

ENVIRONMENT PDG

11 JUNE 2019

National Assistance Burial Policy

Cabinet Member(s): Cllr Luke Taylor –Cabinet Member for Environment.
Responsible Officer: Andrew Busby, Group Manager for Corporate Property and Commercial Assets.

Reason for Report: The Policy for National Assistance Burials required review.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Cabinet adopts the revised National Assistance Burial Policy that is attached as Annex A.

Financial Implications: It is essential that the National Assistance Burials carried out by the District Council are cost effective; there is currently an increase in the demand for this statutory duty.

Legal Implications: The Council has a statutory duty to carry out National Assistance Burials under Section 46 of The Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984 .

Risk Assessment: If there is no National Assistance Burials policy or if the policy is not followed a funeral may take place without the knowledge of relatives.

Equality Impact Assessment: Attached as Annex B.

Relationship to Corporate Plan: Environment -Priority 4.

1.0 Introduction/Background

- 1.1 National Assistance Burials had been arranged efficiently by Bereavement Services, however until April 2016 this was without a policy. With the increase of requests for funerals and with consideration of budgetary restrictions it was considered prudent to formalise the policy that is now due for renewal.
- 1.2 National Assistance Burials are sometimes referred to as “Paupers” Funerals. The Council may be informed by the Exeter Coroner’s Office, a Nursing Home, a Housing Association, a relative or a friend. When a resident of the district has died and there is no one able to make arrangements for the deceased funeral, the burial fees are met by the Council.
- 1.3 The number of National Assistance Burials carried out by the Council has steadily increased over the past decade; there have been 22 since 2006.
- 1.4 Where it appears to the Council that there are no suitable arrangements for the burial of the deceased, the Council have a statutory duty to bury or cremate the body of any person who has passed away or been found deceased within the district.

1.5 The 2016 policy has been revised (Annex A) and for ease of reference when referring to the revised policy, the changes are:

- Cost for copies of Death certificates.
- Changes to Legislation.
- Funeral Director & Coroner new updated contact details (6.3).
- Number of National Assistance Burials undertaken.
- The Council may consider the use of Heir Hunter companies, through an approved Procurement route (1.3).
- More information / contact details added regarding visiting properties of the deceased (5.1 & 5.2).

2.0 **Funeral Arrangements**

2.1 All National Assistance Burials arranged by the Council shall be an interment in either our Crediton or Tiverton Cemetery. Unless specific instructions have been left by the deceased, the Council reserve the right to make the final decision on the type of burial.

2.2 Burial plots within both cemeteries are double depth and have the capacity for two coffins, this will result in unrelated persons being buried in the same plot.

2.3 A Will may state the preference to be buried in a family plot, this should be complied with as long as the difference in cost can be paid by a relative or there are sufficient funds in the bank account of the deceased.

3.0 **Funeral Director**

3.1 The Funeral Director contracted by the Council is Friendship & Sons who have offices in Dulverton, Chard and Barnstaple. A fair procurement process was followed between all the interested undertakers that the Council have used in the past.

4.0 **Genealogy Searches**

4.1 In advance of arranging a National Assistance Burial and where no next of kin are known, the Council may engage a genealogical company by following an approved procurement route and they will carry out a search for any next of Kin.

4.2 By engaging a genealogical company it will give further opportunity to identify any possible next of Kin, and this process will then ensure that they are aware of their relatives' death and that they are offered the opportunity to make the necessary funeral arrangements.

5.0 Conclusion

- 5.1 The revised policy clearly outlines the procedure for handling National Assistance Burials, with the changes have been detailed in item 1.5. It is therefore the Officers recommendation that the Cabinet adopts the revised National Assistance Burial Policy that is attached as Annex A.

Contact for more Information:

Andrew Busby, group manager for Corporate Property and Commercial Assets.

Tel: 01884 234948, abusby@middevon.gov.uk.

**In his absence contact Bereavement services Tel: 01884 234343,
propertyservices@middevon.gov.uk.**

Circulation of the Report: