



CABINET – 18TH OCTOBER 2017

SUBJECT: CHILDREN'S BURIAL FEES

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR - COMMUNITIES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek the views of Cabinet on establishing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Welsh Government and Local Government across Wales in respect of adopting a consistent approach to children's burial fees in place.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 Members may 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.
- 2.2 On 1st February, Cabinet resolved to remove the interment fee of children up to and including the age of 16 years. However, there would still be costs associated with the purchase of the Exclusive Rights of Burial if chosen by the bereaved family.

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 deals 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 Welsh Government is currently working with local Authorities to establish a MoU between Welsh Government and Local Government in respect of adopting a consistent approach to children’s burial fees.
- 4.5 The detail of the MoU proposed by Welsh Government is that the following set of standards be adopted:-
- (i) That all Councils agree to stop charging fees for the burial or cremation of children;
 - (ii) That a common definition of a child being up to and including 18 years of age is adopted.
- 4.6 However, there is still a great deal of work required between officers and Welsh Government to establish which fees should be included and whether there are any conditions or restrictions. A common view needs to be established on what is included in/meant by the “removal of charges”.
- 4.7 The next Partnership Council for Wales meeting is scheduled to take place on the 8th November. Welsh Government would like to use this opportunity to showcase the shared commitment.

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 charges, 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 charges for children will clearly assist less affluent families with funeral costs.
 - (iii) A More Equal Wales - The removal of the charges 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 Whilst the contents of the MoU is yet to be established, to enable members to make an informed decision, during 2016/17 the Authority dealt with the interment of two children (under the age of 18 years). Should members be minded to waive all fees associated with these burials, this would have resulted in the potential loss of income in the sum of £1,487. However, this could be absorbed due to the actual cemeteries income being above the budgeted level. At this stage it is still not clear whether Welsh Government wish to waive burial fees only or other associated fees as well.

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 agrees that the Authority commits to working closely with Welsh Government on the formation of the MoU in respect of children's burials and that once the final MoU is drafted; officers present a further report to Cabinet.

11. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

11.1 To allow officers to work with Welsh Government Officials on the formation of a MoU between Welsh Government and Local Government across Wales and to adopt a consistent approach in relation to children's burial fees.

12. STATUTORY POWER

12.1 Local Authorities Cemeteries Order 1977.

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Background Papers:
Report to Cabinet on 1st February 2017