

Appendix 1

Difficulties and Health and Safety Implications

The points below outline the difficulties and health and safety implications related to the personal memorials placed on some graves:

- When excavating a grave, if adjacent plots have personal memorials there is nowhere for the soil box to be placed. In the event that memorials are removed to allow the excavation of a grave, employees have reported facing animosity from families on occasion and risk insurance claims being made for any damage.
- When funeral employees are lowering a coffin and when mourners are attending a funeral they are surrounded by memorial items which could be a trip hazard.
- Families extending the personal memorials beyond the grave impacts on maintenance and mowing of the site and topping up and seeding of graves.
- Impedes safe access and egress for both Council employees and visitors to the site.

An extract from the relevant section of the Rules and Regulations is provided below:

16. Burial areas

It is Council policy that no item of whatever description is allowed to be placed upon the actual grave space in a lawned area. These items include fencing, kerbing, bedding plants, vases, flower displays, windmills, any item made from glass and any alcohol found to be left on a grave will be removed and disposed of immediately. Wooden crosses or any other equivalent religious symbols may only be left as a temporary measure but must be removed once a permanent memorial is erected.

The Council will not provide maintenance to any grave which has prohibited items on it and will neither provide the maintenance nor excavate a grave for any interment until all items have been removed.

The Council reserves the right at any time to remove any unauthorised item placed upon the grave space.

Personal items left on any grave area are the sole responsibility of the grave owner. The Council is not responsible for the loss or damage of such items.

The Council reserves the right to take over the grave maintenance within a burial area without notice to the grave owner where it has been determined that the grave has not been suitably maintained by the grave owner and is unsightly or dangerous.

It is important for employees and visitors, and the general maintenance of the cemeteries that the Rules and Regulations are enforced.

Broxtowe Borough Council cemeteries were awarded the Gold Award 2024 for Cemetery Management by the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM). Below is an extract from their management of memorials document "code of safe working practice"

7.0

Unauthorised Memorials

A large number of Authorities experience difficulties with the control of unauthorised memorials. This can be directly related to a lack of choice in the type of memorials available. When considering providing a range of choice the cost of the permission to erect each type of memorial should be related to the whole life risk for the type of design together with the ongoing maintenance costs of sections in which they are placed. The provision of new traditional sections where more flexibility is given on the size, type, design and even the material used for the memorial allows the personalisation of the grave but uses the normal authorisation process. By providing this important option burial Authorities can then insist on the removal of additional memorialisation, particularly on lawn sections where it upsets maintenance routines, but more importantly upsets those bereaved who wish to have an ordered tidy look to the section in which their relative is buried. It is clear from experience throughout the country that the lack of choice makes the policing of additional memorialisation very difficult. There is no other alternative for the bereaved and they are often very upset that they are unable to personalise the grave. Unauthorised memorials then begin to grow unchecked creating the potential for further serious health and safety problems for the Authority, such as spiked wrought iron fences. Proper choice and proper control of unauthorised memorials through the management rules and regulations is, therefore, essential to the effective long-term control over memorial safety.

Bramcote Bereavement Services currently offer a wide range of memorial options for families' consideration following the advice from the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management as stated above. This is evidenced by the Gold Award achieved.

The goal is to provide a safer environment and a more attractive cemetery for families to visit.

Benchmarking Information

Other cemeteries that have experienced the same personal memorial issue have successfully implemented the clearing of graves. Wilford Hill Cemetery has recently introduced the same policy and have given Bramcote Bereavement Services advice and support regarding the process followed.

By adhering to the Rules and Regulations and enforcing them the Council are providing a safer environment for those who visit the graves of their loved ones.

By starting the project now it will be the summer before the actual removal of items commences.

It is anticipated that some families may complain about the action to remove personalised memorials, but as detailed in this report the health and safety of employees and visitors as well as the maintenance of the cemeteries are important factors which need addressing.

Proposed Approach

- Cemeteries Officers will erect signage, centrally within the cemetery and place signage upon individual plots providing information 3 months' in advance of any action being taken. It will encourage individuals to clear the graves themselves. **See Appendix 2 and Appendix 3**
- Where possible grave owners will be written to in a sensitive manner outlining the details of the approach. **See Appendix 4**
- Memorialisation removed will be stored for one month at Bramcote Crematorium and made available for families to collect.
- Work will commence at the first cemetery and will commence one section at a time.
- A photograph of each grave detailing the items removed will be stored for future reference.