

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCILCABINET30 August 2018Report by Director of EnvironmentREMOVAL OF CHARGES FOR CHILDREN'S BURIALS**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. To advise the Cabinet on the removal of children's burial charges.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. It is recommended that:
 - (a) Lairs and interments should be free to all children 17 years of age and under regardless of whether resident or non-resident; and
 - (b) This change be implemented with immediate effect.

BACKGROUND

3. COSLA leaders and Scottish Government have agreed to work together to remove local authority charges for children's burials and cremations.
4. East Renfrewshire do not currently charge for children's burials for resident children defined as 16 years and under.
5. However, a charge is currently levied for children's burials for non-residents (copy of current charges attached).

REPORT

6. Local Authority charges for children's burials in Wales have been removed and the UK Government has announced the establishment of a child Funeral Fund for England to support the removal of charges. As a result of consultation with Council leaders, the Scottish Government is recommending no charges for the following:-

- For burials – interment fee, lair purchase (exclusive right of burial), and headstone permit / foundation
- For cremation – cremation fee
- Fees to be waived for both resident and non-residents
- Children should be defined as those aged 17 and under
- Pregnancy loss is not included as there are existing arrangements in place through the NHS for families.

7. Councils may however retain charging for later adult interments in lairs provided free of charge for children's burials.

8. Council Leaders have also agreed that private burial and cremation providers who are willing to remove their charges should be given funding. It would be up to each local authority to broker arrangements with local providers.

FINANCE AND EFFICIENCY

9. COSLA Leaders have agreed a recommendation made by the Settlement and Distribution Group on the quantum and allocation of funding. Funding will be available to support policy change rather than reimburse local authorities and private providers on actual costs incurred.

10. Financial support of £310,000 per annum will be provided to Scottish Local Authorities, a figure which is based on actual and forecasted child deaths and the costs of burials and cremations. Distribution will be based on the population of children aged 0-18.

11. Pro-rata funding to implement the agreement within the current financial year will be included as an adjustment to the 2018-19 Local Government Finance Order in early 2019.

12. As child burials will be free to non-residents of the local authority there is a potential longer term risk of an increase in child burials which would reduce the burial capacity of the Council.

CONSULTATION

13. Significant consultation has been undertaken between, local authority Leaders, COSLA, Scottish Government and local authority lead officers.

PARTNERSHIP WORKING

14. COSLA and Scottish Government have worked closely with other organisations such as the Welsh Local Government to propose the recommendations.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROPOSALS

15. The recommendations should have no significant financial impact on the Council. These recommendations will have no negative impact on staffing, legal, IT or equalities.

CONCLUSIONS

16. All Scottish Local Authority's will be given pro-rata funding to remove costs to bereaved families of children aged 18 years and under. East Renfrewshire Council will require to change its current policy of charging for non-residents and make a minor alteration to the current age range in order to comply with Scottish Government recommendations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

17. It is recommended that:

- (a) Lairs and interments should be free to all children 17 years of age and under regardless of whether resident or non-resident; and
- (b) This change be implemented with immediate effect.

Director of Environment

Further information can be obtained from: Andrew Corry, Head of Operations on 0141 577 3458 or andrew.corry@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk

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