



Our Ref: CEM-03/RWH/EH
Your Ref: SS. P&C – 09.08.2022

23 September 2022

By email to: SteeleSara@BelfastCity.gov.uk

For the Attention of Mr Seamus McBride
City Protection Manager
Belfast City Council

Dear Mr McBride

Review of Non-Residential Fees for the re-opening of graves in Blaris Cemetery for Collin Residents

Further to the correspondence to Mr David Burns dated 20 September 2022 regarding cemetery charges for non-residents using New Blaris Cemetery, I wish to advise that I have been asked to respond on his behalf as the Head of Service responsible for Cemetery Administration within the Council.

I am aware of the financial impact of any interment of a loved one and the significant emotive nature of the same. As you will be aware as a result of Local Government Reform, the Council boundary was changed and this resulted in certain areas of the former Lisburn City Council (and former Castlereagh Borough Council) transferring to the Belfast City Council area, which includes the Collin Area. In recognising the potential financial impact of this on former ratepayers, Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council (L&CCC) agreed to offer a time bound 3-year subsidy to those former ratepayers making use of Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council cemeteries. This subsidy was supported from April 2015 until March 2018 and matched the overall regional rates convergence scheme which was implemented by Central Government for household rates. Both of these schemes ended on 31 March 2018 and at the conclusion of this subsidy the council has been consistent in its approach.

I can confirm that from April 2015 there have been a number of requests around the same subject. Officers have maintained a consistent approach and complied with the policy and any previous queries/complaints of this nature have not been upheld. Furthermore, the Council has also been reviewed by the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO) on a similar challenge and has been supported in the decision making and consistency of approach concerning this matter.

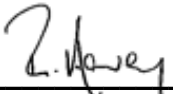
Whilst I am responding on the issue of non-residents who now reside within Belfast City Council, I feel it is relevant to also advise on the position of former Castlereagh ratepayers who had existing graves within Knockbreda Cemetery.

Knockbreda Cemetery was owned and operated by the former Castlereagh Borough Council and it transferred as an asset to Belfast City Council on 1 April 2015. Many of the former Castlereagh Borough Council ratepayers within the newly formed L&CCC had graves within Knockbreda. Belfast City Council never subsidised any former Castlereagh Borough Council residents for their subsequent use of Knockbreda Cemetery and charged up to 3 times the resident rate for L&CCC residents.

I can advise that the Council reviews its charging scheme annually and this includes charges associated with cemetery provision.

I am happy to meet to discuss further if you feel that would be beneficial.

Yours sincerely



Richard W Harvey
Head of Service (Environmental Health)