

## Review of Burial Charges

### Report by John Blair, Director Resources

#### 1 Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to allow Council to consider waiving the burial charges for children aged 17 or below. It should be noted that this change would necessitate the suspension of standing orders.

#### 2 Background

- 2.1 The current charges are as follows and were revised by Council as part of the overall review of fees and charges at the Council meeting on 13 February 2018 which set the 2018/19 revenue budget.

<b>Interment Fees:</b>	<b>Resident</b>	<b>Non Resident</b>
Stillborn Child	No Charge	£ 109.50
Child Under 5 years	£ 200.00	£ 295.00
Child age 5 up to 18 years	£ 435.50	£ 655.00
Person over 18 years	£ 725.00	£ 1075.00

- 2.2 Historically the Council undertakes a small number of child burials per year. For example:  
2013/14 -5 child burials  
2014/15 -8 child burials  
2015/16 -0 child burials
- 2.3 Midlothian is one of only seven Councils that charge for child burials and it is understood that a review is ongoing in some of the other local authority areas who presently charge for the service.

#### 3 Report Implications

##### 3.1 Resource

There will be a minor reduction in income to the Cemeteries budget in the region of £2,000 per annum which will increase the net cost of providing the burials service to the Council.

##### 3.2 Risk

No change in policy may bring the Council into disrepute and lead to potential criticisms when compared with other local authority areas.

##### 3.3 Single Midlothian Plan and Business Transformation

Themes addressed in this report:

- Community safety
- Adult health, care and housing
- Getting it right for every Midlothian child
- Improving opportunities in Midlothian
- Sustainable growth
- Business transformation and Best Value
- X None of the above

### **3.4 Key Priorities within the Single Midlothian Plan**

The provision of free child burials will ensure that the Council meets its equality obligations

### **3.5 Impact on Performance and Outcomes**

There will be no direct impact on the key performance outcomes of the Council

### **3.6 Adopting a Preventative Approach**

The provision of free child burials should ensure that the Council meets the needs of a diverse community contributing to inclusion and equity.

### **3.7 Involving Communities and Other Stakeholders**

No direct consultation has been undertaken, although the Council is aware of the revisions to burial pricing approaches being undertaken by other local authorities with regards to child burials.

### **3.8 Ensuring Equalities**

The provision of free children's burials will ensure that residents irrespective of their social economic backgrounds have equal provision and this provision will not impact on their financial wellbeing.

### **3.9 Supporting Sustainable Development**

There are no sustainable development implications for Midlothian.

### **3.10 IT Issues**

There are no direct IT issues as a result of proposals set out in this report.

## **4 Summary**

The proposed waiving of the children's burial fees will have minimal financial impact on the Council and it notes that Midlothian are one of only a few Councils still charging for children's burials.

## **5 Recommendations**

It is recommended that:

- a) the charge for child burials be waived for families and
- b) that the Council make representations through COSLA for child burial charges to be met from central resources in future years.

### **Date**

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### **Background Papers:**