

## Report of the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Climate Change

**Clearing Cemeteries of Personal Memorials**1. Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to outline the proposal of clearing personal memorials which have accumulated over the years within all of the Council's cemeteries.

2. Recommendation

**The Cabinet is asked to NOTE the intention to clear all personal memorials as detailed in this report.**

3. Detail

Bramcote Bereavement Services have carried out a review of the current management arrangements of the Council's cemeteries and identified an issue with personal memorials. The Council's Cemeteries Rules and Regulations state that "It is Council policy that no item of whatever description is allowed to be placed upon the actual grave space in a lawned area." This is in order to maintain a safe environment for both employees of the Council and visitors to the cemeteries. The Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management also states "Proper choice and proper control of unauthorised memorials through the management rules and regulations is essential to the effective long-term control over memorial safety."

Whilst most families, friends and visitors adhere to the Rules and Regulations a number of personal memorials are appearing. Particularly this was the case during the pandemic when the monitoring of graves was impacted.

More details regarding the difficulties experienced as a result of the current situation is provided in **Appendix 1**.

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

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

Further information is provided within the report at **Appendix 2** and **Appendix 3** to show signage to be placed on plots prior to action, while **Appendix 4** includes a letter that grave owners will receive outlining the details of the approach.

4. Key Decision

The location of cemeteries will effect individuals within communities who visit and tend to family graves in several wards in the Council's area.

5. Updates from Scrutiny

Not Applicable.

6. Financial Implications

The comments from the Head of Finance Services were as follows:

There are no budget implications to consider with any operational costs being met from within existing resources.

7. Legal Implications

The comments from the Monitoring Officer / Head of Legal Services were as follows:

8. Human Resources Implications

The comments from the Human Resources Manager were as follows:

Not Applicable.

9. Union Comments

The Union comments were as follows:

Not Applicable.

10. Climate Change Implications

The climate change implications are contained within the report.

11. Data Protection Compliance Implications

This report does not contain any OFFICIAL(SENSITIVE) information and there are no Data Protection issues in relation to this report.

12. Equality Impact Assessment

Not Applicable.

13. Background Papers

Nil.

## 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.

Ask for:	Cemeteries Office
Ext:	0115 917 3630
Email:	<a href="mailto:Cemeteries@broxtowe.gov.uk">Cemeteries@broxtowe.gov.uk</a>
Our Ref:	Unofficial memorial removal
Your Ref:	
Date:	



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Appendix 2

## Advance Notice

**Bramcote Bereavement Services work hard to ensure the cemetery is a beautiful place and is well managed in order to provide the best possible environment for you to remember your loved ones. We respectfully ask that you help us achieve this outcome.**

**The unofficial surrounds, tributes and/or memorials in this section on graves are not permitted and will be cleared and disposed of**

## After .....

**They result in us experiencing practical problems with the general upkeep of the cemetery and also pose a health and safety risk to the general public and employees visiting the cemetery.**

**Please ensure ALL unofficial surrounds, tributes and/or memorials in this section are removed prior to this date.**

**If you require more information, please contact the cemeteries office at [cemeteries@broxtowe.gov.uk](mailto:cemeteries@broxtowe.gov.uk)**



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**Broxtowe Borough Council**

Foster Avenue, Beeston,

Nottingham NG9 1AB

t: 0115 917 7777

typetalk: 18001 0115 917 7777

w: [www.broxtowe.gov.uk](http://www.broxtowe.gov.uk)



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Ask for: Cemeteries Office  
Ext: 0115 917 3630  
Email: [Cemeteries@broxtowe.gov.uk](mailto:Cemeteries@broxtowe.gov.uk)  
Our Ref: Unofficial memorial removal  
Your Ref:  
Date:



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Appendix 3

## Advance Notice

**Bramcote Bereavement Services work hard to ensure the cemetery is a beautiful place and is well managed in order to provide the best possible environment for you to remember your loved ones. We respectfully ask that you help us achieve this outcome.**

**The unofficial surrounds, tributes and/or memorials on this lawn grave are not permitted and will be cleared and disposed of**

**After .....**

**They result in us experiencing practical problems with the general upkeep of the cemetery and also pose a health and safety risk to the general public and staff visiting the cemetery.**

**Please ensure ALL unofficial surrounds, tributes and/or memorials are removed prior to this date.**

**If you require more information, please contact the cemeteries office at [cemeteries@broxtowe.gov.uk](mailto:cemeteries@broxtowe.gov.uk)**



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**Broxtowe Borough Council**  
Foster Avenue, Beeston,  
Nottingham NG9 1AB  
t: 0115 917 7777  
typetalk: 18001 0115 917 7777  
w: [www.broxtowe.gov.uk](http://www.broxtowe.gov.uk)



Ask for: Cemeteries Office  
Ext: 0115 917 3630  
Email: [Cemeteries@broxtowe.gov.uk](mailto:Cemeteries@broxtowe.gov.uk)  
Our Ref: Unofficial memorial removal  
Your Ref:  
Date:



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Appendix 4

Name  
Address  
Address  
Address  
Address

#### **CEMETERY LOCATION – Grave Number #**

Bramcote Bereavement Services work hard to ensure the cemetery is a beautiful place and is well managed in order to provide the best possible environment for you to remember your loved ones. We are writing to you to respectfully ask that you help us achieve this outcome.

Following recent cemetery inspections, it has been noted that there are unauthorised surrounds, tributes and/or memorials which have been placed at the grave numbered above.

We remind you of the Cemetery Rules and Regulations, a copy of which can be found: <https://www.bramcotebereavement.org/cemeteries/rules-regulations/>

Whilst Bramcote Bereavement Services understand that this is a personal and sensitive issue, the Cemetery Rules and Regulations that were issued to you clearly define the types of surrounds, tributes and memorial that can be displayed.

Unfortunately, due to several complaints of the condition of the cemetery, and the risk to visitors and employees visiting the cemetery, Bramcote Bereavement Services have decided that there is now a need to enforce the Cemetery Rules and Regulations.

Bramcote Bereavement Services work hard to create and maintain a respectful and dignified environment which is sympathetic to the landscape and the people who visit loved ones at their place of rest.

We kindly request that you remove the unauthorised surrounds, tributes and/or memorials prior to ..... After this date Bramcote Bereavement Services will remove any items still in situ and the items will be stored for one month for collection at Bramcote Crematorium.



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Foster Avenue, Beeston,  
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We are aware that there are many other graves in this section and across the cemetery that have the same or similar items on them, please be assured that we are also in contact with the relevant grave owners.

Bramcote Bereavement Services would like to thank you in advance for your support and understanding in relation to this situation.

Yours sincerely,

XXXXXXXXXXXXX

Bereavement Services Manager

Bramcote Bereavement Services  
Bramcote Crematorium  
Coventry Lane  
Bramcote  
Nottingham  
NG9 3GJ

Tel: 0115 917 3849