



RECORD OF DELEGATED OFFICER DECISION

SUBJECT: BEREAVEMENT FEES & CHARGES

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

The purpose of this report is to amend the Council's current policy in respect of bereavement fees and charges and specifically to remove the requirement that non residents are charged a 100% surcharge on grave purchase and interment fees.

DELEGATED DECISION (Date):

The Council cease the practice of applying a non resident surcharge to its bereavement fees and charges with effect from 1st April 2016.


Chief Officer Signature

C. ISINGRINI
Print Name

04.02.16.
Date

The decision is taken in accordance with Section 15 of the Local Government Act, 2000 (Executive Functions) and in the terms set out in Section 5 of Part 3 of the Council's Constitution

Jay Bosser

CONSULTEE CABINET MEMBER SIGNATURE

4/2/16

DATE

P. Mee

OFFICER CONSULTEE SIGNATURE

4/2/16.

DATE

Directorate:	Public Health & Protection
Contact Name:	Paul Mee
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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2015/16

**REPORT TO ACCOMPANY DECISION OF
GROUP DIRECTOR, COMMUNITY & CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

<u>Part 1</u> (Non-Confidential)
BEREAVEMENT SERVICES FEES & CHARGES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 In accordance with the Council's scheme of delegation this report has been prepared to accompany the decision of the Group Director of Community and Children's Services as described below.
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to amend the Council's current policy in respect of bereavement fees and charges and specifically to remove the requirement that non residents are charged a 100% surcharge on grave purchase and interment fees.

2. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

- 2.1 The Council cease the practice of applying a non resident surcharge to its bereavement fees and charges with effect from 1st April 2016.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Council increases its fees and charges for bereavement services on an annual basis in line with the general uplift in fees and charges applied across the Council. In 2015/16 this meant an increase of 6.1% was applied to all bereavement fees and charges. A surcharge is currently applied to some fees and charges for non residents.

- 3.2 The main fees and charges for bereavement services are presented in Table I.

Table I – Fees & Charges

Fee	Resident	Non Resident
Cremation	£626	£626
The exclusive right of burial in a grave space:	£457	£914
Interment in a grave:	£457	£914
Exclusive right of burial in a cremation plot:	£225	£450
Interment in a cremation plot	£225	£450
Loose deposit at a rosebush:	£139	£278

- 3.3 It has been the Council's policy for many years that non residents are charged a 100% surcharge for the purchase of a grave and for the interment of remains. An exemption is applied where the deceased has moved outside of the County Borough for care no more than three years prior to their death.
- 3.4 If the funeral is being arranged by a relative of the deceased who is non resident the surcharge would be applied to the grave purchase irrespective of the place of residence of the deceased. The surcharge is not however applied to the interment fee in these circumstances. In effect, the deceased can be a resident of Rhondda Cynon Taf their entire life, but on their death, if their funeral is arranged by a relative who lives outside of the County Borough they will be charged double to purchase the grave.
- 3.5 As bereavement fees and charges have increased the impact of the surcharge has become more significant. Effectively a non resident may have to pay £1828 for the purchase of a grave and the interment of the deceased remains compared to £914 for a resident of the County Borough.
- 3.6 In recent years as the cost of funerals has increased, this surcharge has become more contentious with funeral directors and relatives of the deceased. This is particularly the case where the deceased is a resident but the relative arranging the funeral and purchasing the grave is a non resident and is charged the non-resident fee. Consequently, there is an increasing number of questions as to whether the equitable principles that originally underpinned this surcharge still remain and furthermore, in light of the current ideology towards consumer relations there is justification for this surcharge to continue.
- 3.7 The principle behind the non resident fee was to preserve and give priority to the burial rights of residents of the County Borough who throughout their lives are effectively paying for the Council's Bereavement Services. However, it is often the case that people who

were born or resided in Rhondda Cynon Taf for much of their lives and then subsequently moved away for whatever reason want to be interred at home on their death. In such cases it is often perceived as unfair that a surcharge is applied, particularly when the reason for leaving Rhondda Cynon Taf may have been to take up a residential care placement and not necessarily been out of choice.

- 3.8 This charging is challenged by funeral directors and relatives of the deceased on an increasingly frequent basis, often in the circumstances described above, where it is difficult to justify application of the surcharge.
- 3.9 The budget summary for Bereavement Services is presented at Table II.

**Table II – Budget Summary 2015/16
(excluding Llwydcoed Crematorium)**

Salaries	£856k
Supplies & Services	£518k
Total Expenditure	£1,374k
Income	£1,583k
Net Budget	-£209k

- 3.10 The service receives in excess of £1.5 million in income each year through fees and charges and this goes towards the cost of providing the service and to the period replacement of equipment such as cremators and recent environmental requirements. In 2015/16 the service is projecting an income of £1.638 million against a budget of £1.538 million; a surplus of £55k.
- 3.11 In 2014 (calendar year) approximately £36k of income was received from the application of the surcharge for non residents. In the overall context of the service the income received from the application of the surcharge is not considered significant.

4 CONCLUSION

- 4.1 The Council currently applies a non resident surcharge for bereavement fees and charges. As funeral costs have continued to increase over recent years this surcharge has increasingly been perceived as unfair particularly where the deceased have been residents of the County Borough for much of their lives.
- 4.2 The application of the 100% surcharge can no longer be justified and it is recommended that the Council cease this practice at the earliest opportunity.

