

To Full Council

Notice of Motion

Death Certificate Compassionate Fund

In response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the tragic deaths that occur because of the virus, Southend-on-Sea Borough Council's Register Office administers associated death certificates requested by the next of kin or executor, as it does for all instances of death where copies of a certificate are requested.

In England, whilst there is no fee associated with the statutory responsibility of registering a death, certified copies of the registration are provided on request at a cost to the next of kin or executor of £11.00 per copy. This is a statutory fee approved by Parliament. In most instances, the next of kin or executor requires more than one copy of the certification – even as many as ten, fifteen or twenty individual copies. This is, therefore, already a costly burden. Additionally, the next of kin or executor will often need the certificates promptly to assist them in addressing the administrative matters that arise from the death of a relative or loved one.

However, despite the efficiency and exemplary professionalism of Southend-on-Sea's Register Office in dealing with such matters, issues may still arise in administering death certificates due to no fault of the Council's Register Office, causing lengthy delays to the next of kin or executor receiving the certificates. For example, in cases of the postal service failing to deliver the certificates in a timely fashion or at all. Subsequently, this can have a detrimental impact on the next of kin or executor's ability to handle the administrative matters associated with the death. In such an instance, they are, therefore, resorting to purchasing replacement copies at additional expense, simply so that they can obtain them quicker. At present, there are no means by which the Council's Register Office may refund or waive the fee - as it is a statutory charge and not one set by the Local Authority.

As such, this motion calls for:

The introduction of a Death Certificate Compassionate Fund – an annual ring-fenced budget made available to Southend-on-Sea Borough Council's Register Office for the purpose of covering the cost of replacement death certificates. This budget would be provided for use only in cases of exceptional circumstances and would be utilised at the sole discretion of Officers on a case-by-case basis. To use this budget efficiently, Officers in the Register Office may wish to consider introducing a cap on the number of replacement certificates that could be provided per instance. Additionally, Officers would be given the freedom and discretion of back-dating reimbursements for replacement certificates where the cause of death was COVID-19.

This motion would go a long way to improving the already distressing and difficult process that relatives of the deceased must go through. Therefore, I hope that the Council approves this motion.

Proposer:

Cllr Alex Bright

Second:

Cllr Boyd

Cllr Buck

Cllr Burzotta

Cllr Cox

Cllr Davidson

Cllr Dear

Cllr Evans

Cllr Flewitt

Cllr Folkard

Cllr Garne

Cllr Garston

Cllr Habermel

Cllr Jarvis

Cllr McGlone

Cllr Moring

Cllr Nelson

Cllr Salter

Cllr Walker