

Cemetery Policy

2026



Contents

	Page
Introduction	1
2 Background	
2.1 Cemeteries and Closed Churchyards	2
2.2 Legislation	3
2.3 Cemetery Records	3
3 Behaviour in Cemeteries	4
4 Definitions	
4.1 Deed of Grant	5
4.2 Exclusive Right of Burial	5
4.3 Transfer of Ownership	5
4.4 Notice of Interment	6
5 Management of Grave Spaces	
5.1 Purchased Graves	7
5.2 Unpurchased Graves	7
5.3 Pre-purchased Graves	7
5.4 Flowers	8
6 Interments	
6.1 Hours of Interments	9
6.2 Funeral Directors	9
6.3 Certificates	9
6.4 Notice of Interment	10
6.5 Interment Vessels	10
6.6 Officials Presence at Interments	10
7 Burials	
7.1 Pre-Burial Preparations	11
7.2 Post-Burial Arrangements	11
7.3 Grave Space Maintenance	12
7.4 Children's Section	13
7.5 Natural Glade Burials	13
8 Ashes	
8.1 Pre-Interment Preparation	15
8.2 Garden of Rest	15
8.3 Memorial Rose and Shrub Gardens	16
8.4 Sanctums	16
8.5 Lawn Birches	17
9 Memorials	
9.1 Installation of Memorials	18
9.2 Memorial Safety and Upkeep	19
9.3 Types of Memorials	19
10 Climate Change	23
11 Chapel Services	23
12 Exhumations	24
13 Fees & Charges	25
Appendix A- Memorial Inspection and Safety Policy	26

Introduction

The burial grounds in Stevenage provide attractive and peaceful green spaces for all visitors to enjoy, whether for remembering a loved one or to simply take some time for quiet reflection.

All visitors are welcome to our cemeteries, and we ask that everyone respects the peace, dignity and reverence of these facilities, as well as other users, and we thank you in advance for your consideration.

This policy sets out the principles of how Stevenage Borough Council (the 'Council') will manage the cemeteries to ensure that they are safe, accessible, and sustainable.

This policy seeks to provide a balance between respecting the rights and choices of the individual, while also meeting the need for providing safe and tidy cemeteries that everyone can enjoy.

This policy has been agreed by the Council's Executive Committee and will be reviewed as required in response to changes in legislation or other guidance.

2. Background

2.1 Cemeteries and Churchyards

The Council's cemeteries are open to the public 365 days a year.

The sites to which this policy relates are:

- Almond Lane Cemetery,
- Weston Road Cemetery,

2.1.1 Almond Lane Cemetery

This cemetery has both a traditional layout with full kerb-sets and lawn sections, which are divided into Established Church, Roman Catholic, and Dissenter or Non-conformist.

Almond Lane Cemetery also has:

- a natural burial ground for both burials and ashes interments
- Sanctums
- Garden of Rest
- Rose Gardens
- Shrub Gardens.

The Sanctums, Garden of Rest, Rose and Shrub Gardens are for ashes interments only.

2.1.2 Weston Road Cemetery

This is a lawn cemetery with sections divided into Established Church, Dissenter or Non-conformist.

Weston Road Cemetery also has:

- A Muslim section
- Children's section
- Gardens of Rest
- Rose Gardens
- Shrub Gardens
- Lawn Birches - an ashes scattering area.

The Garden of Rest, Rose and Shrub Gardens are for ashes interments only.

2.1.3 The Council also manage and maintain two churchyards in Stevenage:

- **St Nicholas Churchyard**
The Churchyard is immediately adjacent to the Weston Road Cemetery. It is a closed churchyard, meaning that there are no further grave spaces available for new burials.

St Nicholas Churchyard is designated as a Local Wildlife Site and the Council manages the grounds sympathetically to its status.

- **St Mary's Churchyard**
This is a closed churchyard, meaning that there are no further grave spaces available for new burials.

2.2 Legislation

There is a range of legislation that applies to burials and the management of cemeteries. The Cemetery Regulations, and this policy, are based upon legislation including:

- Local Government Act 1972
- Local Authorities' Cemeteries Order 1977
- Health & Safety at Work Act 1974
- Environmental Protection Act 1990

2.3 Cemetery Records

All the statutory burial records for Almonds Lane and Weston Road Cemeteries are held at:

Weston Road Cemetery	and	Stevenage Borough Council
Weston Road		Cavendish Road
Stevenage		Stevenage
Herts.		Herts.
SG1 3RP		SG1 2ET

A map is available to help in locating a grave or ashes plot.

3. Behaviour in Cemeteries

- 3.1 The burial grounds in Stevenage provide attractive, peaceful green spaces for all visitors to enjoy, whether for remembering a loved one or to simply take some time for quiet reflection.
- 3.2 All visitors are welcome to our cemeteries, and we ask that everyone behaves in an appropriate manner:
- All visitors shall behave in a quiet, orderly, and respectful manner
 - Visitors shall not cause a nuisance or interfere with any burial taking place or any grave or memorial
 - All visitors shall make full and appropriate use of the recycling facilities provided on site
 - No sports or games or discharge of firearms (unless at a military funeral) are permitted
 - Any person, who damages, defaces or destroys any property or causes a nuisance in the cemeteries may be prosecuted
 - Dogs are permitted in the cemetery grounds provided they are kept on a suitable lead and under control at all times. Owners, or handlers, must take full responsibility for their animal and must observe appropriate standards of behaviour and cleanliness
 - Dogs, with the exception of assistance dogs, or any other animals are not permitted in the cemetery buildings without the prior agreement of the Cemetery Officer.
 - Vehicles must not exceed 10 miles an hour and must use the one way system
 - Vehicles must not park on any grassed area
 - Vehicles may be prevented from entering the cemeteries during maintenance work
 - Children under 11 years of age must be accompanied by a responsible person
 - No demonstrations of any kind are allowed
 - Drinking of alcohol is prohibited within the cemetery buildings and grounds

4. Definitions

Making arrangements for the interment of a loved one can be highly emotional and stressful. In addition to the personal bereavement there are lots of legal terms and processes that need to be followed. Here we will try and provide some simple explanations of common terminology associated with interments.

4.1 Deed of Grant

The Deed of Grant is an important legal document, and this should be stored in a safe place. It confirms that you are the current legal owner of the Right of Burial in a named grave.

The Deed of Grant (the 'Deed') needs to be produced when an interment takes place. Where this is not reasonably possible, any person whom the Council considers to be entitled to request that the grave may be opened may do so by making a Statutory Declaration and giving indemnity to the Council.

The Deed can be purchased at the time of arranging an interment or, in the case of a child's grave, it can be purchased after the burial has taken place.

The Council currently grants a Deed for a period of 50 years for graves and 50 years for ashes interments in the Garden of Rest and Rose Gardens.

It is the responsibility of the Deed of Grant holder to keep the cemetery office informed of any changes to contact details.

4.2 Exclusive Right of Burial

The Deed of Grant holder has the exclusive right to determine who can be buried in the grave space for which they hold the Deed.

Only the owner of the Exclusive Rights of burial, or their personal representative, can authorise the reopening of the grave space. This authorisation must be received in writing.

4.3 Transfer of Ownership

The Transfer of Ownership of a Deed of Grant for Exclusive Right of Burial is a legal process and is usually required when the owner of the grave space has been interred within the grave for which they hold the Deed.

No further burials, interments, memorials, or changes to memorials are allowed until ownership has been transferred. The new owner must demonstrate ownership of the grave by producing:

- a will
- grant of probate
- letters of administration or a Statutory Declaration witnessed by an authorised court official, a Commissioner of Oaths, a magistrate or solicitor to prove that they are the next of kin.

A fee is payable for a Transfer of Ownership; if ownership is not transferred on the death of the owner, the grave space will be considered unavailable for further interments.

4.4 Notice of Interment

This is a Council document that is often completed by the funeral director. It sets out the details of the funeral, including date and time, details of the deceased, together with the status and details of the grave space.

The completed form must be returned to the Council at least 2 days (48 hours) prior to the funeral.

5. Management of Grave Spaces

Burials are only allowed in the designated areas.

5.1 Purchased Grave Spaces

Graves are allocated by section consistent with the plan of the cemetery; however, there may be a choice regarding the position of the available graves and arrangements can be made to meet a member of staff to view available and appropriate graves.

5.2 Unpurchased Grave Spaces

An unpurchased grave, sometimes also known as a 'public' or 'common' grave, is where the Exclusive Right of Burial Grant has not been purchased and effectively remains with the Council.

More than one interment may take place in the grave, and maybe of unrelated persons.

The Council will place a small plaque on the grave space to identify the person(s) interred there. No memorials of any kind (including, but not limited to, planting, flowers, vases, crosses, pictures, kerbings) are permitted on non-purchased grave spaces and any such item may be removed without prior notice.

5.3 Pre-purchased Grave Spaces

Pre-purchased graves, sometimes known as 'reserved plots' are graves which have been purchased by families before someone's death.

Offering families and individuals the ability to pre-purchase provides some peace of mind and will help to alleviate any anxiety felt by those that are terminally ill or have no next of kin available to make funeral arrangements on their behalf.

The Council will make approximately 10 graves available each year for pre-purchase in Weston Road cemetery, this number will be reviewed annually and may be varied depending on the amount of burial capacity.

The Exclusive Right of Burial Grant will be for a period of 20 years to assist keeping in touch with the purchaser and to help understand our burial demands and capacity for the future.

If the plot remains unused at the expiry of the 20-year period families will be offered the opportunity to renew the Exclusive Right of Burial Grant for a further 20 years. If the plot has become occupied the family will be offered the opportunity to renew the Exclusive Right of Burial Grant for 50 years upon expiry of the 20-year Grant.

An additional fee of £1000 will be charged for pre-purchased graves.

5.4 Flowers

Cemetery staff will remove all fresh flowers once they have withered and will dispose of them through recycling.

6. Interments

6.1 Hours of Interments

6.1.1 Interments can take place between the following hours:

All Year	Monday to Thursday	9.30am – 2.30pm
	Friday	9.30am – 2.00pm

6.1.2 The appointed times for funerals must be strictly observed to prevent inconvenience to other funerals.

Late arrivals may incur additional charges and the funeral may have to be postponed or rearranged. Any funeral arriving at a time other than that appointed, must act under the Council's directions.

6.1.3 Burials may also be possible on a Saturday, subject to availability of cemeteries staff, and will incur an additional charge.

6.2 Funeral Directors

6.2.1 Funeral directors must observe the "Instructions to Funeral Directors" issued by the Federation of Burial and Cremation Authorities, or other authorised instruction.

6.2.2 Funeral directors are responsible for arranging sufficient bearers to carry and lower the coffin in a dignified, and reverent manner. The Council is unable to supply additional bearers.

We understand that family members, and friends often wish to assist with this and we respect that decision. Any mourners who do assist with the bearing or lowering of the coffin do so at their own risk.

6.3 Certificates

6.3.1 A Registrar's / Coroner's Certificate (for burials) or Certificate of Cremation (for ashes) must be presented, by hand, to the overseeing Council Officer in advance of the interment taking place.

The certificate should not be sent through the postal system, and the Council will not accept any liability for certificates sent by post and subsequently lost.

6.3.2 No burial will be permitted within the cemetery grounds without the Registrar's / Coroner's Certificate (for burials) or Certificate of Cremation (for ashes).

6.4 Notice of Interment

- 6.4.1 A completed Notice of Interment (the 'Notice') must be received not less than two working days before the day the burial is due to take place.
- 6.4.2 The Notice must be signed by the grave owner or their personal representative. The Council will not accept responsibility for the accuracy of the details contained in the Notice of Interment.
- 6.4.3 The Council will not accept verbal instructions.
- 6.4.4 Once the Notice has been accepted no alteration to the arrangements will be allowed, with the exception of the time of the burial. In this case, notice should be given to the Council at least 24 hours before the original time of burial is due to take place.

6.5 Interment Vessels

- 6.5.1 The Council will only accept coffins, caskets and shrouds for burial.
- 6.5.2 A nameplate should be fixed to each coffin or casket.

6.6 Attendance at Interments by Officials

- 6.6.1 An interment can take place with or without a religious service. It is the responsibility of the bereaved family or the funeral director to arrange for an appropriate authorised person to officiate at the burial.
- 6.6.2 The Cemeteries Team will accommodate all faiths, and their beliefs / needs, where possible and practical to do so.
- 6.6.3 Weston Road Cemetery provides a dedicated Muslim section. Where possible there should be a nominated Muslim community representative present to ensure the smooth running of all Muslim burials.
- 6.6.4 There will be a Council officer present at every funeral to oversee the delivery of the interment. They will maintain a discreet presence to ensure that everything is in place.

7. Burials

7.1 Pre-Burial Preparation

- 7.1.1 A grave space subject to an Exclusive Right of Burial would usually be expected to allow up to three interments.

It is traditional to have one burial interment in each Muslim grave and the Council will respect this tradition. If the family would prefer a deeper grave for two or three burial interments this must be made clear at the time of booking the first interment.

Occasionally soil or ground conditions may necessitate a reduction in the numbers of interments possible in a used grave or may prevent a burial taking place in a pre-purchased grave. The Council will not accept liability or responsibility in these circumstances.

More than one burial at any one time in a grave will need to be authorised by the Council, and authorisation is required for each interment.

- 7.1.2 When any grave is re-opened for another burial, no person shall disturb or remove any human remains already interred.
- 7.1.3 Graves can only be excavated by someone appointed to do so by the Council.
- 7.1.4 Prior to a funeral the grave will be excavated and dressed in artificial matting.

The excess soil may be placed on the nearest adjacent area. Space restrictions sometimes mean this may be another grave space. Where this is the case, grave adornments will be removed, the grave covered prior to placement of the soil, and the area reinstated following the burial. The grave owner or the family will be informed wherever possible.

- 7.1.5 The cemetery staff will have a discreet presence at the burial to ensure that everything is in place.

7.2 Post Burial Arrangements

- 7.2.1 Once the mourners have left the graveside the grave will be backfilled. The Council's cemetery staff will return the soil to the grave.
- 7.2.2 We understand that families and mourners may wish to return the soil to the grave themselves and spades will be provided to support this.

Great care should be taken to ensure that mourners are not injured whilst returning the soil to the grave, and therefore up to four people may do this at any one time.

- 7.2.3 Once the soil has reached the appropriate level within the grave the cemetery staff are required to remove the support shoring from around the top of the grave. At this time the family and mourners will be politely asked to step back from the area momentarily whilst this is carried out. They will be advised when they are able to continue the back-fill safely.
- 7.2.4 The soil on the grave will be left mounded to allow for natural settlement in the weeks following the interment. When settlement is complete, the Council will level the soil and grass seed the grave space.
- 7.2.5 On completion of the backfilling, the cemetery staff will tidy the area and remove any excess soil.

7.3 Grave Space Maintenance

- 7.3.1 The Council will maintain the lawn area of all graves. However, the owner (with the Deed of Grant) is responsible for the management and maintenance of any memorial on the grave.
- 7.3.2 In order to ensure access for ease of maintenance, grave space owners are permitted to place fresh, seasonal plants and flowers within 150mm (6 inches) of the front edge on the memorial foundation at the head of the grave. Owners are encouraged to maintain this area themselves in order that the Council's cemetery staff does not have to disturb any items in the course of their maintenance activities.

No other items are allowed on and around the grave space.

- 7.3.3 Fresh floral arrangements will be removed from all graves when they have withered, and these will be disposed through recycling.
- 7.3.4 Any item(s) placed outside the permitted area will be removed without prior notice.
- 7.3.5 Any items left on a grave, are left at the owner's risk; the council does not accept any responsibility for loss or damage to those items.
- 7.3.6 The Council may remove any material or inscription on the grounds of taste, decency or possible offence to any person, faith or community.

7.4 Children's Section

- 7.4.1 The Children's Section at Weston Road Cemetery is available for interments of children aged up to 16 years.
- 7.4.2 Memorials in the children's area will be subject to approval, and permanent memorials may only be erected where the Grant of Exclusive Right of Burial has been purchased.

7.5 Natural Burial Glade

- 7.5.1 The Council manages (the Glade) to provide an alternative to the more traditional style of burial spaces. The grass within this space will not always be kept short and may therefore appear wilder and more natural at times.
- 7.5.2 We understand that families may wish to plant a tree on each grave or ashes plot. However, this is not appropriate as trees need a space to establish and grow to their full potential.
- 7.5.3 Any new tree planting will be undertaken at the discretion of the cemetery team, and the species will be chosen to suit the location.

In accordance with best practice, trees will be planted during the winter months, when the trees are dormant.

- 7.5.4 Only single depth interments are available within the Glade.
- 7.5.5 Shroud burials, biodegradable coffins, caskets, and their linings, including, but not limited to, cardboard, wicker, or soft woods, shall be accepted in this burial space.

Ashes may be buried within this area or scattered loose.

- 7.5.6 The Council requests that bodies are not embalmed due to the possible pollution caused by introducing formaldehyde to the soil. We understand that this may sometimes be unavoidable but request that Funeral Directors inform the cemetery team in advance so that due consideration can be given.
- 7.5.7 The only items that may be placed on the burial spaces in the Glade are fresh cut flowers. All cellophane, ribbons and non-biodegradable wrapping must be removed.
- 7.5.8 Cemetery staff will remove all fresh flowers when they have withered and will dispose of them through recycling.

7.5.9 No other items (including, but not restricted to, vases, crosses, wind chimes and trinkets) are permitted to be placed on or around the trees or burial spaces. The Council reserves the right to remove any items, without prior notice.

7.5.10 Any items left on the graves and ashes plots are left at the owner's risk and the Council does not accept any responsibility.

7.5.11 The Council reserves the right to remove any trees that are not flourishing in order to allow others to develop to their full potential.

8. Ashes

8.1 Pre-Interment Preparation

- 8.1.1 A grave space subject to an Exclusive Right of Burial would usually be expected to allow up to a maximum of six interments of ashes within each grave space.

A Children's section grave will hold up to two interments of ashes.

A Garden of Rest plot will hold up to two interments of ashes.

A Memorial Rose or Shrub Garden plot will hold up to two interments of ashes.

A Sanctum will hold up to two ashes inurnments.

Occasionally soil or ground conditions may necessitate a reduction in the numbers of interments possible in a used grave/plot or may prevent a burial of ashes taking place in a pre-purchased grave/plot. The Council will not accept liability or responsibility in these circumstances.

More than one interment at any one time will need to be authorised by the Council, and authorisation is required for each interment.

- 8.1.2 When any grave is re-opened for another burial no person shall disturb or remove any human remains already interred.
- 8.1.3 Graves can only be excavated by someone appointed to do so by the Council.

8.2 Garden of Rest

- 8.2.1 The Garden of Rest is an area set aside solely for the interment of cremated remains. A maximum of two interments, and one memorial, are permitted to each plot.

- 8.2.2 The memorial will be affixed to the base slab provided by the Council.

- 8.2.3 No other items are permitted in the Garden of Rest, and any item placed there may be removed without prior notice.

- 8.2.4 Memorials in the Garden of Rest will be subject to approval and permanent memorials may only be erected where the Grant of Exclusive Right of Burial has been purchased.

- 8.2.5 Any items placed in the Garden of Rest are left at the owners risk and the Council does not accept any responsibility.

8.3 Memorial Rose & Shrub Gardens

- 8.3.1 These Gardens are set aside solely for the interment of cremated remains. A maximum of two interments, one rose or shrub, and one name plaque are permitted to each plot.
- 8.3.2 A list of available roses and shrubs, and a list of plaque inscriptions, will be provided for the families to choose from. The Council will determine the planting position in the gardens.
- 8.3.3 No other items are permitted in the Memorial Rose & Shrub Gardens, and any item placed there may be removed without prior notice.
- 8.3.4 A replacement rose, shrub or plaque can be provided on request. A fee may be payable for this service.

8.4 Sanctums

- 8.4.1 Sanctums (above-ground ashes vaults) may be leased from the Council for a period of 25 years.
- 8.4.2 The leaseholder has the right for their ashes to be placed within the ashes vault, space permitting, during the period of the lease.
- 8.4.3 All caskets/containers shall be of a non-biodegradable material and must not exceed 305mm (12 inches) in height.
- 8.4.4 A floral tribute of freshly cut flowers may be placed in the flower vase provided. Cemetery staff will remove all fresh flowers when they have withered and will dispose of them through recycling.
- 8.4.5 No other items are permitted on, or around, the ashes vault and any item placed there may be removed without prior notice.
- 8.4.6 Unauthorised items placed on or around the ashes vault may cause damage or staining to the stonework. Should any unauthorised items cause damage or staining, the leaseholder will be responsible for the cost of cleaning or replacing the memorial vault.
- 8.4.7 The lease of the ashes vault may be renewed for an additional 25 years. The Council will contact the leaseholder prior to the lease period ending, using the contact details on file. The renewed lease will be payable at the fees appropriate at the date of renewal.

- 8.4.8 If the lease is not renewed, the leaseholder may arrange for the ashes to be collected from the Cemetery Office or elect for them to be scattered within the Lawn Birches area at Weston Road Cemetery. The inscribed tablet can be collected from the Cemetery Office at Weston Road.
- 8.4.9 Six months prior to the end of the lease period the Council will endeavour to make contact with the leaseholder to establish future arrangements. However, if the Council is unable to make contact, or in the absence of any instructions, both the cremated remains and the inscribed tablet will be removed, and the cremated remains will be scattered within the Lawn Birches area at Weston Road cemetery. The inscribed tablet will be removed and disposed of.
- 8.4.10 While the Council will make all reasonable efforts to make contact with the leaseholder(s) from the details provided, it is the responsibility of the leaseholder (s) to ensure the lease is renewed. The Council will accept no responsibility for action taken in the absence of ownership.
- 8.4.11 Where the lease is held in joint names, on the death of one owner, the Rights automatically transfer to the surviving named leaseholder.
- 8.4.12 Upon the death of the sole leaseholder, the person who has been nominated to assume responsibility must inform the Council giving their full details including contact information.

8.5 Lawn Birches

- 8.5.1 This area, at Weston Road Cemetery, is set aside solely for the scattering of cremated remains.
- 8.5.2 Scattering is only permitted from the original crematorium container, or from a scattering urn provided by the Council. For the latter, the ashes shall be given to the Cemeteries Officer in advance of the booking date so that they can be transferred into the scattering urn.
- 8.5.3 Fresh cut flowers are permitted within this area, but any cellophane, ribbons and non-biodegradable wrapping must be removed.
- 8.5.4 Cemetery staff will remove all fresh flowers when they have withered and will dispose of them through recycling.
- 8.5.5 No other items are permitted within the Lawn Birches, and any item placed there may be removed without prior notice.
- 8.5.6 Once the ashes have been scattered an exhumation is not possible.

9. Memorials

Memorials are only permitted on purchased grave spaces. No memorial is permitted on an un-purchased area without the Council's written consent.

Kerbstones, border stones, fencing, and marble, glass or stone clippings are not permitted in the lawn sections of the cemeteries.

The following items are not permitted to be left anywhere within the cemetery grounds:

- glass vases or any other glass item
- food and drink, including alcohol
- fencing, edging or borders of any kind
- any item deemed, by the Cemeteries Team, to be offensive or dangerous
- any item placed in or on trees

Temporary wooden markers or crosses can be placed at the head of a purchased grave until such time as a permanent memorial is erected. The marker must not exceed 914mm (3 foot) in height and 456mm (1 foot 6 inches) in width and can be inscribed with the name of the deceased and their birth and death dates.

9.1 Installation of Memorials

- 9.1.1 Before any monument or stone is erected, repaired or any inscription is cut or altered, an application must be made to the Council, a permit received and approval granted. Memorial masons will not be permitted to work in the Council's cemeteries without the necessary approvals being in place.
- 9.1.2 Fixing or removing memorials is only permitted Monday to Friday 7:30am – 4.00pm.
- 9.1.3 Only Memorial and Stone Masons registered with, and meeting the standards of, the British Register of Accredited Memorial Masons (BRAMM) or the National Association of Memorial Masons (NAMM) are permitted to erect memorials within the Stevenage cemeteries. This also applies to memorials being reinstated after their removal to permit an interment or to allow for additional inscriptions.
- 9.1.4 As a minimum standard all memorial work, including fixing, shall be carried out in accordance with the Code of Practice of the BRAMM Blue Book, NAMM Code of Working Practice and British Standards, BS 8415, current at the time of fixing.
- 9.1.5 Any new memorial must have the grave number and section clearly and conspicuously engraved upon the base in figures not more than 20mm high. Only

the name of the stonemason may be cut in a similar position in letters not more than 15mm high. The Council will arrange for any memorial not inscribed in this way to be removed, and the costs recharged to the holder of the Deed of Grant.

- 9.1.6 Masons are required to liaise with the Cemeteries Officer prior to undertaking any works on site.
- 9.1.7 Masons are requested to remove all spare soil or other materials and leave the ground to the Council's satisfaction. They will be responsible for any damage done by them or their workmen. All work must be completed in a timely way without disturbance to other graves, and the mason may not leave the site until the installation of the memorial is completed.
- 9.1.8 The Council reserves the right to refuse any inscription on the grounds of taste, decency, or possible offence to any person, faith or community.

9.2 Memorial Safety and Upkeep

- 9.2.1 The maintenance and upkeep of all monuments and headstones is the responsibility of the Deed of Grant holder. The Council requires that monuments and headstones be kept in good and safe repair at all times.

The Council will undertake a survey of every memorial to ensure that they are in a stable condition and do not pose any immediate danger to visitors and staff working in the cemeteries.

- 9.2.2 At least every five years a visual and stability check will be undertaken. If significant movement of a memorial is detected, or it is deemed unsafe, the memorial will be laid down for safety reasons and we will endeavour to contact the grave owner to inform them.
- 9.2.3 The Council will not be held responsible for memorials damaged through any cause whatsoever, nor for any injury or damage caused by them. Adequate insurance cover should be taken out by the grave owner at the time of purchase and current at all times.

9.3 Types of Memorials

9.3.1 Lawn Sections

All memorials in the grave sections of Weston Road Cemetery and the lawn sections of Almond Lane cemetery (Sections - BB, H, G and K) must be a headstone or cross-type memorial, of marble, granite or nebresina, not exceeding 914mm (3 foot) in height (including the base), 761mm (2 foot 6 inches) and 101mm (4 inches) deep.

9.3.2 Almond Lane

Headstones and Kerbstones in Sections A, B, C, D, E, F, FF, G and R must be a maximum area of 2,135mm (7 foot) x 915mm (3 foot) for an adult grave space, and 1,220mm (4 foot) x 610mm (2 foot) for a child's grave space.

Planting is permitted within these graves.

9.3.3 Garden of Rest

A base slab, approximately 510mm (20 inches) x 455mm (18 inches), will be provided by the Council. One memorial is permitted. The memorial will not exceed 455mm (18 inches) high x 405mm (16 inches) wide x 75mm (3 inches) deep

The base stone will not exceed the dimensions of the base slab and should be no more than 50mm (2 inches) thick. 510mm (20 inches) x 457mm (18 inches) x 50mm (2 inches) thick.

9.3.4 Memorial Walls

The memorial walls are placed around the rose and shrub gardens where memorial plaques and flower vases can be placed in memory of loved ones.

The plaque and flower vase will be placed on the wall for a period of 5 years with the option to renew for a further period.

The Council may remove any material or inscription which is deemed to have fallen into disrepair.

Any items left on the memorial walls are left at the owners risk and the Council does not accept any responsibility.

9.3.5 Memorial Benches

The Council will purchase and locate memorial benches and these will be maintained by the Council.

Plaques may be purchased and installed to a memorial bench for a period of 10 years, with the ongoing option to renew the agreement.

No items are to be placed on or around the memorial benches and any such item may be removed without prior notice.

Maintenance of memorial benches privately purchased, through historical permissions, are the responsibility of the purchaser. When staining the bench the purchaser must use a dark oak stain, and warning notices must be in place until such time as the stain / treatment has completely dried.

The Council will undertake regular inspections of all memorial benches, and any that are deemed unsafe will be removed. All reasonable efforts will be made to inform the purchaser if a bench is removed.

9.3.6 Memorial Trees

Families can sponsor a tree to be planted in either of our cemeteries and a list of appropriate species and suitable locations will be provided.

Cemeteries staff will liaise with the sponsor to agree the location of the tree, but due to the layout and ongoing management of the cemeteries, it may not be possible to deliver the preferred location of the sponsor.

The cost of a memorial tree includes the supply of the chosen tree, planting and the first year's maintenance, including watering. Families are encouraged to water the tree when they are on site to assist with the trees establishment and health.

In accordance with best practice, trees will be planted during the winter months when the trees are dormant.

The Council will not accept responsibility or liability in the case of a tree being damaged or dying, unless this is shown to be due to negligence by the Council.

Damaged memorial trees we will be replaced during the next planting season. This may require a further payment to cover cost and maintenance of the new tree.

Dedication of a memorial tree does not give the donor any right to determine or influence the future management of the specific tree in any way. Should the memorial tree become a risk to property or people, removal will be considered, although all options will be explored to avoid this.

No items are to be placed on or around the memorial tree other than the authorised memorial plaque. Any item(s) placed there may be removed without prior notice.

9.3.7 Memorial Plaques - Trees

Plaques dedicated to a loved one shall be purchased from the Council either in conjunction with a Memorial Tree or to be placed at the foot of an existing tree in either of the cemeteries.

The price of the plaque will be given upon application, as the price may vary due to the length of the inscription.

If the plaque should deteriorate the cemetery team can arrange for a replacement, and a fee may be charged.

9.3.8 Book of Remembrance

There is a Book of Remembrance at both the Weston Road and Almond Lane cemeteries.

Entries will be displayed Monday to Friday.

Entries that fall on a Saturday, Sunday, or Bank Holiday will not be displayed.

Arrangements can be made to view these entries during weekdays.

The inscription will be the full name of the deceased and the date of their birth and death and may be entered on any date requested.

In addition to the standard inscription, it is possible to include an entry of a short verse. The verse can be up to four lines in length, with a maximum of 32 letters per line.

9.3.9 The Mulberry Memorial Tree

The Mulberry Memorial Tree is a memorial tree, positioned in the centre of Weston Road cemetery surrounded by rose and shrub gardens. A leaf can be purchased to hang from the tree in commemoration of a loved one.

A maximum of 4 lines of inscription are available.

The leaf will be displayed on the tree for a period of 5 years. There is an option to extend the period of display subject to payment of the fee then applicable.

Any leaves which have not been renewed or collected will be removed from the tree and after 3 months will be disposed of sensitively.

No items are to be attached to the tree.

Personalisation of the area, flowers and/or personal items are not permitted. The Council will remove such items.

The Council reserves the right to remove the leaf should there be a breach of these conditions.

If the leaf is removed by the Council for breach of condition no refund of the fee paid shall be made to the purchaser.

The Council reserves the right to refuse any inscription that is deemed to be unacceptable for display in a public place.

10. Climate Change

- 10.1 On 12 June 2019, the Council declared a climate emergency and reconfirmed its long-standing commitment to tackling climate change.
- 10.2 As part of the climate emergency, the Council has set a target to be net carbon neutral by 2030.
- 10.3 The cemeteries team already make use of electric hand tools in their maintenance of the sites.
- 10.4 Future operations and provision of replacement tools, plant, and equipment will seek to deliver a carbon-neutral service by 2030.

11. Chapel Services

- 11.1 The chapel is situated at the Weston Road Cemetery and comfortably seats forty (40) people.
- 11.2 Chapel services are booked for the duration of one hour, exceeding this time may result in additional charges.
- 11.3 The Council does not provide a music system; families should discuss arrangements for playing music with their minister/celebrant.
- 11.4 Families should make contact with the Cemeteries Officer, in advance, if the Council provided music systems are required, to enable to the testing of the music in advance of the service.
- 11.5 Copies of hymn books can be made available for the congregation.

12. Exhumation

- 12.1 Exhumation means the removal from the ground of a body or cremated remains. Any disturbance of remains is deemed to be an exhumation. It is unlawful to disturb any human remains (including any cremated remains) without first obtaining the necessary legal authority.
- 12.2 Once a body or ashes remains have been interred, they can only be removed with permission from the Burial Authority and with a licence granted by the Ministry of Justice.
- 12.3 If the remains are in consecrated ground then permission must be obtained from the Diocesan Court.
- 12.4 An Environmental Health Officer and Cemetery Officer shall be present at all exhumations and will supervise the event to ensure that respect for the deceased person is maintained and that public health is protected.
- 12.5 If the conditions of the licence cannot be met, or there are public health or decency concerns, the exhumation may not proceed.

13. Fees and Charges

- 13.1 Fees are set by the Council and are reviewed and approved annually. The current fees and charges are available on the Council's website at www.stevenage.gov.uk or from the Cemetery Office.
- 13.2 All payments are required in full in advance of the service being provided, unless a funeral director is arranging the funeral.
- 13.3 There is a separate pricing list for non-residents of Stevenage. A resident is considered to be:
- a permanent occupier of a residential property within the borough of Stevenage or a payer of council tax to Stevenage Borough Council at the time of their death.
 - someone who purchased the grave whilst living in the borough or is the spouse of a resident
 - someone who left the borough in the past two years for the purposes of receiving care, nursing, or education
 - a person who has no other place of abode and passes away within the borough – in relation to interments to un-purchased graves only.
- To receive the resident fee for all cemetery services, proof of address will be required. This should be a council tax bill or utility bill.
- 13.4 Only in very exceptional circumstances the Assistant Director, with responsibility for Cemeteries, may approve a request to waive the non-resident fee.
- 13.5 Any coffins or caskets which exceed 1,067mm (42 inches) in width will be charged the equivalent of double burial fees.

Appendix A- Memorial Inspection and Safety Policy

1. Purpose

Stevenage Borough Council is committed to ensuring that no memorial on any grave within its cemeteries presents a foreseeable danger, in any respect, to a cemetery visitor, member of staff, or anyone within the cemetery grounds.

2. Responsibility and Liability

Responsibility for the overall safety (duty of care) within a burial ground lies with the burial authority. Stevenage Borough Council has responsibilities under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Occupiers Liability Act 1957 to ensure that, as far as reasonably practicable, our sites are maintained in a safe condition. This includes ensuring that anyone who enters the cemeteries to carry out work, such as a memorial mason, carries out such work in a safe manner and in such a way that others using the site will not be put at risk.

- Stevenage Borough Council will carry out regular inspections on the existing memorials, at least once every 5 years.
- Where this inspection programme identifies unsafe memorials, the council has a responsibility to ensure such memorials are not a danger to visitors and employees in the cemetery. Where possible, the council will contact the owner, advise them of the problem and ask them to plan with a NAMM and/or BRAMM registered Stonemason to make the memorial permanently safe, usually by having it refixed, in line with BS 8415.
- The council will make any memorial found to be unsafe PERMANENTLY safe within 18 months, either by sinking the stone into the ground or laying the memorial flat. In the interim it will be made temporarily safe by either staking and strapping or laying the memorial flat.

The ground in certain areas of both Almond Lane Cemetery and Weston Road Cemetery have been consecrated in accordance with the rites of the Church of England. The Church, through the local diocesan Consistory Court, has jurisdiction over such ground.

- A faculty will be obtained from the church diocese giving permission for Stevenage Borough Council to carry out inspections and making safe work.
- If a faculty is not forthcoming Stevenage Borough Council will fence off the consecrated areas to prevent access and refer all enquiries to the relevant diocese.

Commonwealth War Grave memorials are not tested but any observable defects will be reported immediately to the Commission.

3. Communication

The Council will:

- Ensure notices are displayed within the Cemetery grounds. This is to warn the public of the potential dangers of memorials, advise the public who to contact with any queries or concerns, advise of inspections taking place and where necessary fulfil our obligations under LACO 1977.
- Release information via social media through the council's communications team
- Inform local Stonemasons of the work being carried out
- When memorials are found to be unstable letters to grave owners will be issued informing them that Stevenage Borough Council are currently carrying out an inspection of memorials under the Health and Safety at work Act 1974 and have found their memorial to be unstable giving 30 days to contact us.
- If we know that the owner of the Exclusive Rights of Burial is deceased and/or it has been 50 years or more since we last had contact with the owner of the Exclusive Rights of Burial, the memorial will be immediately made safe by either sinking the stone into the ground or laying the memorial flat. We will not send letters or attempt other forms of communication in this instance

If a grave owner is unhappy about the authority's decision to identify their memorial as being unstable a meeting can be arranged where they can witness a further inspection of the memorial.

4. Memorials & Fixings

Every memorial, having any upright component (headstone, cross, column) will be subject to memorial inspection. All new memorials, renovated memorials and re-fixed memorials are expected to conform to BS 8415 and to have been affixed by a NAMM and/or BRAMM registered Stonemason. Permit approval will not be given to any Stonemason that is not registered with these organisations.

Weston Road – Lawn Cemetery:

- The grave memorials are placed in a back-to-back arrangement on a concrete foundation beam. The overall height of each grave memorial will not exceed 3' (920mm) including the base. The ground anchor system which is approved by the National Association of Memorial Masons (NAMM), will be used. A 2" (50mm) hole will be drilled 10" (250mm) from the front of the concrete foundation beam to the back to accommodate a 1" stainless steel dowel/anchor, the length of the dowel/anchor to be used is 9" (228mm).

Almond Lane - Lawn Sections

- The overall height of each grave memorial will not exceed 3' (920mm) including the base. The ground anchor system will be used on all memorial stones, new or reopened graves in the lawn sections, the size and length of the anchor will be 1 - 1 1/2 or 30mm - 40mm in diameter; the minimum length will be 20" long (500mm)

Almond Lane - Traditional Sections with Full Kerb Sets

- The overall height of each grave memorial will not exceed 3' (920mm) including the base. All memorial stones fixed to kerb sets will have 2" x 1/2" stainless steel dowels, to be set into the landing and base of the headstone to ensure the headstone is secure. All adhesives and fixings used shall conform to the (BS) mark.
There are a small number of historic memorials within these sections of Almond Lane that exceed 3' (920mm) in height.

Child Section – Weston Road

- A 2" (50mm) hole will be drilled 9" (230mm) from front to back in the centre of the base to the memorial, this will accommodate a 1" stainless steel dowel/anchor, to fix to the concrete foundation beam. Attention shall be given to the careful drilling, filling and sealing of all dowel/anchor holes. The length of the dowel/anchor to be used is 4" (100mm) or 7" (175mm).

Garden of Rest – Weston Road & Almond Lane

- The Garden of Rest the base slab measures 20" x 18" (508mm x 457mm), which is provided by the Council, and thereon will be permitted a maximum of one memorial. The memorial will not exceed 18" x 16" x 3" thick (475mm x 406mm x 76mm) with a maximum height of 18". The base stone must not exceed 20" x 18" x 2" thick (508mm x 457mm x 51 mm).

5. Memorial Inspection

Memorial inspection will follow the recommendations issued by the Ministry of Justice, taking the form of a visual inspection, followed by a hand test to discover any tendency to rock.

Memorials which are found to present any hazard will be dealt with in one of the following ways:

- If there is a very small risk of minor injury, the memorial shall have a sign affixed to it, advising people not to touch.
- If there is a risk of injury, or conceivably death, the memorial will either be staked and strapped or laid down flat.

The Council will attempt to contact the owner of any memorial which is found to be unsafe. The owners of memorials which are found to be unstable, but do not pose a significant health and safety risk, will also be contacted where possible, to advise them of such. These memorials may have warning signs affixed to them, depending upon the degree of risk assessed.

Unsafe memorials, whose owners cannot be contacted, or who do not take necessary action to have them made safe, will be dealt with as follows:

- If the memorial is of historic, architectural or artistic significance, the Council may undertake repair at their cost.
- Otherwise, if it would not affect the ambience of the area in which the memorial is sited, it may be made safe by sinking the memorial into the ground, ensuring the inscription or part of the inscription is visible, or by laying the memorial flat.
- If this is not so, the Council may commence proceedings, as dictated by the Local Authorities Cemeteries Order 1977, to remove the memorial from the cemetery grounds.

The results of all memorial inspections will be recorded on the Council's cemeteries department dedicated computer system.

Stevenage Borough Council holds a faculty issued by the Bishop of St. Albans to test and make safe memorials on consecrated ground.

Owners of grave memorials may, if they wish, be present when memorials are inspected, and may make appointments for such.

Destructive memorial testing (minimum applied force resistance) is **NOT** performed by Stevenage Borough Council, i.e. Council staff or Council contractors do not generally use 'topple-tester' type equipment on memorials. Memorials are either secure, or not secure, at time of inspection. If they are not secure, an assessment will be made as to whether they present any safety risk, depending upon their categorisation and individual circumstances.

6. Memorial Risk Assessment Categorisation Scheme

Every memorial is to be categorised; this will assess each memorial and set it initially into one of five following categories:

Category	Risk	Inspection Scheme
0	Nil	Not Tested
1	Low	Every 5 years
2	Moderate	Every 3 years
3	High	Every year
4	Imminently Dangerous	Immediately made safe

Apart from category 0, which will be for memorials with no upright component, and therefore possess no risk hazard, memorials may move from one category to another, depending on the actual condition of an individual memorial and its risk potential.

The purpose of categorisation is to determine the frequency of memorial inspection, based upon the size and design of a memorial, the possibility of the memorial, or part of it, falling, and the capacity it would have for causing injury, or possibly death, if such did occur. This will save unnecessary time and effort being wasted on testing memorials that do not need it, allowing more resources for those that do possess a high potential for causing serious harm.

7. Categorisation

Category 0 – No risk; memorials in this group have no foreseeable potential to cause any injury (trip hazards are not part of these considerations):

- ☐ Flat Memorials
- ☐ Cremated remains tablets
- ☐ Kerb sets
- ☐ Slabs
- ☐ Books on inclined plinths
- ☐ Any memorial under 500mm in height.

No inspection scheme.

Category 1 – Low risk; memorials in this group will have no foreseeable potential for causing death, and only an extremely small capacity to cause minor injury in the case of the memorial falling:

- ☐ All lawn memorials with another memorial, of similar size, directly behind it, whether secure or not
- ☐ Conventional area headstones 3' (920mm) and under in height
- ☐ Known ground-anchored headstones over 500mm but under 1500 mm in height
- ☐ Very wide based memorials

Memorials in this group will be inspected every five years.

Category 2 – Moderate risk; memorials having the potential, if falling, to cause injury, but, except in exceptional circumstances, not death.

- ☐ Sound lawn memorials not having another immediately behind
- ☐ Headstones over 920mm in height but under 1.5m in height

Memorials in this group will be inspected every three years.

Category 3 – High risk; memorials in this group will have the potential, if falling, to cause serious injury or death.

- ☐ All memorials over 1.5m in height

Memorials in this group will be inspected every year

Category 4 – DANGEROUS; in imminent danger of causing serious injury or death.

- ☐ Memorials from categories 2 and 3 which are found to be NOT SECURE and UNSAFE.

All memorials found to be category 4 will be made safe IMMEDIATELY upon detection, by either staking and strapping, sinking or lying flat. Owners will then be contacted if possible. Staking and strapping will not be removed until the memorial has been repaired, or the hazard removed.

8. Memorial Inspection Guidance

Memorials will only be inspected by Stevenage Borough Council staff that have successfully completed the ICCM Memorial Safety Training.

- I. Look at the upright part of the memorial. If it is CRACKED or ERODED, or the cement joint looks like it has gaps, proceed with great care
- II. Decide which way the memorial is most likely to fall: -
 - a. If a monolith type memorial (headstone with no base, the bottom of it set into the ground) it will be the direction that it is leaning (if any. If not, either way).
 - b. If a headstone with a base and the headstone is not central on the base, i.e. it is towards the back of the base, it will NOT normally fall forwards (unless leaning greatly in that direction). If headstone is central on the base, it could equally fall either direction.
 - c. If a headstone with kerbs (headstone fitted against side kerbs as the great majority are) it would fall outwards (away from the kerbed memorial).
 - d. If headstone with kerbs, with the headstone standing on top of the kerbs on a base, treat as headstone with base.
 - e. If a cross or column, in direction of lean (if no lean any direction is possible).
- III. Stand on the side of the memorial opposite to the direction in which the part being tested is most likely to fall, so that you will push in the direction in which it would naturally fall. If possible, stand in the centre of the memorial. If, due to the design of the memorial this is not possible, stand to one side (left hand side if you are right-handed, or v.v.), but still behind the direction of natural fall.
- IV. If standing central, place both hands on the top of the stone, with fingers wrapped over the top. If to one side, place one hand (right hand if standing on left side, or v.v.) on the top corner of the stone nearest to you, with fingers wrapped over the top.
- V. Ensure that your feet are on firm, solid ground. Dig them in, if possible, otherwise keep firm. Bend knees slightly and brace legs. Bend elbows slightly but keep arms firm. Push gently, increasing the pressure to firm. Any movement will quickly be detected. If movement is detected, use your fingers to control it. Do not push it too far, such that it over-balances. **DO NOT** try to catch or stop the memorial from falling if it moves suddenly and passes the over-balance point. Use this method to ascertain whether it is completely loose or will just move a small way and then stop.
- VI. If no movement is detected when pushing firmly, the memorial has passed the test, and the procedure can be completed by either entering the information on the cemetery system if using a tablet or by entering a tick if using paper-based forms.
- VII. If movement is detected, and it is obvious that the memorial is completely loose, it must be made safe immediately (see below).

9. Making Safe

- If the 'failed' memorial is still standing upright, it should be staked and strapped.
- If the memorial has fallen, it should either remain lying flat and be positioned within the boundary of the full surround (if applicable) or placed at the head of the grave ensuring it does not cause a potential trip hazard or sunk into the ground.

10. Safety

- **DO NOT** attempt to stop falling memorials after they have reached the over-balance point, i.e. if a gentle pull back does not stop it, do not try too hard.
- **DO NOT PULL** memorials towards you .
- **DO NOT** stand on memorials with stone chippings when hand testing.
- **DO NOT** position anybody the other side of the memorial when testing, and make sure nobody, worker or cemetery visitor, can walk behind it whilst testing.
- **DO NOT** attempt to inspect memorials over 1.5m alone, the inspections must always be carried out in pairs.
- **DO NOT** attempt to make safe any memorial alone, this process must always be carried out in pairs.

11. Staff Training

Management of Memorials – Safety Training

This course is delivered by the Institute of Cemetery and Crematoria Management (ICCM)

Stevenage Borough Council cemetery staff undertook and successfully completed this training in September 2025