
To: INFRASTRUCTURE, LAND & ENVIRONMENT POLICY BOARD

On: 29 AUGUST 2018

Report by: DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITIES, HOUSING AND PLANNING

**Heading: REMOVAL OF LOCAL AUTHORITY CHARGES FOR BURIALS AND
 CREMATIONS FOR UNDER 18'S**

1. Summary

- 1.1 At the Council meeting on 2 March 2018, the Council committed £0.050million to help alleviate funeral poverty through the development and implementation of an affordable Respectful Funeral Service for Renfrewshire and also to remove burial and registration fees for children under 16.
- 1.2 This paper notes that the Scottish Government and CoSLA have now agreed a programme to remove local authority charges for burials and cremations for under 18's in Scotland and sets out how the Council will participate in this programme. The report seeks approval to remove local authority charges for burials and registration fees for under 18's in Renfrewshire, and to work with local Crematoria to seek their support in removing their charges for under 18's.
-

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Infrastructure, Land & Environment Policy Board:
- (i) agrees that the existing arrangements to waive any Renfrewshire Council costs (lair and interment) for a funeral of a young person under the age of 16 be extended to ensure that any Renfrewshire Council funeral costs will be waived for any child under 18 in line with the agreed CoSLA / Scottish Government approach;
 - (ii) agrees that officers from Communities, Housing and Planning work with local crematoria to seek their support in removing charges for under 18's; and

- (iii) notes that the Scottish Government has provided a contribution to support policy change towards the costs of implementing this programme amounting to £10,000 for Renfrewshire.
-

3. Background

- 3.1 The average cost of a funeral in Scotland is now approximately £3,500, including Funeral Directors costs. All Funeral Directors in Renfrewshire currently provide a “basic funeral package” that is below the national average. The Council charges £479.25 for interments and £459.90 for new lairs for Renfrewshire residents, these fees and charges being among the lowest in Scotland.
- 3.2 At the Policy Board in May 2018 it was agreed that any Renfrewshire Council costs (lair and interment) for a funeral of a young person under the age of 16 would be waived for 2018/19. Since then the Scottish Government and CoSLA have agreed an approach that would see costs removed for all children under the age of 18.
- 3.3 This approach is seeking to create consistency across Scotland and is in line with the approach now being taken across the wider UK. Local authority charges for children have already been removed in Wales, and the UK Government has announced the establishment of a Child Funeral Fund to support the removal of charges in England. Under the agreement now made between CoSLA and the Scottish Government, essentially, the following should not be charged for:
- 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
 - Pregnancy loss is not included as there are existing arrangements in place through the NHS for families.
- 3.4 The policy intention is to remove fees for lair purchase (exclusive right of burial) for those aged 17 and under, although an interment fee for subsequent adult burials in the same lair would be charged for.
- 3.5 In Renfrewshire, cremation services are provided by the private sector. The agreement is that each local authority broker arrangements with local private providers to seek their support in removing fees in these circumstances.

- 3.6 COSLA Leaders have agreed a recommendation made by the Settlement and Distribution Group on the quantum and allocation of funding to support policy change. The funding is not to reimburse local authorities and private providers on actual costs incurred, it is there to support the change that local authorities will require to make and to sustain the existing commitments already in place. The funding is not for funeral directors to remove their fees.
- 3.7 Scottish Government will provide financial support of £310,000 per annum to Scottish local authorities. This is based on actual and forecasted child deaths and the costs of burials and cremations. Leaders agreed that distribution be based on the population of children aged 0 - 18. The Scottish Government has advised that this provision will be reviewed at the end of a three-year period. For Renfrewshire the share of funding will be 3.3% - approximately £10,000.
- 3.8 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.
-

Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** - None
2. **HR & Organisational Development** – None
3. **Community Planning** –
Renfrewshire is fair – by removing local authority fees and charges for funerals for under 18's and working with nearby Crematoria to do the same for Renfrewshire residents, this should reduce inequalities by providing residents with access to a dignified service.
4. **Legal** - Renfrewshire Council has a legal obligation to comply with the Public Health etc (Scotland) Act 2008.
5. **Property/Assets** - None
6. **Information Technology** - None
7. **Equality & Human Rights** - The recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website.
8. **Health & Safety** – None
9. **Procurement** – None

10. **Risk** – None

11. **Privacy Impact** – None

12. **CoSLA Policy Position** – None

List of Background Papers - Email from Robert McGregor, CoSLA on Removing Local Authority charges for children's burials and cremations – 19 July 2018

Author: *Oliver Reid, Head of Communities and Public Protection;*
E-mail: oliver.reid@renfrewshire.gov.uk