

**Report for: CABINET**

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Date of Meeting:	10 December 2024
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>National Assistance Burial Policy Review</b>
Cabinet Member:	Cllr Josh Wright – Cabinet Member Service Delivery and Continuous Improvement
Responsible Officer:	Paul Deal – Head of Finance, Property & Climate Resilience.
Exempt:	None
Wards Affected:	All
Enclosures:	Appendix 1 – National Assistance Burials Policy - 2024

**Section 1 – Summary and Recommendation(s)**

The policy was last approved in June 2019 and has become due for review after 5 years. This report presents the revised Policy for National Assistance Burials.

**Recommendation(s):**

**It is recommended that the Cabinet adopt the National Assistance Burials Policy as recommended by the Service Delivery & Continuous Improvement Policy Development Group.**

**Section 2 – Report**

**1.0 Introduction/Background**

- 1.1 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. 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.
- 1.2 The number of National Assistance Burials carried out by the Council has steadily increased over the past decade; there have been 22 since 2006 at the time of previous review in 2019, and a further 14 to date.

1.3 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.

1.4 The 2019 policy has been revised and for ease of reference when referring to the revised policy, the changes are:

- 3.5 Department for Work & Pensions payments updated.
- 6.4 clarification on cost of moving a body between Undertakers.
- 7.1 contact for registering a death updated.
- 8.2 clarification on consideration of choice of cemetery for burial.

## 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.

3.2 The Funeral Director provision is to be tendered in accordance with Procurement Policy for year commencing 2025/26.

## 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 paragraph 1.4. It is therefore the Officers recommendation that the PDG recommends to Cabinet the adoption of 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 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, where in appropriate or at unnecessary cost the council.

### **Impact on Climate Change**

None

### **Equalities Impact Assessment**

Not applicable

### **Relationship to Corporate Plan**

This service provides an important statutory duty. It is essential that we continue to review and update our service provision to ensure it provides the best value for money.

### **Section 3 – Statutory Officer sign-off/mandatory checks**

**Statutory Officer:** Andrew Jarrett

Agreed by or on behalf of the Section 151

**Date:** 22 November 2024

**Statutory Officer:** Maria De Leiburne

Agreed on behalf of the Monitoring Officer

**Date:** 22 November 2024

**Cabinet Member notified:** (yes/no)

#### **Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers**

**Contact:** Paul Deal, Head of Finance, Property & Climate Resilience, Finance

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**Background papers:** N/a