

Executive Committee

25th November 2025

Bereavement Services - Burial Strategy

Relevant Portfolio Holder		Councillor Harvey
Portfolio Holder Consulted		Yes
Relevant Assistant Director		Simon Parry, Assistant Director of Environmental and Housing Property Services
Report Author	Job Title: Environmental Services Manager, Doug Henderson Contact email: doughendersonbromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk Contact Tel: 07483 151469	
Wards Affected		All
Ward Councillor(s) consulted		N/A
Relevant Council Priority		
Non-Key Decision		
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.		

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive Committee is asked to RESOLVE that.

1) The Redditch Borough Council Burial Strategy be approved.

and to note that

2) A further report will be prepared for Committee consideration in due to course in respect of burial provision in Redditch.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 In Redditch Borough Council operates and manages three cemeteries, Plymouth Road, Edgioake Lane and Abbey Cemetery and St Stephen's, St Luke's and Feckenham closed church yards.

2.2 Plymouth Road is closed to new burials, and Edgioake Lane Cemetery has approximately five years burial provision available at its current usage but is under review to reassess overall spacing which should free up at least another 5/+ years of burial provision.

2.3 Abbey Cemetery is the main burial area in Redditch Borough and had approximately 8 months left of burials space in early 2024. Through the later parts of 2024 a vigorous exercise of reviewing burial space within

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the cemetery borders led to the council being able to secure a further 10 years of space.

- 2.4 These figures are only indicative based on trends; however, they can change for a number of reasons; including continued increase in cremations versus burials and fluctuating local/county death rates.
- 2.5 Work had been undertaken in recent years to assess the suitability of several different sites across the Borough as per previous reports taken to council.
- 2.6 In total twenty-six sites were originally reviewed, the various different sites included land at the rear of Morrisons, Foxlydiate Woods, additional extension to the existing Edgioake lane site, Ipsley Church Lane, Greenland's playing fields, Coldfield Drive, Oakenshaw Park, and Woodrow Park.
- 2.7 A previous council leadership decided upon Ipsley Church lane as the most favourable option.
- 2.8 New Cemetery provision required to secure provision of burial service for residents – agreed at Exec Dec 21 and full council Jan 2022
- 2.9 Appropriation of land off Ipsley Church Lane For planning purposes Exec 13th Dec 2022.
- 2.10 In May 2024 Labour take control of the council on a local manifesto that included putting a hold on any further works on the Ipsley site.
- 2.11 In early 2025 a new site review was undertaken, and a new site is now under investigation. To date it has passed the Environment Agency requirements to secure a standard permit.
- 2.12 The above outlines why a Burial Strategy is a crucial document for the Council because it ensures long-term, respectful, and inclusive management of burial spaces while meeting legal, cultural, and environmental needs.
- 2.13 Burial space is finite, and the Council must plan ahead to avoid shortages. This strategy will help forecast future demand and a suitable trigger point for beginning an exercise for seeking expansion to an existing site or seeking a new site in a timely fashion.
- 2.14 Without prior planning, the Council risks running out of burial plots, leading to distress for families and logistical challenges.
- 2.15 This Burial Strategy will also ensure cemeteries continue to accommodate diverse religious and cultural practices, such as Muslim and Jewish burial requirements or Hindu cremation preferences.

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- 2.16 The Council must comply with laws such as the Burial Act 1857, registration of Burials Act 1864, Local Authorities Cemeteries Order 1977, Local Government Act 1972, and the Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984, which govern cemetery management and public health funerals.
- 2.17 This strategy will help align Burial Services with local planning policies and national legislation.
- 2.18 Cemeteries are valuable green spaces that offer areas for reflection and biodiversity. This strategy ensures our spaces are well-maintained and accessible.
- 2.19 The strategy outlines a clear vision: to ensure that all residents have access to dignified burial options that reflect their beliefs, traditions, and personal wishes. It establishes key objectives around service quality, environmental sustainability, future capacity planning, and community engagement.
 - 2.19.1 Key themes and content include:
 - 2.19.1.1 The Council's remaining capacity
 - 2.19.1.2 Reclaiming rights
 - 2.19.1.3 Up to date fees and charges
 - 2.19.1.4 Rule and Regulations
 - 2.19.1.5 Grounds maintenance
 - 2.19.1.6 Memorial Safety
 - 2.19.1.7 Memorialisation
 - 2.19.1.8 New IT systems
 - 2.19.1.9 Top level action plan against each theme.

3. OPERATIONAL ISSUES

- 3.1 In Redditch, the service has gone through a significant period of uncertainty culminating in the need to rethink current burial provision within the Abbey Cemetery boundary which produced a further 10 years of space to enable time to pursue new burial land options.
- 3.2 The land currently under investigation has passed the initial geology/hydrology 6 months bore hole testing which means that it would secure an environment agency standard rules permit to burial.
- 3.3 The next stage subject to agreement is to begin a pre-planning process.

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- 3.4 As outlined within the new Burial Strategy, Redditch finds itself at the appropriate moment in terms of existing burial provision to begin a process of pursuing a new site, but this is only because the service managed to find more space.
- 3.5 If this option of securing more space had failed Redditch would have been left with Edgioake Cemetery as the only option remaining in the coming years and would have seen that site fill rapidly at current burial rates.
- 3.6 A clear Burial Strategy that all departments sign up to will remove the risk of a scenario like this occurring again.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The New Cemetery Budget Capital Cost Code 110021 has £304,500 remaining to secure a new site.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Council is a burial authority and as such has the responsibilities associated with that status. Should the Council be unable to provide burial plots in future, this would create financial and reputational risks.

6. OTHER - IMPLICATIONS

Local Government Reorganisation

- 6.1 Entering into either North/South Unitary Authority arrangements or a One Worcestershire entity without have suitable burial provision in place would apply pressure on adjoining sites across borders.

Relevant Council Priority

- 6.2 This strategy supports both the Economy, Regeneration & Prosperity and the Green, Clean & Safe strands of the current Redditch Council Plan.

Climate Change Implications

- 6.3 The Burial Strategy has important climate change considerations. Traditional burial practices contribute to carbon emissions through land use, materials, and ongoing grounds maintenance. Cemetery expansion plans must incorporate climate resilience measures, including flood risk mitigation, tree planting, and sustainable drainage systems.

Operational activities—such as grounds maintenance and infrastructure upgrades—should align with the Council’s net zero ambitions. Cemeteries also offer opportunities to enhance green infrastructure and carbon sequestration, supporting wider environmental goals in the Redditch Council Plan.

Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 6.4 To ensure that equality implications are effectively addressed, a full Equality Impact Assessment of the Strategy will be undertaken.
- 6.5 The new strategy recognises the need for the respectful and inclusive management of burial sites, which also meet cultural needs. There are potential positive equality implications arising from the implementation of an effective strategy, including greater physical accessibility and a range of burial options to accommodate different faiths.
- 6.6 Protected characteristics potentially impacted by the delivery of the service include age, disability, pregnancy and maternity, race and religion and belief. Ensuring sufficient burial provision, as well as accessible, safe, inclusive and well-maintained sites will help to deliver positive impacts.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 No longer being able to offer burials to the Redditch community is both a reputational and financial risk for the authority.
- 7.2 The mitigation would be to either agree an expansion at an existing site or secure a new site within the timeframes outlined within the Burial Strategy or begin a consultation and communication strategy to highlight that Redditch may within 10 years phase out full earth burials and will simply maintain the closed sites.

8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix 1 – Redditch Borough Council Burial Strategy

9. REPORT SIGN OFF

Department	Name and Job Title	Date
Portfolio Holder	Cllr Harvey	3 rd Nov 2025

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Lead Director / Assistant Director	Simon Parry	3 rd Nov 2025
Financial Services	Bev Docherty	3 rd Nov 2025
Legal Services	Nicola Cummings, Principal Solicitor - Governance	14 th Nov 2025
Policy Team (if equalities implications apply)	Rebecca Green	13 th Nov 2025
Climate Change Team (if climate change implications apply)	Matthew Eccles	3 rd Nov 2025