbed".
- 4.7 Many local Authorities in the South East Wales area are being asked to review their current policies in this regard. There is a general consensus of opinion within local Authorities that the interment fee could be removed (due to the low number of interments) and easily absorbed whilst the purchase of the Exclusive Rights of Burial (ERoB) should remain.

5. WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS

- 5.1 This report contributes to the wellbeing goals as set out in the Links to Strategy section above.
- (i) A Healthier Wales - If members are minded to remove interment fees, this will clearly reduce stress on families at probably one of the most difficult time of their lives.
 - (ii) A Prosperous Wales - The removal of interment fees for children will clearly assist less affluent families with funeral costs.
 - (iii) A More Equal Wales - The removal of the interment fee for children will give equal access to services for all residents irrespective of wealth.

6. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no potential equalities implications associated with this report for any specific groups or individuals therefore a full Equalities Impact Assessment has not been carried out.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Between November 2015 and November 2016, the Authority dealt with 5 interments of children. 4 of these interments related to stillborn children and therefore no fees were imposed.

- 7.2 One interment related to the interment of a baby and the charges imposed by the Authority were:-
- (i) £1,807 for the interment (as a result of the parents requesting a 3 depth, conventional grave where they could also be interred at a later date).
 - (ii) £605 – purchase of the Exclusive Rights of Burial (ERoB).

The total cost to the family being £2,412.

- 7.3 Bereaved families do not need to purchase the ERoB however, without doing so, the grave space will remain in the ownership of the Authority and families will not be permitted to erect any memorialisation. In addition, the family will have no right on any future interments within the plot.
- 7.4 If Cabinet are minded to endorse the removal of the interment fee for children up to the age of 16, the loss of income (£1,807 for one year) is negligible in the context of the overall income achieved by the service area. Furthermore, in recent years actual cemeteries income has consistently been above the budgeted level and this is also projected to be the case for the current financial year. There is, therefore, scope to absorb the small loss of income within the current budget.
- 7.5 During the two previous financial years (2013/14 and 2014/15), the Authority has dealt with 17 interments of children. During this period only one fee was levied which was a charge of £505 (an average of £252.50 per annum). Again, this small loss of income can be absorbed due to the actual cemeteries income being consistently above the budgeted level.

8. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

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

9. CONSULTATIONS

- 9.1 This report reflects the views of the listed consultees.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 Cabinet are asked to endorse one of the following recommendations:-
- (i) To retain the existing fee structure in relation to the interment of children.
 - (ii) To remove the interment fee of children up to and including the age of 16 years. As set out within paragraph 7.3, there would still, however be costs associated with the purchase of the Exclusive Rights of Burial if chosen by the bereaved family.

11. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 11.1 To seek the views of Cabinet on the current fee structure relating to the interment of children.

12. STATUTORY POWER

- 12.1 Local Authorities Cemeteries Order 1977.

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Appendices:
Appendix 1 Straw Poll of Other Local Authority Charges

APPENDIX 1

<u>LOCAL AUTHORITY</u>	<u>CURRENT POLICY</u>
Blaenau Gwent	Stillborn – No fee / Baby Under 12 months - £695 / Full charge over 12 months - £1458.
Swansea	NVF/Stillborn burial in babies' garden – No fee. Baby burial in family plot depth for two adult coffins - £1625 (ERoB & interment). Additional depth (step) for the baby is provided at no extra cost. Child burial family plot – standard fee £1625 depth for two (third depth is available in some cemeteries). Cremation is free for NVF/Stillborn/child up to aged 16, but they are charged a chapel hire fee of £150 if they choose to hold a service.
Flintshire	Children up to age 16 are free of charge if they are going into a children's grave. If they are going into a full grave with room for parents then normal fee applies.
Carmarthen	Stillborn/NVF - £57.
Rhondda Cynon Taff	No charge for children up to age 16.
Torfaen	Free interment of a child or baby up to 16 years of age if within a dedicated baby section or within a single depth lawn grave. If the parents wish to utilise the grave for future interments the normal burial fees would apply. <i>*this is a recent change within the last month.</i>
Merthyr	£174 from stillborn to age 18 – there is a surcharge for people living outside the borough doubling the cost.
Denbighshire	£60 from stillborn/NVF - £140 for child up to 24 months - £160 for child up to 5 years – after 5 years full fees are charged.
Monmouthshire	Stillborn/NVF – no charge / Children under 5 - £725 (including ERoB) – out of county £1652. 5 years plus:- New Single Depth - £1065 (including ERoB) New Double Depth - £1373 (including ERoB) New Treble Depth - £2198 (including ERoB) There is a surcharge on any burial where the deceased resided outside of Monmouthshire upon their death (excluding respite care/nursing home up to a few months).
Powys	Age 1 month to 12 years - £367.52 (burial charge) £358.81 (purchase of grave). Stillborn to 1 month - £188.81 (burial charge) £179.42 (purchase of grave)
Llanelli Joint Burial Authority	No charge for NVF or childrens burial in NVF or childrens section graves. If the family prefer to purchase a standard grave so they can also be buried in the same plot as the child, we charge the ERoB fee but do not charge for the interment.
Newport	No charge for interment under the age of 16.
Cardiff	£75.

Conwy	No charge for interment up to age 16.
Gwynedd	<p>Stillborn – no charge NVF no less than 13 weeks – admin. fee only £58.60 Child up to one month – no charge</p> <p>Child up to 12 years in Adult grave: Grave for one - £640.00 Grave for two or three - £690 Further interment - £290</p> <p>Child up to 12 years in Children’s Section - £200 per interment</p>
Bridgend	No charge for burial of children under 12 years. If child under 12 is being interred in a new adult grave the EROB is charged at standard rate.