
Agenda Item: Cemetery Regulations Review

Meeting Date: Monday 14 September 2026

Contact Officer: Senior Administration Officer

The purpose of this report is to present the revised Cemetery Regulations for Member consideration ahead of submission to the Policy, Governance and Finance Committee for agreement on 28 September 2026.

Background

Witney Town Council as the burial authority is responsible for the management and operation of Tower Hill Cemetery and Windrush Cemetery.

The Council's Cemetery Regulations establish the requirements applying to the use and management of both cemeteries. They provide information and direction for bereaved families, funeral organisers, memorial masons, Council officers and other cemetery users.

The existing regulations have been subject to a comprehensive review to ensure that they remain clear, consistent and reflective of the Council's current cemetery operations.

Current Situation

A revised draft of the Cemetery Regulations is attached to this report. The review covers the regulations in their entirety and provides a clearer and more consistent framework for the operation of the Council's cemeteries and for those using or providing cemetery services.

Members are invited to consider the revised regulations and identify any further amendments. Subject to Members' comments, the final draft will be presented to the Policy, Governance and Finance Committee for agreement on 28 September 2026.

Corporate Strategy

The Council's Strategic Plan 2025–29 sets out the Council's long-term priorities and direction, supporting its mission to 'make Witney a great place to live, work and visit.' This report contributes to the delivery of the following strategic pillar of the plan:

1. A Forward Looking Town Council

The revision of the Cemetery Regulations supports this objective by ensuring that the Council maintains a clear, current and effective framework for the administration and operation of its cemeteries.

The revised regulations also support respectful and consistent service delivery to bereaved families and other cemetery users.

The guidance explains that this pillar concerns representing the community on strategic matters and ensuring that the Council's actions remain aligned with its overall direction and long-term goals.

Impact Assessments

The Town Council has a duty to consider the effects of its decisions, functions and activities on equality, biodiversity, and crime & disorder. Consideration should also be given to effects on the environment, given the Council's Climate Emergency declaration in 2019.

- a) Equality - The revised regulations are intended to apply fairly and consistently to all cemetery users. They recognise a range of burial practices and interment options and provide clearer information on the Council's requirements. No adverse equality impacts have been identified.
- b) Biodiversity - The revised regulations include provisions for the management of meadow and woodland burial areas. These support the maintenance and development of designated areas in accordance with their intended environmental character.
- c) Crime & Disorder - The revised regulations provide clearer requirements governing conduct within the cemeteries, including activities that may constitute an offence. No significant adverse impact on crime and disorder has been identified.
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency - The regulations recognise environmentally conscious burial options and include provisions relating to biodegradable materials, woodland habitat creation and wildflower management. Clear controls over planting, memorial materials and items placed on graves will also support appropriate grounds maintenance.

Risk

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

Maintaining clear and current Cemetery Regulations assists the Council in applying its requirements consistently, fairly and transparently.

Without an updated regulatory framework, there is a risk that existing provisions may not adequately reflect current cemetery operations or may be interpreted inconsistently by cemetery users, contractors and Council officers.

The proposed revisions seek to reduce these risks by clarifying responsibilities, application processes and operational requirements. The regulations will remain subject to periodic review and may be amended where required by operational experience or changes in legislation.

Social Value

Social value is the positive change the Council creates in the local community within which it operates.

The revised regulations support social value by providing a clear, respectful and consistent framework for services used by bereaved families and the wider community.

They also support the continued provision of a range of burial and memorial options, together with the appropriate maintenance and environmental management of the Council's cemeteries.

Financial implications

There are no direct financial implications arising solely from consideration of the revised Cemetery Regulations.

Fees and charges relating to interments, Exclusive Rights of Burial, memorials and other cemetery services will continue to be determined through the Council's approved schedule of burial charges.

Some provisions within the revised regulations clarify circumstances in which additional charges may apply. These include late arrivals or departures, changes to confirmed interment dates, oversized burials and additional operational requirements. The applicable amounts will remain those specified in the Council's approved burial charges schedule.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and

1. Consider the revised Cemetery Regulations and provide any comments or proposed amendments; and
2. Recommend that, subject to the incorporation of any amendments arising from this meeting, the revised Cemetery Regulations be presented to the Policy, Governance and Finance Committee for agreement on 28 September 2026.