

Report

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Report to:	Community and Enterprise Resources Committee
Date of Meeting:	21 August 2018
Report by:	Executive Director (Community and Enterprise Resources)

Subject:	Child Burial and Cremation Charges
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1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ◆ propose that the current age restrictions on charges for child burial internments and cremation are extended from children aged 15 and under to 18 and under from 1 September 2018

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Committee is asked to approve the following recommendation(s):-

- (1) that the extension of the current age restrictions on charges for child burial internments and cremation from children aged 15 and under to 18 and under from 1 September 2018 be approved; and
- (2) that a further report be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee outlining any further changes proposed once the final guidance has been agreed and issued.

3. Background

- 3.1. On 25 May 2018, COSLA leaders agreed in principle that all child burial and cremation charges should be removed and that local authorities and the Scottish Government should work in partnership to achieve this. This was jointly announced with the Scottish Government on 30 May 2018.
- 3.2. The purpose of this was to ensure parents experiencing extremely difficult circumstances after the loss of a child did not face the additional financial burden of cremation or burial costs.
- 3.3. The Settlement and Distribution Group have set out proposals on behalf of the Scottish Government for the distribution of funding to implement the removal of charges.
- 3.4. The Council's Bereavement Services currently do not charge for child burial or cremations for under 16s (0 to 15 years) and have not charged since 2008. The Service does, however, charge for the purchase of a new lair when this is required as this would normally be used for a further two burials and a number of internment of cremated remains (ashes) and it is not proposed to amend this arrangement at this time. There are also already arrangements in place for pregnancy loss with Lanarkshire Health Board, where cremations are already provided to parents at no charge.

- 3.5 Currently across Scotland there is a variety of charging policies in place with some councils, like South Lanarkshire, not applying charges for under 16s (e.g. North Lanarkshire), others with no charge for residents under 16 but non residents charged (e.g. West Dunbarton), some charging reduced rates for a variety of age bands e.g. under 12s (e.g. Dundee City Council), under 18s (e.g. West Lothian). A number of other councils are planning, like South Lanarkshire, to propose a move towards free burials and cremations for under 18s.

4. Proposed Child burial and cremation charges

- 4.1. Based on the COLSA announcement, it is considered appropriate to propose that South Lanarkshire Council adjust the current age restrictions on charges for child burial internments and cremation and extend them to cover children aged 18 and under from 1 September 2018. Whilst the details arising for the Settlement and Distribution Group are still to be provided, it is considered that, given the issue, this should be progressed at the earliest opportunity with the details of financial issues being subsequently implemented.
- 4.2. It is proposed that Bereavement Services continue to offer to take part in any future discussions with the Scottish Government and COSLA in considering how best to evaluate the funding provision and agree the finer detail of the proposals.
- 4.3 A further report may require to be submitted to a future Committee meeting if the finalised national guidelines require any further changes.

5. Employee Implications

- 5.1. There are no employee implications associated with this proposal.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1. The Scottish Government has indicated an intention to provide financial support to local authorities. It is likely this funding will be based on actual and forecast numbers of child deaths and the costs of burials and cremations. South Lanarkshire's allocation has still to be confirmed but given the number of deaths within the extended age group, there are no significant financial implications associated with this proposal.

7. Other Implications

- 7.1. There are no risk or sustainability implications in terms of the proposals contained within this report. However, as detailed in paragraph 4.3, a further report may be required to be presented to Committee once national guidelines are finalised.

8. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

- 8.1. This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a change to an existing policy, function or strategy and, therefore, no impact assessment is required.
- 8.2. There is also no requirement to undertake any consultation at this time in terms of the information contained in the report.

Michael McGlynn
Executive Director (Community and Enterprise Resources)

10 July 2018

Link(s) to Council Values/Ambitions/Improvement Themes

- ◆ Fair, open and Sustainable

Previous References

- ◆ None

List of Background Papers

- ◆ None

Contact for Further Information

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:-

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