

Report to Cabinet

Subject: Removal of Under 18 Burial Charges

Date: 11 October 2018

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1. Wards Affected

All Borough wards are affected

2. Purpose

Losing a child is an extremely difficult time for parents and guardians and the Council would like to reduce their burden of a sudden and unexpected cost when they are going through such tragic and devastating grief.

Cabinet are asked to consider the removal of all of the Council costs for parents and guardians associated with the burials of Gedling Borough children under 18 years of age in the Borough's cemeteries.

3. Key Decision

This is not a key decision.

4. Background

Child burial fees have been rescinded in Wales and Scotland, and the UK Government has expressed intention to establish a Funeral Fund for grieving parents who have lost a child.

There is "considerable variation" in charges across the country, with some councils charging reduced fees and others waiving fees altogether.

Gedling Borough Council currently categorises services provided for children and infants as:-

- a. Stillborn Child or Child up to 12 weeks of age
- b. Child (Ages between 13 weeks & under 12 Years)
- c. Over 12 years old

For which it provides a table of fees and charges for burials, and associated services that is reviewed annually.

Current Charges

	Resident	Non-Resident
Full Burial		
Stillborn Child or Child up to 12 weeks of age	Nil	£343.00
Child (Ages between 13 weeks & 11 Years)	Nil	£494.00
Child Aged 12 to 17 years (Adult sized grave)	£586.00	£1502.00

	Resident	Non-Resident
Burial of Casket or Scattering of Ashes		
Stillborn Child or Child up to 12 weeks of age	Nil	£226.00
Child (Ages between 13 weeks & 11 Years)	Nil	£289.00
Child Aged 12 to 17 years	£164.00	£580.00

The 'up to 17' years of age interment fee which includes a memorial permit charge will be waived such that a child's plot for one only will incur no charge. But if the family wish to purchase a grave with space for a double or triple depth plot for adults, this will have to be paid for at the time. Currently our charges for new graves include any permit fees, so any new graves bought will not incur any separate fees. The separate memorial permit charge only applies to graves that were purchased pre April 2007.

Grave rights as indicated will include the option to place a memorial and in the event of financial difficulty at the time, we will continue to offer the opportunity to spread the cost of the double or triple depth grave purchase for 12 months.

5. Proposal

It is proposed to remove all charges for burials of resident children under the age of 18 years old. The removal will result in an extension of our child free interment policy from under 12's to under 18 years as follows:-

- a. Stillborn Child or Child up to 12 weeks of age
- b. Child (Ages between 13 weeks and under 18 Years)

Charges will still currently apply to non-residents who do not pay Council Tax, and do not benefit from the resident discounted rate. This helps ensure

sufficient burial space in cemetery grounds for Borough residents. But when the Government plans are unveiled this autumn this will be reviewed to ensure we comply with any forthcoming recommendations.

This will effectively mean the charges for a full burial or for burial of a casket or scattering of ashes will be reduced to zero for the category of a child aged 12 to 17 years who is a Gedling resident.

6. Alternative Options

To continue to make charges to residents of Gedling Borough for burials of those between the ages of 12 and under 18 years of age. The option of a reduced fee has not been offered as an alternative as the desire nationally is to move to free burials for all under 18's at such tragic and devastating times.

7. Financial Implications.

The current financial impact of agreeing that all fees related to burials for resident children under 18 years of age being removed, would be low.

It is not envisaged that the financial impact in future years of agreeing that all fees related to burials and cremations for children under 18 years of age being removed would be significant.

The table below shows the approximate financial impact of this proposal:

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
	£	£	£	£
Removing charges for Burials and Cremations made for Gedling Borough children	<u>3,000</u>	<u>7,000</u>	<u>7,000</u>	<u>7,000</u>
Net income reduction	<u>3,000</u>	<u>7,000</u>	<u>7,000</u>	<u>7,000</u>

8. Appendices

None.

9. Background Papers.

None.

10. Recommendation(s)

That Cabinet approves the removal of charges made to residents of Gedling Borough for burials for those under 18 years of age with immediate effect.

11. Reasons for Recommendations

To reduce the burden of a sudden and unexpected cost when families of Gedling Borough children have suffered the loss of a child.