

**Redditch Borough Council
Burial Strategy 2025**



Contents

Foreword

Theme 1 – Our Cemeteries

Theme 2 - Reclaiming Graves

Theme 3 - Fees & Charges

Theme 4 - Management Rules & Regulations

Theme 5 - Grounds Maintenance

Theme 6 - Memorial Safety

Theme 7 - Memorialisation

Theme 8 - Evolving & Developing Burial Systems

Actions table



Foreword

This is our council's first burial strategy and a positive step forward to ensuring that we will continue to deliver effective control and management of the burial service and future development of cemeteries for the benefit of our communities across the area. Redditch Borough Council has a statutory responsibility to provide a means of burial across our region.

Careful consideration for the appropriate management and regulation of the council's cemeteries has been undertaken as the burial authority operates within The burial Act 1857 and the Health and Safety Act 1974

Redditch Borough Council has three working cemeteries under its remit of management and maintenance as well as a number of closed churchyards. Two of these cemeteries has provision for new burial space which is Abbey Cemetery, where the crematorium is located, and Edgioake Cemetery.

It is recognised that the burial service needs to be sympathetic to and meet the needs of the bereaved and the wider communities of Redditch for both the short and longer term. This burial strategy has been developed around the eleven themes which have been highlighted during our consultation process, and our future service delivery will concentrate on these themes and required actions to deliver on these.

The burial service is managed and carried out by our Bereavement Services team and supported by the wider Environmental Services departments who carry out grave digging and grounds maintenance duties.

3 working cemeteries

3 closed churchyards

75 burials per year on average

200 cremated remains interments per year on average

3 Environmental Operatives involved in the burial process

4 burial administration staff

Approximately 50 hectares across 3 cemeteries

55,000 headstone memorials

In a traditional standard cemetery with a dense number of graves up to 300 full graves can be interred per acre when factoring in road and path access for the operational teams and the public.

Land required

Burial Provision	Space required
10 Years	3 acres
20 years	6 acres
50 years	15 acres

Theme 1 - Our Cemeteries

Redditch Borough Council operates three cemeteries (detailed in the table below), one of which can no longer accommodate new burial space. The remaining capacity within the active cemeteries is analysed on an annual basis, based on a 5 year average of interments both full earth burials and ashes interments. A cemetery is highlighted when it has under 15 years capacity remaining, with full analysis and consideration given to potential extensions from when 10 years remain.

Area	Cemetery	Number of sections that remain	Approximate years of burial space remaining
Redditch	Abbey	1	7
	Edgioake	1	10
	Plymouth Road	0	0

At the time of writing this strategy, work is ongoing to explore other locations for potential new sites for burial ground.

In the past it has been customary for the council to extend all cemeteries when they reach capacity. This may not be possible in future due to availability of land, suitability of land due to strict planning guidelines and land purchase costs. It may become necessary for people to be buried in neighbouring towns and villages. We appreciate how important it is for people to be buried in their local area and will make every effort to extend cemeteries where possible.

Our cemeteries accommodate a wide range of different faiths and are always open to new customs and requests. Our sites provide provision for Muslim burials and will increase space within Abbey in line with local demand.

Image 1. Abbey Cemetery

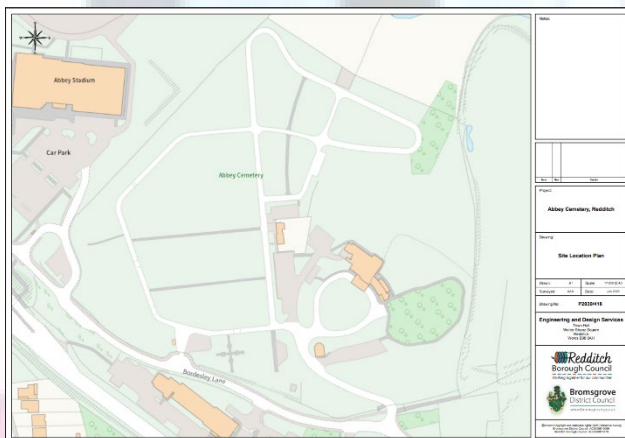


Image 2. Edgioake Cemetery

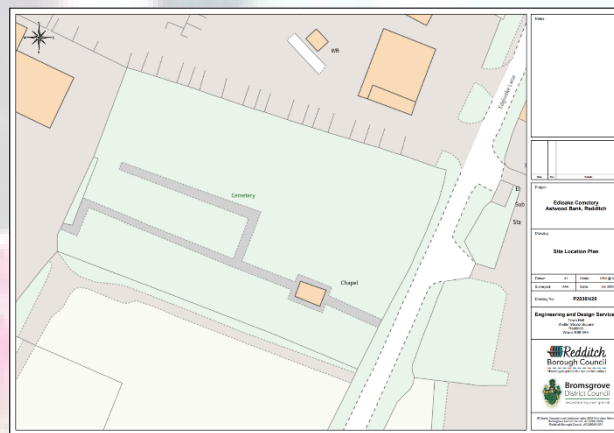


Image 3. Plymouth Road Cemetery



A photograph of a cemetery with rows of headstones in the background and pink tulips in the foreground. The image is slightly blurred, giving it a soft, ethereal feel. The tulips are in sharp focus in the lower left, while the headstones recede into the distance.

Financing Extensions

Future financing of cemetery extensions will be progressed through existing Capital Budgets. At the exploratory stage of considering a cemetery extension a business case will be prepared detailing full projected costings. These will then be considered and built into the existing Capital Budget for agreement by members at an appropriate committee. This will ensure that prior to an extension project starting the funds are set aside solely for this purpose and will therefore allow the seamless completion of the project.

Theme 2 - Reclaiming Graves

Redditch Borough Council operate under the Local Authorities Cemeteries Order 1977, in that burial authorities may “reclaim” rights in reserved graves purchased at least 75 years ago if the rights have not been exercised and the relevant notice has been given. As of the start of this burial strategy, the bereavement services team are beginning a project to go through all purchased plots which have not been used and also have lapsed a 75 year time period in order to establish a communication list to all relevant grave owners through council communication channels and appropriate signage. Stage 1 will be to carry out a thorough desktop survey of all records in order to assess how many graves qualify for this, followed by physical assessments of the grounds and an established report to members detailing findings for each cemetery. Sites with the lowest remaining capacity will take priority, with other sites to follow under the same process.



Theme 3 - Fees & Charges

As of 1st April 2025, our current fees and charges for burials are shown via the link below

Redditch [Fees and Charges](#)

These fees and charges are created on a twofold basis for Bereavement Services, via utilising the Competition and Markets Authority guidance and the Council internal governance policies. To address the price and service transparency concerns identified during the [2019 to 2020 investigation into the funeral sector](#), the Competition and Markets Authority made a legally binding Order, the [Funerals Market Investigation Order 2021](#). This places various requirements on funeral directors as well as cemetery and crematorium operators. On top of each year, fees and charges are reviewed as part of the Council's budget setting process – usually to reflect an increase in line with RPI inflation, this helps identify budget pressures, priorities and future works.

The council also annually bench marks its fees and charges against a range of similar size neighbouring councils and select few commercial operators. This process makes sur that the public are always charges a fair and transparent fee for the services on offer.



Theme 4 - Management Rules & Regulations

Rules and Regulations formally apply to all active cemeteries, giving agreed powers to the burial authority in the safe management of burial interments, memorial installations, unauthorised tribute management, anti social behaviour and any other disturbance, memorial safety and site safety. The rules and regulations will be reviewed on an annual basis in line with the financial year change, and any changes put forward shall be agreed by the burial authority officers in post at that time. All stakeholders ie, funeral directors and stonemasons will receive an electronic copy of set regulations, as well as having physical copies at relevant reception points.

Theme 5 - Grounds Maintenance

Grounds maintenance operations within our cemeteries are carried out following good horticultural practice, using suitable machinery and are carried out when weather permits.

Grass cutting shall take place between the months of March and October on a sequence put in place by the service's place team co-ordinator, careful consideration will be given to areas most frequently visited, in particularly the lawned areas surrounding the crematorium building and scattering areas. Selected areas shall be left for wildlife enhancement across all active cemeteries. Older sections which no longer have new grave space and are less frequently visited will be cut on a lesser sequence.

Weed control shall be in place across all active sites, particularly on hard surface areas which are frequently used e.g. the entrance drive to the crematorium building and all public footpaths. A non-selective herbicide shall be used on 2 occasions per annum at the beginning and midway point through the grass cutting season when weather permits.

Litter picking shall be carried out at least once per week across all cemeteries and litter bins shall be checked twice weekly and changed when required.

Tree maintenance shall be carried out on request from officers or members of the public to the reception point, a monthly site inspection shall be carried out by management or site supervisors who will raise any issues as and when necessary.

It is the aim of the Bereavement Services team to look at bio-diversity enhancements, management plans and potential funding and awards such as Green Flag and potential Arboretum status.

Theme 6 - Memorial Safety



At the creation point of this burial strategy, a memorial programme was in its design phase with an aim to have officers suitably trained by the autumn period of 2025. A clear strategy across all cemeteries will be mapped out with officers carrying out regular inspections and uploading detailed risk assessments accordingly on the service's appropriate software.

It is recognised that any work progressed within our cemeteries requires to be completed in a sensitive and respectful manner, this has and will continue to be a priority for council officers and our contractors. It is a requirement for any stonemason carrying out work within the councils cemeteries, that they are BRAMM registered (The British Register of Accredited Memorial Masons) operating to the British Standard 8415 and have been working to the NAMM (National Association of Memorial Masons) code of conduct. It is the councils aim to develop a memorial mason registration scheme which will require any stonemason wanting to carry out work in one of Redditch Borough Council cemeteries to be signed up to. This will ensure that Redditch Borough Council knows who is working within the cemeteries and will allow for ad hoc inspections of work to be carried out to ensure safety and best practice is maintained.

Theme 7- Memorialisation

Redditch Borough Council offers a range of memorial items in all of its cemeteries, items and lease details are in the table below. Prices are reviewed by members annually.

Memorial Item	Lease period
Memorial bench (Wooden/Composite/Metal) with inscription	20 years
Book of remembrance	No lease
Wall (outdoor/indoor) and planter plaques	5/10/20 year options
Memorial leaves	3 years

At the creation stage of this strategy, the services memorial options are under review with intention of acquiring new options for bereaved families.



Theme 8 - Evolving & Developing Burial Systems

The Bereavement Services team within Redditch Borough Council will be adopting a new Abavus system in the summer of 2025 in line with wider council departments which will enhance both the staff and customers experience in being able to use a more efficient and user-friendly software. This system will collaborate with the services current internally built system to extract essential historic data from all of the council's sites, as well as incorporate a GIS mapping system for burial plots, a genealogy section, an improved funeral booking system, memorial details, as well as environmental and local service updates. The aim of this will be to bring the local community and its stakeholders on to a portal in which will be easy to use and understand, as well as making enquiries more efficient and time saving for staff.

The council holds and will maintain up to date ledgers for exclusive rights of burial and grave registers. Cremation paperwork will also remain in paper form within the councils archive room for a period of 15 years in line with GDPR responsibilities. Maps will still be kept up to date in paper form as well as on the councils newly developed Abavus system.

Actions Table

Theme	Action	Anticipated Start Date	Completion Date
Theme 1 - Cemeteries and capacity	For noting	Ongoing	Ongoing
Theme 2 - Reclaiming lairs	Reviewing all cemeteries and assessments made.	June 2025	Ongoing
Theme 3 - Fees and Charges	For noting	1 st April each year	1 st April each year
Theme 4 – Rules and Regulations	Reviewed annually	1 st April each year	1 st April each year
Theme 5 - Grounds Maintenance	Biodiversity and grounds maintenance management plan to be created	Summer 2026	Summer 2028
Theme 6 - Memorial Safety	Memorial safety programme created, and all relevant staff trained with qualification.	October 2025	April 2026
Theme 7 – Memorialisation	Memorialisation audit conducted, review of current products and new memorials selected for options.	Winter 2025	Winter 2026
Theme 8 - Evolving and developing burial systems	Abavus software launched. Data capture carried out from old system. GIS mapping system in place.	Summer 2025	Summer 2026