

**SUBJECT: Removal of Under 18 burial Charges**

**MEETING: Individual Cabinet Member**

**DATE: 14<sup>th</sup> February 2018**

**DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: All**

**1. PURPOSE:**

To consider the adoption of Welsh Governments Memorandum of Understanding which removes all burial fees for Under 18's in Wales.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

2.1 That the Council agrees to adopt the Welsh Government's Memorandum of Understanding and remove all burial charges for Under 18's.

**3. KEY ISSUES:**

3.1 The Council agreed in February of last year to remove burial fees for single plots for under 18's, but still imposed a charge for undertaking the Existing Right to Burial process.

3.2 Following the adoption of our revised charging policy, Welsh Government set up a working group to consider under 18 burial charges in direct response to a campaign led by Carolyn Harris MP.

3.3 As a result a Memorandum of Understanding has been drafted which removes all of the costs associated with the burials of under 18's. Representatives of all of the Welsh authorities have been party to the drafting of the Memorandum and it is expected that all Councils will formally ratify its adoption.

3.4 It is anticipated that at the point we elect to ratify the MoU that charging will cease with immediate effect. Welsh Government do intend to undertake a review in two years to understand the impact, if any of the agreement.

3.5 It is intended that if a double or triple depth is requested, that in the event of a subsequent re-opening for an adult burial a burial charge will be imposed and an ERB will be required. There will be no memorial permit charges for a single depth under 18 grave, however if a double or triple depth plot a memorial permit charge would apply for any subsequent inscriptions.

#### 4. REASONS:

- 4.1 The Council has already adopted a policy where the burial fee for under 18's in a single depth plot is free. By agreeing to adopt the memorandum of Understanding we will be in line with other Councils and removing any financial hardship from a grieving family.

#### 4.6 Options Appraisal

Option	Benefits	Risk	Evaluation
Do nothing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>No financial loss as potential of a grant scheme</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Will be out of alignment with Welsh Government and other Unitary Authorities</li><li>Potential financial hardship for grieving families</li><li>Potential reputational damage</li></ul>	Given the potential reputational damage and the proposed grant scheme to offset any financial loss, it is not recommended that we follow this action
Agree to adopt the MoU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Potential grant scheme to minimise financial loss</li><li>Single charging regime throughout Wales</li><li>Minimising impact of financial hardship</li><li>Ability to recover fees from double and triple depth at any subsequent adult burial re-opening</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Grant will not cover loss of income</li><li>We will have additional requests for out of county burials which will place pressure on depleting burial space</li></ul>	This is the preferred course of action to ensure that a consistent approach is adopted throughout Wales and financial hardship is avoided for grieving families

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#### 5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 5.1 The removal of any charges for under 18's will result in the loss of a small income to the Council, associated with the charges for ERB agreements. Welsh Government has agreed to provide a specific grant to all Councils, the details of which are yet to be confirmed. There are however conditions attached to the grant, firstly that we provide evidence that we have ratified the MoU and secondly that we have an arrangement in place to passport grant funding to other service providers who undertake burial/ cremation services in our County. The grant would be payable from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018.

5.2 If adopted, the new charging regime will be as follows:

TYPE OF BURIAL	IN COUNTY				OUT OF COUNTY			
<b>INTERMENT IN EARTHEN GRAVE:</b>	New Burial (Incl. ERB Fee of £450 where applicable) £	First Issue of ERB (£450) £	No ERB Transfer £	With ERB Transfer (£400) £	New Burial (Incl. ERB Fee of £858 where applicable) £	First Issue of ERB (£858) £	No ERB Transfer £	With ERB Transfer (£400) £
Persons 17 years of age or under:								
Stillborn and non-viable foetuses	No Charge				No Charge			
New Single Depth Grave in Children's Section	No Charge				No Charge			
New Single Depth Grave	No Charge				No Charge			
New Double Depth Grave	No Charge				No Charge			
New Treble Depth Grave	No Charge				No Charge			

**6. FUTURE GENERATIONS AND EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS:**

- 6.1 An evaluation assessment has been undertaken which indicates that the impact of reducing this fee whilst limited will be positive.

**7. SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS**

There are none.

**8. BACKGROUND PAPERS:**

Individual Cabinet Report 08.03.17

**9. AUTHORS:**

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## Appendix 1

### Evaluation Criteria

<b>Title of Report:</b>	<b>Removal of Under 18 burial charges</b>
<b>Date decision was made:</b>	<b>Report to be considered 14<sup>th</sup> February 2018</b>
<b>Report Author:</b>	<b>Debra Hill-Howells</b>

#### **What will happen as a result of this decision being approved by Cabinet or Council?**

All charges for under 18 burials will be removed immediately.

12 month appraisal

*Was the desired outcome achieved? What has changed as a result of the decision? Have things improved overall as a result of the decision being taken?*

#### **What benchmarks and/or criteria will you use to determine whether the decision has been successfully implemented?**

- No charges have been imposed
- MCC has been successful in achieving a grant from Welsh Government to offset financial loss
- MCC has a process in place to passport any eligible grant funding to other providers in County that undertake burials or cremations for Under 18's

12 month appraisal

*Paint a picture of what has happened since the decision was implemented. Give an overview of how you fared against the criteria. What worked well, what didn't work well. The reasons why you might not have achieved the desired level of outcome. Detail the positive outcomes as a direct result of the decision. If something didn't work, why didn't it work and how has that effected implementation.*

#### **What is the estimate cost of implementing this decision or, if the decision is designed to save money, what is the proposed saving that the decision will achieve?**

There will a loss of income estimated to be less than 5k per annum, which may be offset in part or in full by a Welsh Government grant.

12 month appraisal

*Give an overview of whether the decision was implemented within the budget set out in the report or whether the desired amount of savings was realised. If not, give a brief overview of the reasons why and what the actual costs/savings were.*

Any other comments

