



Subject:	Correspondence from Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council re Blaris Cemetery Fees and Response from DfC re review of burial ground regulations in relation to fees
Date:	11th October, 2022
Reporting Officer:	Siobhan Toland, Director of City Services
Contact Officer:	Seamus McBride, City Protection Manager

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	To note the correspondence received from Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council re Blaris Cemetery Fees and Department for Communities re review of burial ground regulations in relation to fees.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to <ul style="list-style-type: none">Note the correspondence as set out in the report.

3.0	Main report
	<p data-bbox="272 226 421 255"><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p data-bbox="165 300 1469 633">3.1 The Committee will recall that, at its meeting on 9th August, 2022, the Committee agreed to write to Lisburn and Castlereagh (LCCC) to seek a review of non-residential fees for the re-opening of graves in Blaris Cemetery for Collin Residents and also to write to the Department for Communities to establish if there was any plans to review the Burial Ground Regulations in relation to fees for burials and to ascertain if the Department had any plans to work with Councils to ensure that residents were not faced with disproportionate charges during a bereavement.</p> <p data-bbox="165 703 1469 786">3.2 The Committee was referred to responses that had been received from LCCC's Head of Service and from the Director, Local Government and Housing Regulation Division.</p> <p data-bbox="165 855 1469 1391">3.3 In his response from LCCC the officer notes that, as Members would be aware, as a result of Local Government Reform, the Council boundary had changed which had resulted in certain areas of the former Lisburn City Council (and former Castlereagh Borough Council) transferring to the Belfast City Council area, which included the Collin Area. In recognising the potential financial impact of this on former ratepayers, Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council (L&CCC) had agreed to offer a time bound 3-year subsidy to those former ratepayers making use of Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council cemeteries. This subsidy had been supported from April 2015 until March 2018 and matched the overall regional rates convergence scheme which had been implemented by Central Government for household rates. Both of these schemes had ended on 31 March 2018 and at the conclusion of this subsidy the council had been consistent in its approach.</p> <p data-bbox="165 1460 1469 1744">3.4 He reported that from April 2015 there had been a number of requests around the same subject. Officers had maintained a consistent approach and complied with the policy and any previous queries/complaints of this nature had not been upheld. Furthermore, the Council had also been reviewed by the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO) on a similar challenge and had been supported in the decision making and consistency of approach concerning this matter.</p> <p data-bbox="165 1814 1469 1946">3.5 He also drew reference to the position of former Castlereagh ratepayers who had existing graves within Knockbreda Cemetery. Highlighting that many of the former Castlereagh Borough Council ratepayers within the newly formed L&CCC had graves within Knockbreda.</p>

<p>3.6</p> <p>3.7</p> <p>3.8</p> <p>3.9</p>	<p>He detailed that Belfast City Council had 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.</p> <p>He concluded by advising that the Council reviewed its charging scheme annually and this included charges associated with cemetery provision.</p> <p>In the DfC response regarding fees for burials, the Director advises that the Burial Grounds Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1992 were made under section 181 of the Public Health Ireland Act 1878 Act (the 1878 Act). He details that this section does not provide the Department with the power to make regulations regarding burial fees. He goes onto state that the Department has no role in the settling of burial fees which is the sole responsibility of Councils.</p> <p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p>
<p>4.0</p>	<p>Appendices – Documents Attached</p>
	<p>Appendix 1 - Response from Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council. Appendix 2 – Response from Department for Communities.</p>