



## **FULL COUNCIL REPORT**

Date Written	13/1/17
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Service Area	Neighbourhood Services
Exempt/Non Exempt	Non Exempt
Committee Date	22 <sup>nd</sup> February 2017

*To: Mayor, Ladies and Gentlemen*

## **CHILD BURIAL FEES/REGISTRATION FEES**

### **1.0 SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 A campaign by a Welsh MP has led to local authorities considering their fees in relation to the death of a child. The local authority currently charges for the burial of children (under the age of 18), unviable foetuses and still born babies. Our Registration service also charge fees for birth/death certificates.
- 1.2 Many local authorities are reconsidering these charges following the national campaign started by Swansea East MP Carolyn Harris.

### **2.0 RECOMMENDATION(S) that**

- 2.1 The proposal to waive the fees in relation to child burial is approved.
- 2.2 The proposal to waive the fee for death certificates is approved.
- 2.3 The proposal to waive fees for the provision of full certificates is approved.

### **3.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 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. Theresa Pearce, the Labour MP and Shadow Secretary for Communities and Local Government has called for the costs that local authorities levy on parents for burials in graveyards to be paid for by the government. The campaign has

prompted some local authorities to look at their existing charges and question whether these should be reduced or scrapped in line with the campaign.

- 3.2 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 fees could be removed due to the low number of interments.
- 3.3 This report sets out Merthyr Tydfil's current policy along with proposed changes.

## 4.0 CURRENT POSITION

4.1 The authority currently has a range of charges relating to death of a child. In addition to the burial fee the authority charge for the Exclusive Rights Of Burial (ERoB) and combined death/birth certificates.

### 4.2 EXCLUSIVE RIGHT OF BURIAL

Bereaved families do not need to purchase the ERoB (Exclusive Right Of Burial) and a burial can take place without it. However without doing so the family will have no right on any future interments within the plot and families will not be permitted to erect any memorialisation (headstone). Purchasing the ERoB means that you are purchasing the right of burial in a grave space and **not** the purchase of the land itself. This means that you do not own the land but have the exclusive right, to say who can be buried in the grave.

### 4.3 DEATH CERTIFICATES

The Authority currently charges £4.00 for the provision of a death certificate of a child.

### 4.4 FULL CERTIFICATE

For still born children a combined birth/death certificate is issued. The statutorily provided certificate is provided free. However where the parents/guardians request further details such as cause of death to be recorded a charge of £4.00 is levied for a full certificate.

4.5 Typical example of costs incurred by parents.

Burial Fee for child.	£174.00
Exclusive rights of burial	£833.00
Headstone permission/certificate.	£181.00
Birth/Death certificate	£ 4.00
<b>TOTAL COST</b>	<b>£1192.00</b>

## **5.0 PROPOSAL**

- 5.1 It is proposed to waive all fees relating to child burial including the exclusive right of burial and the provision of certificates.
- 5.2 As it's likely parents will want to erect a memorial on the grave it is proposed to waive the EROB costs as well as the interment fees thereby giving a totally free service from the council.

## **6.0 WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT**

6.1 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 content of this report links into three i.e. "a more equal Wales, a prosperous Wales and a healthier Wales".

- (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.

## **7.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)**

- 7.1 Changing the current charging system to one that is free for the burial of children under the age of 18 years of age will cost the local authority around £5980 per annum based on five child burials and ten requests for certificates per annum. This is a relatively small cost to the service and one that can be absorbed by bereavement services.
- 7.2 Within the Local Registration Service of Merthyr Tydfil district the numbers of still births and child deaths averages less than 10 a year. The financial implications of waiving the fees for stillbirths and child deaths are negligible.

## **8.0 SINGLE INTEGRATED PLAN AND SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT SUMMARY**

8.1 The proposal has mostly no impact or positive impact. There is a small negative impact in relation to loss of income which is detailed in the 7.0 of this report. There is also a small negative impact on equal opportunities as it could be argued that it benefits a narrow band of the population i.e. parents typically ranging from 16 to 45 years old. However the benefits to the family and community far outweigh the negative aspects.

## **9.0 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

9.1 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.

**CHERYLLEE EVANS**  
**CHIEF OFFICER NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES**

**COUNCILLOR CHRIS BARRY**  
**CABINET MEMBER FOR NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES AND PUBLIC PROTECTION**

<b>BACKGROUND PAPERS</b>		
<b>Title of Document(s)</b>	<b>Document(s) Date</b>	<b>Document Location</b>
<b>Does the report contain any issue that may impact the Council's Constitution?</b>		<b>No</b>

***Consultation has been undertaken with the Corporate Management Team in respect of each proposal(s) and recommendation(s) set out in this report.***