



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot  
Neath Port Talbot Council

## **NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **Environment, Regeneration and Street Scene Cabinet Board**

**6<sup>th</sup> October 2022**

#### **Report of Head of Streetcare, Mike Roberts**

##### **Matter for Decision**

##### **Wards Affected**

All wards

##### **Revision of the Cemetery Rules & Regulations**

##### **Purpose of the Report**

1. To consider updates and revisions to the Authority's Cemetery Rules and Regulations.

##### **Executive Summary**

2. It is essential that the Cemetery Rules and Regulations document is up to date and represents the service offered and delivered by the Council.
3. A revision of the Cemetery Rules & Regulations has become essential, as the detail within specific sections of the document no longer aligns with service delivery. The sections that require

updates include burial times, vehicle provision, memorials, bricked grave provision and memorial seats.

4. Minor changes have also been made to other sections of the document such as decoration and planting, scattering of cremated remains and self-arranged funerals.

## **Background**

5. This report and the associated update to the Cemetery Rules and Regulations is required to ensure that recent changes within the cemeteries department align with the current Rules & Regulations documentation. Further recommendations and additional measures surrounding safety, reducing anti-social behaviour, increasing the current offering and providing structure to the cemeteries operations and administration are included in the report.

## Burial Times

6. Up until recently, there have been no official time slots allocated for interments within Council run cemeteries. Funeral directors would make requests to the Cemeteries Office in line with the bereaved family's preferred time and the team would do what they could to accommodate. The team has recently implemented time slots after undertaking consultation with funeral directors. A table outlining these slots is included on page 9 of the Burial Times section of the Rules and Regulations contained within Appendix A.
7. Allocated time slots are essential to ensure service resilience. Prior to the implementation of designated slots, 3pm full interments could be booked which often resulted in operational cemetery staff working until 6pm. Whilst the same operational staff have tried to be as accommodating as possible to such incidents, it has been noted that this is 2 hours over their contracted hours

and that they are not obliged to do so. There are also safety concerns associated with working with little light, working in grey water and having no time to wash properly at the end of the shift.

8. By providing structured burial times, there will be little need for any staff member to work over their contracted hours without prior consultation and agreement.
9. Previous service managers have struggled to recruit in the cemeteries team. Expelling the unwritten rule of regularly working past contracted hours, often unexpectedly will assist in this regard.
10. Frequently, funeral directors are late for their intended booking times at the cemetery. Through consultation with the same, it was acknowledged that due to the lack of stringent time slots such as those associated with Margam Crematorium; a laid-back approach is taken when utilising Council run cemeteries. By providing allocated time slots, the section hopes to improve this issue.
11. As stated in the updated Rules & Regulations, the latest time for a full interment is now 1pm. This allows the staff sufficient time to backfill the grave within their contracted hours. This also gives the staff sufficient time to use shower facilities to conform to the measures outlined in the relevant risk assessments.
12. This burial timetable will also be in place throughout the year. Previously the cemeteries section worked on summer and winter hours for last burial times (3.00pm in the summer and 2.00pm in the winter). The new timetable allows us to keep this in place throughout the year as the only available booking slot for 3pm is for cremated remains.
13. This new provision is under review for a 6 month period. Further consultation will take place with funeral directors in the New Year. To date, no issues that demonstrate the new designated time slots cause significant issues have been received. Should further consultation in the New Year identify any issues, these will be

considered in consultation with funeral directors to ascertain if changes are required to the current designated time slots.

### Vehicle Provision

14. Recently, the section has received some complaints in relation to vehicle movements in Ynysyrmaerdy cemetery. Furthermore, there has been a number of fly tips in Goytre and Margam Cemetery along with a skip theft in Cymmer Cemetery.
15. The complaints associated with vehicle movements in Ynysyrmaerdy Cemetery refer to drivers taking undue care and attention in the cemetery and, as a result, causing damage to grass verges and grave spaces located near the main paths/roadways. Complainants have also raised the issue of the proximity of grave spaces to the roadways, stating that those driving with undue care and attention pose a risk to members of the public visiting graves.
16. Whilst the volume of complaints have been limited, it is acknowledged that vehicles that are being driven without due care and attention within the cemeteries are causing damage and do pose a safety risk to pedestrians and visitors to the cemetery.
17. Additional measures such as speed warning signage and kerb edging where appropriate will improve the situation.
18. Other measures have been considered, such as completely removing the facility for vehicle access within Council run cemeteries, locking the gates during the evening or access only by appointment.
19. It should be noted that many visitors rely on vehicle access as a means to be able to access a loved ones grave.

20. Further to the measures associated with addressing damage and safety concerns related to vehicle movements, CCTV cameras will be placed in each of our cemeteries to monitor any anti-social behaviour, theft or criminal activity going forward.
21. As a temporary measure and in response to the numerous thefts and fly tips that occurred on the weekend of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> June, an operational decision was taken to lock the gates in the cemeteries. The gates were only opened during working hours (8am – 4.30pm).

### Memorials

22. After external consultation with local stonemasons, Officers are seeking to increase the width of a headstone from 610mm to 762mm. The current dimensions do not leave customers or stonemasons many options in terms of selecting memorials.
23. The feedback from the local stonemasons was that standard sizes for memorials can be anything up to 762mm in width and are more readily available than current dimensions. This causes a supply issue for the memorial mason and subsequently, can put a delay on an order for a customer. By increasing the size of the headstone, this has no implication on grave space provision or grounds maintenance. The maximum sizes of the base, plinth and concrete foundation remain the same.

### Bricked Grave Provision

24. The Council have many bricked graves within our cemeteries that have either already been utilised or reserved. This provision is a traditional and historic method of burial. Moving forward, it is recommended that the request for new bricked graves is to cease.

25. This is due to a bricked grave potentially taking up further burial space than needed. A bricked grave could also cause structural issues between the earthen walls of other graves. To provide context of the impact of this proposal, the Council has not received any requests for new bricked graves within the last 10 years.

### Memorial Seats

26. The Council has waiting lists for each cemetery regarding memorial benches. This provision stopped across our cemeteries a number of years ago due to prioritising grave space. In order to reinstate this provision, the Council have recently installed community benches within our Cemeteries, which have room to place 10 commemorative plaques.
27. It is proposed that moving forward; the Council will determine the location of a bench and subsequently install if there is suitable land available. Any land selected will have been deemed unsuitable for future burial use and will not affect future grave provision.

### **Financial Impacts**

28. There are no financial implications as a result of this report.

### **Integrated Impact Assessment**

29. A first stage impact assessment has been undertaken to assist the Council in discharging its legislative duties (under the Equality Act 2010, the Welsh Language Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the

Environment (Wales) Act 2016. The first stage assessment as provided in Appendix C has indicated that a more in-depth assessment is not required for the way forward proposed which in summary reflects the as existing position.

### **Valleys Communities Impacts**

30. There are no valley community implications as a result of this report.

### **Workforce Impacts**

31. Designated burial times provide operational cemetery staff sufficient time between burials and structure to their working day. It removes the expectance and reliance of staff to work beyond their contracted hours on a regular basis and without early consultation. It is likely to improve recruitment processes for the service area and subsequently increase service resilience for the future.

### **Legal Impacts**

32. There are no implications associated with this report.

### **Risk Management Impacts**

33. The new burial times significantly reduce health and safety risks that cemetery operational staff have been exposed to. This includes the ability to use the wash facilities during their working

day and significantly reduces the time that is needed to work in reduced daylight.

34. Additional measures associated with vehicle provision will reduce the risk of damage and anti-social behaviour involving vehicles within the cemeteries. Suitable kerb edging, signage and CCTV cameras will help reduce any risk.

### **Other Impacts**

35. There are no other impacts associated with this report.

### **Crime and Disorder Impacts**

36. With regard to vehicle provision within the cemetery, installing CCTV cameras, additional signage and kerb edging where appropriate should reduce fly tipping, theft and damage to associated land within the cemetery.

### **Counter Terrorism Impacts**

37. There are no implications associated with this report.

### **Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Impacts**

38. There are no implications associated with this report.

### **Consultation**

39. Local funeral directors were invited to attend a meeting regarding the change in burial times. Three funeral directors accepted the

invitation and provided feedback to the team regarding the new proposed burial times.

40. Local stonemasons have also been consulted regarding the change in size for the width of memorials.

## **Recommendations**

### Burial times

41. To continue implementation of the new burial times on a 6 month trial. Review after a 6-month period and make any necessary changes after further consultation with funeral directors.

### Vehicle Provision

42. To keep vehicle provision as it is and allow 24/7 access to our cemeteries, with the addition of safety measures as detailed in the background section of this report. Continue to closely monitor the situation and address any complaints that are received individually and in a timely manner.

### Memorials

43. Increase the width of a headstone from 610mm to 762mm.

### Bricked Grave Provision

44. Cease the provision of new bricked graves within our cemeteries.

## Memorial Seats

45. Continue to keep the current arrangement – that we do not allow any further individual memorial benches within the cemeteries. Install community benches as an alternative allowing those that request a memorial bench to have the option of a plaque on a community bench.

## **Reasons for Proposed Decision**

46. The new burial times allow sufficient time between burials and means that the cemetery staff do not need to work over their contracted hours. This increases staff morale and will ensure that staff can follow health and safety measures/provisions as they will have sufficient time to use wash facilities and will not be required to work in poor light conditions.
47. By keeping vehicle provision the same, the Council are still allowing access for all our users on a 24/7 basis. Additional measures are to be put in place in order to address recent complaints and crimes such as additional signage, kerb edging (where appropriate) and CCTV cameras.
48. In order to maximise burial space the provision of bricked new graves is proposed to cease within our cemeteries. This not only causes grave space issues, it is also a health and safety issue as it can cause stability issues between the earthen walls of neighbouring graves.
49. As an alternative to an individual memorial bench, install community benches within our cemeteries. The Council have a need to prioritise grave space and a community bench is a way of using land that is not suitable for burial and can incorporate 10 plaques. This allows us to reinstate a service that the public request.

## **Implementation of Decision**

50. The decision is proposed for implementation after the three-day call in period.

## **Appendices**

Appendix A: Cemeteries Rules & Regulations – September 2022  
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Appendix B: Summary Report of Changes to Rules and Regulations  
– September 2022

Appendix C: First Stage Integrated Impact Assessment

## **List of Background Papers**

The ICCM Shallow Depths Policy  
The BRAMM Blue Book  
The ICCM Charter for the bereaved  
Local Authorities Cemeteries Order 1977  
Neath Port Talbot Council Cemeteries Rules & Regulations  
Burial Act 1857

## **Officer Contact:**

Mr. Steffan Newton – Principal Officer Country Parks & Cemeteries  
Tel: 07737038452  
Email: [s.newton@npt.gov.uk](mailto:s.newton@npt.gov.uk)

Mr. James Davies – Neighbourhood Services Manager  
Tel: 01639686408  
Email: [j.davies19@npt.gov.uk](mailto:j.davies19@npt.gov.uk)