

## **ENVIRONMENT PDG**

15 May 2018

### **Bereavement Service Fees and Charges**

**Cabinet Member:** Cllr Clive Eginton

**Responsible Officer:** Andrew Jarrett, Director of Finance, Assets and Resources

**Reason for Report:** To review and approve Bereavement Service Fees and Charges for 2018/19.

#### **RECOMMENDATION(S):**

**To recommend approval to Cabinet the proposed charges for 2018/19 set out in Table A, Column B.**

**Relationship to Corporate Plan:** Priority 5 – Corporate.

**Financial Implications:** Bereavement Services' total income for 2016/17 was £112.7k in a full year; the proposed increases in fees could generate an additional £12k.

**Legal Implications:** By virtue of section 214 of the Local Government Act 1972 and of the provisions of the Local Authorities' Cemeteries Order 1977, the Council is the burial authority.

Paragraph 15 of the said 1977 Order provides burial authorities with the power to charge such fees as they think are proper – "(a) for or in connection with burials in a cemetery; 3 (b) for any grant of a right to place and maintain a tombstone or other memorial in a cemetery...(c) for any grant of a right to put an additional inscription on such a tombstone or other memorial".

A burial authority is obliged to keep a table showing the matters in respect of which fees or other charges are payable to them, and the amount of each such fee or charge, and the table, shall be available for inspection by the public at all reasonable times.

**Risk Assessment:** N/A

**Equality Impact Assessment:** An equality impact assessment has been undertaken and is attached as Annex A.

### **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 In previous years price increases within the Bereavement Service were necessary for the Council to reduce the estimated cost of service provision. The focus remains on providing the best possible standards of service, which includes not only the maintenance of our two cemeteries but the ongoing aim of ensuring the long-term needs of burials are met. Our two cemeteries provide places for quiet reflection where people are treated with dignity and respect at all stages of their lives.

- 1.2 The Council remains committed and continues to ensure that re-investment is made for various maintenance works across the Council's two cemeteries in Crediton and Tiverton that also includes buildings.
- 1.3 It is proposed to increase bereavement charges from 1 April 2018 by 10%, as set out in Table A.
- 1.4 In the case of a death with no next of kin, or should some members of the public be unable to meet these new charges through financial hardships or other such circumstances, support is available to bereaved families. There are three main means of support: Social Services, the hospital where the death occurred and Funeral Payments, available via the Department of Work and Pensions.
- 1.5 In addition, under Section 50 of the National Assistance Act 1948, a local authority will meet the costs of a basic funeral where the deceased or the next of kin are not in a position to meet the expenses. In 2016/2017 the cost of providing national assistance burials was £2k.
- 1.6 Among the broader financial considerations, the Council continues to face budget pressures and has experienced a reduction of core funding in the region of £493k from central government.
- 1.7 Further to the press release from The Rt Hon Theresa May MP on the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018, instruction has been given for a Children's Funeral Fund to be set up in England. This will remove the fees for burials or cremations for those under the age of 18. The intervention brings England in line with Wales and follows a cross-party campaign by bereaved parents. The cost of burials or cremations for those under the age of 18 will be met instead by government funding; the details on how local authorities will do this are yet to be published.

Table A, column B has therefore be updated to reflect the intervention.

## **2.0 Background**

- 2.1 There is a risk that budget targets will not be met due to increased costs of providing the service and therefore this decision is important in ensuring the sustainability of burial provision.
- 2.2 The Council applies a range of fees and charges associated with burials. The existing fees and charges are presented in Table A.

## **3.0 Table A**

- 3.1 Column 'A' lists the current charges that were set in 2016/17.
- 3.2 Column 'B' shows proposed charges for 2018/19 that includes an increase of 10%. Column B has also been updated following government intervention, as detailed in 1.7.

**Table A**

A			B		
‘A’ - Current charges 2016-18			‘B’ - Proposed charges 2018-19		
Interment fees of a coffin		Ashes	Interment fees of a coffin		Ashes
Adult	£957.00	£157.50	Adult aged 18 or over	£1052.50	£173.00
Juvenile (16-18 yrs)	£370.00	£157.50	Removed	N/A	N/A
Stillborn/NVF/ Under 16	Nil	N/A	Stillborn/NVF/ Under 16	Nil	N/A
<b>Inter ashes into tree cremation plot (this charge includes 30 year Exclusive Rights of Burial and Right to erect a Memorial</b>					
£492.00			£541.00		
<b>Exclusive Rights of Burial and Right to Erect a Memorial</b>					
	30 years	75 years		30 years	75 years
Adult grave	£1037.00	£2540.00	Adult grave	£1140.50	£2794.00
Childs grave	£373.50	£934.00	Childs grave	£410.50	£1027.00
Cremation plot	£298.00	£751.00	Cremation Plot	£327.50	£826.00

**Table A Continued**

A		B
‘A’ - Current charges 2016-18		‘B’ - Proposed charges 2018-19
<b>Additional costs are required when the grave was purchased before 1 April 2003</b>		
Erect a Headstone	£161.50	£177.50
Headstone & Kerbing	£400.00	£440.00
Additional Inscription	£98.50	£108.00
Place Tablet (18x18) Vase	£98.50	£108.00
Tablet/Ledger (18x36)	£187.00	£205.50
Tablet/Ledger larger than (18x36)	£295.50	£325.00
Place open kerbing up to (7x3)	£258.50	£284.00
Place open kerbing larger than (7x3)	£471.50	£518.50
Place fully enclosed kerbset	£554.00	£609.00

#### 4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 The proposed charges from 1st April 2018 would increase income by circa £12k and the schedules of charges are listed at Table A within this report.
- 4.2 A comparison of the cemeteries and crematorium fees currently charged by other surrounding local authority and private providers' shows fees across the area vary (please see Table B). It is acknowledged that all authorities will review their bereavement service charges in the coming months and each one will differ in terms of the current level of service provision they choose to make. Therefore, it is difficult to make a true like-for-like comparison with other neighbouring authorities.
- 4.3 If a Funeral Director requires any changes or an exhumation that requires a licence prior to disturbing an existing grave, it is proposed to introduce a new fee of £70.00 for every application that the Council has to make, with a quotation being provided on a case-by case basis. Whilst it is acknowledged that these applications are not made on a regular occurrence, they are time consuming in the administration and pursuance of the said licence. In addition to this, it is also proposed to add an additional charge for a 'trial dig' of £150.00 that is required to confirm ground conditions.

## 5.0 Table B

5.1 Column 'A' compares current Mid Devon charges with three neighbouring authorities and a town Council.

5.2 Column 'B' compares increased Mid Devon charges with three neighbouring authorities and a town council.

**Table B**

		A	B				
Costs from 2017	as April	MDDC	MDDC+10%	Exeter City	Torridge	Cullompton Town Council	Taunton D
Burial Interment fees	Juvenile	FOC	<b>FOC</b>	FOC	FOC	FOC	FOC
Burial Interment fees	Adult 18 or over	£957.00	<b>£1052.50</b>	£907.00	£720.00	£980.00	£750.00
Ashes Interment fees	Casket	£157.50	<b>£173.00</b>	£170.00	£135.00	£190.00	£140.00
Ashes Interment fees	Scatter	£157.50	<b>£173.00</b>	£108.00	£70.00	£190.00	£140.00
Saturday and BH supplement	Saturday	£166.50	<b>£183.00</b>	N/A	£135.00	£125/£250	£202 / £62
	BankHol	£166.50	<b>£183.00</b>		£135.00	£125/£250	£202 / £62
EROB 30Yrs	Adult	£1037.00	<b>£1140.50</b>	£1023.00	(25)EROB only £475.00	£950.00	-
EROB 30Yrs	Child	£373.50	<b>£410.50</b>	£464.00	Under 6 £Nil	£Nil	-
EROB 30Yrs	Ashes	£298.00	<b>£327.50</b>	£480.00	£235.00 £ 70.00	£320.00	-
EROB 75 Years	Adult	£2,540.00	<b>£2,794.00</b>	-	-	£1525.00	£890.00
EROB 75 Years	Child	£934.00	<b>£1027.00</b>	-	-	£Nil	
EROB 75 Years	Ashes	£751.00	<b>£826.00</b>	-	-	£760.00	£650.00

## **6.0 Conclusion**

- 6.1 It is estimated that the proposed charges set out in Table A will contribute £12k full year effect and that this additional income will support increased costs of service provision and reduce the current level of net subsidy at circa £120k.

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**Circulation of the Report:** Leadership Team, Cabinet Member