

ANGUS COUNCIL

COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE – 13 NOVEMBER 2018

REMOVAL OF CHARGES FOR CHILD BURIALS

REPORT BY STRATEGIC DIRECTOR - PLACE

ABSTRACT

This report seeks Members' approval to support a joint Scottish Government and COSLA initiative to remove local authority fees for burial and cremation for children aged 17 and under.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Committee:

- (i) Approves the removal of burial fees for children less than 18 years of age

For burials:

- Interment fee
- Lair purchase (exclusive right of burial)
- Permission to erect a headstone

For cremations:

- Cremation fee (in Angus undertaken by private crematoria);

- (ii) Approves the removal of fees for both residents and non-residents.

2. ALIGNMENT TO THE ANGUS LOCAL OUTCOMES IMPROVEMENT PLAN/CORPORATE PLAN

2.1 This report contributes to the following local outcomes contained within the Angus Local Outcomes Improvement Plan and Locality Plans:

- Improved physical, mental and emotional health and well being
- Safe, secure and vibrant communities

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 On 1 June 2018, COSLA wrote to all Chief Executives and Directors of Finance outlining proposals to remove child burial charges in Scotland with an expectation of full implementation by October 2018. In Wales charges were removed in November 2017 and the UK Government has recently announced the establishment of a Child Funeral Fund for England.

4. CURRENT POSITION

4.1 A small number of Scottish Local Authorities levy charges for child burials; however the majority (including Angus) have long standing policies of limiting charges to older children only. Our current policy is to waive the interment fee for children less than 15 years of age, over the past three years the average number of child burials in Angus has been between 3 and 4 per annum. In anticipation of approval an interim arrangement has been in place across Angus burial grounds since 1 September 2018. Two infant burials have been undertaken since then for which fees were not applied in accordance with proposed policy. Stillbirths and pregnancy loss are not included in these proposals as there are existing NHS arrangements in place.

4.2 Current arrangements are:

Coffin interments	
14 years and under	No charge
Over 14 years	£648.00
Over 14 years (Non Angus resident)	£1296.00
Casket interments	
14 years and under	No charge
Over 14 interment at four foot	£207.10
Over 14 interment over four foot	£420.00
Over 14 interment at four foot (Non Angus resident)	£414.20
Over 14 interment over four foot (Non Angus resident)	£840.00

5. PROPOSALS

- 5.1 An Immediate implementation is proposed to ensure the policy is applied consistently across all Scottish Authorities and no family suffers disproportionately. New arrangements will be:

Coffin interments	Charge
17 years and under (residents and non-residents)	No charge
Over 17 years	£648.00
Over 17 years (Non Angus resident)	£1296.00
Casket interments	
17 years and under (residents and non-residents)	No charge
Over 17 interment at four foot	£207.10
Over 17 interment over four foot	£420.00
Over 17 interment at four foot (Non Angus resident)	£414.20
Over 17 interment over four foot (Non Angus resident)	£840.00
Lair charges	
17 years and under Coffin lair * (residents and non-residents)	No charge
Over 17 years	£603.50
Over 17 years (Non Angus resident)	£1207.00
Memorials	
17 years and under permission to erect memorial/marker/plaque	No charge
Over 17 years	£60-90

* Where a lair can accommodate further interments the authority can levy a charge for adult burials.

- 5.2 All other charges relating to burial ground fees and charges remain unaltered.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.2 There will be a small cost to the Council in making this commitment in terms of lost revenue however funding to support the implementation of this agreement will be provided by The Scottish Government. Funding will support policy change rather than reimburse actual costs incurred. The funding will not include any payments to funeral directors to remove their fees. Financial support of £310,000 per annum has been agreed and will be determined by the number of 0–17 year olds in each local authority area. Pro-rata funding to implement the agreement within the current financial year will be included as an adjustment to the 2018-2019 local Government Finance Order in early 2019. In Wales, local authorities pass a proportion of this funding on to private providers and a similar type of agreement between authorities and private providers is expected in Scotland. It is proposed that authorities return statistics annually during the three year funding period detailing numbers of child burials and cremations and the proportion of funding distributed to private burial grounds and crematoria.

7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

7.1 This report does not require any specific risk issues to be addressed.

NOTE: No background papers, as detailed by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to a material extent in preparing the above report.

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