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1. Glossary of Terms

Term	Definition
WTC, Town Council or Council	Witney Town Council, acting as the local burial authority responsible for managing and providing burial grounds.
EROB	An Exclusive Right of Burial.
Spent	An Exclusive Right of Burial is considered spent when no usable grave space remains for a further permitted interment.
Interment	The burial of a human body or cremated human remains.
Green Form or Registrar's Certificate	The certificate authorising the burial of a body or the interment of cremated remains, where applicable.
Statutory Declaration	A formal written statement of fact that is declared to be true and signed in the presence of a person authorised to administer the declaration.
Grant	The document issued by the Burial Authority evidencing the Exclusive Right of Burial for a specified grave space.
Grantee	The person named on the Grant as the holder of the Exclusive Right of Burial.
Funeral organiser	The funeral director, undertaker or other person responsible for making arrangements for an interment.

2. Law and Jurisdiction

These regulations shall be governed by the laws of England and shall be subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of the English courts.

3. Variations

These Cemetery Regulations supersede and replace all previous cemetery regulations, terms and conditions issued by Witney Town Council.

Witney Town Council may, **at its sole discretion and at any time**, amend, replace, withdraw or add to these Cemetery Regulations. The Council is **not required to provide prior notice** of any amendment, except where notice is required by law.

Any amendment will take effect immediately on the effective date stated in the revised document, unless the Council specifies a different commencement date.

From that date, the revised Cemetery Regulations will apply to all cemetery activities, applications, permissions and works undertaken within cemeteries managed by Witney Town Council, subject to any statutory requirements or transitional arrangements expressly determined by the Council.

It is the responsibility of applicants, funeral organisers, funeral directors, memorial masons, holders of Exclusive Rights of Burial and other cemetery users to ensure that they refer to the current version of these Cemetery Regulations before making an application, arranging an interment or undertaking any work within a cemetery.

4. General Cemetery Information

4.1 Windrush Cemetery Access

Windrush Cemetery is permanently open to members of the public with parking available near the entrance to the cemetery.

The road around the grave sections is only designed as an access road for works vehicles and funeral cortège.

The cemetery is not open for vehicles during ceremonies.

A sign will be placed on the entrance and car parking controlled by cemetery operatives.

4.2 Tower Hill Cemetery Access

Period	Opening hours	Vehicle access to Sections 6, 7 and 8
Monday to Friday	09:00 to 16:00	The access bollards can be removed on request. Requests must be made via 01993 704379 at least 24 hours before the proposed visit.
Saturday and Sunday	07:00 to 11:00	The access bollards are removed to permit vehicle access around Sections 6, 7 and 8.

The gates are opened and closed by Town Council staff or authorised contractors.

4.3 Closures for ceremonies

During a ceremony, the main vehicle gates and the north pedestrian gate will be temporarily locked for the duration of the ceremony. No advance notice of an individual ceremony closure will be provided.

5. Cemetery Rules

The following rules apply within both cemeteries. Some activities may also constitute an offence under applicable legislation.

5.1 General Rules

Dogs are permitted in the cemetery but must always be on leads and all waste must be cleared up.

No parking is permitted in any area that is not a designated parking space.

Bicycles must not be ridden within the cemetery.

All rubbish must be cleared away.

Music or other sound must not be amplified in a manner that causes disturbance to other cemetery users or neighbouring properties.

5.2 Offences Within the Cemetery

To wilfully create any disturbance in a cemetery.

To commit any nuisance in a cemetery.

To wilfully interfere with any burial taking place in a cemetery.

To wilfully interfere with any grave or vault, tombstone or other memorial, or flowers or plants.

To play any game or sport in a cemetery.

6. Burial Plots and Interment Options

6.1 Lawn Burials

Lawn burials are the standard burial plot offered at both Windrush and Tower Hill Cemetery.

They can accommodate one or two full interments depending on the cemetery.

Lawn graves at Windrush Cemetery are double-depth and may accommodate up to two full interments. Lawn graves at Tower Hill Cemetery are single-depth and may accommodate one full interment. Cremated remains may only be interred after the grave has received its permitted number of full interments.

Subject to arrangement with the Council, cremated remains may be placed beneath the turf of a grave by carefully lifting the turf and placing the ashes directly onto the soil beneath. This constitutes an authorised interment of cremated remains and is not the same as the scattering of ashes over the surface of a grave, which is prohibited.

The charge will be the same as an ashes interment.

To perform a future burial the layer of soil will need to be disturbed, and the cremated remains moved from the resting place.

Tower Hill lawn burials are single depth.

All bodies must be interred within a coffin.

The coffin must have a nameplate.

Due to double-depth burials, cemetery staff must be able to identify the first interment before interring a second body.

6.2 Burials in Accordance with Islamic Practices

Burial plots are provided and oriented to accommodate burials undertaken in accordance with Islamic practices.

All plots designated for burials in accordance with Islamic practices are single-depth graves.

Burials may take place in either a coffin or a burial shroud, subject to these Regulations and any applicable legal and operational requirements.

Where a burial shroud is used, funeral organisers must backfill the grave until the body is no longer visible before council staff complete backfilling.

A suitable container must be used to transport the deceased to the graveside.

Brushwood or softwood boards may be used to line the base of the grave to a maximum depth of 30mm.

Upon expiry of burial rights any headstone may be removed by the Council, but no further interments will take place in any available remaining grave space.

6.3 Meadow Burials

A wildflower meadow is provided at Windrush Cemetery for interments.

The purpose of this area is to establish and maintain a flowering meadow environment.

The meadow may receive up to three cuts per year during spring, summer and autumn.

The principal summer cut may involve collection of vegetation.

Additional winter maintenance cuts may be undertaken to control weeds.

Supplementary seeding may be undertaken during March and April.

Once the ground has recompacted following an interment, a wildflower seed mix will be sown over the grave.

Rules Specific to Meadow Burials

Exclusive Rights of Burial cannot be purchased.

Plots cannot be reserved.

Embalmed bodies are not permitted.

No grave marker may be installed.

Identification

As no grave marker may be placed, the burial will be recorded using the standard Council burial records system.

In addition, a grave marker peg will be buried within the plot.

Plots may subsequently be identified through a grave marker peg containing an electronically readable RFID tag.

The RFID tag number will be recorded in both the burial register and the cemetery management software.

6.4 Woodland Burials

Woodland burials are located within the lower section of Windrush Cemetery.

They are intended to provide an environmentally conscious and lower cost burial option.

The woodland burial area has been designed to provide the lowest carbon footprint burial option available within Witney Town Council cemeteries.

Rules Specific to Woodland Burials

Only single-depth interments are permitted.

Exclusive Rights of Burial cannot be purchased.

Plots cannot be reserved.

Embalmed bodies are not permitted.

No form of grave marker may be installed.

This restriction includes the period immediately following an interment, and all flowers will be removed by Council staff following the interment.

The purpose of the area is to maintain an environmentally conscious approach and flowers are therefore discouraged.

All woodland burials must take place in an environmentally friendly coffin or burial shroud made from biodegradable materials, such as bamboo, banana leaf, willow or cardboard. Other biodegradable materials may be accepted with the prior approval of Witney Town Council.

Where a burial shroud is used, funeral organisers must backfill the grave until the body is no longer visible before Council staff complete the backfilling process.

Oversized coffins are not permitted.

Plots may be identified in future through a grave marker peg containing an RFID tag.

When designated sections of the woodland burial area reach capacity, trees and perennial wildflower bulbs may be planted to create woodland habitat areas.

6.5 Children's and Baby Plots

Separate children's and baby burial plots are provided at Windrush Cemetery.

These plots are intended for use alongside the Children's Funeral Fund and have a longer EROB period to allow the later interment of the ashes of parents, guardians or other family members.

Plot Dimensions

Plot type	Dimensions
Baby plot	0.9 metres long by 0.66 metres wide
Children's plot	1.5 metres long by 0.99 metres wide

Additional Provisions

Exclusive Rights of Burial for children's and baby plots are granted for a period of 90 years.

Following a full interment, up to two sets of cremated remains may be interred within the plot.

Memorials for children's and baby plots are subject to the dimensions specified within the Memorial Sizes document.

6.6 Ashes Path – Windrush Cemetery

Windrush Cemetery contains a paved ashes path for the interment of ashes caskets.

Each ashes plot is designed to accommodate up to two caskets. Any additional caskets would only be granted permission from the Council as the time of the additional interment.

The Exclusive Right of Burial must be purchased.

Only a sloping desk tablet memorial may be installed.

6.7 Family Ashes Plots – Tower Hill Cemetery

Tower Hill Cemetery provides family ashes plots for the interment of cremated remains.

Each plot may accommodate up to eight ashes caskets.

Only a standing memorial may be installed.

6.8 Scattering of Ashes – Windrush & Tower Hill Cemeteries

Ashes may be scattered within designated ashes scattering beds. Permission must be sought and a date and time agreed in advance with the Council offices prior to any scattering.

Any unauthorised scattering of ashes will be stopped if prior permission has not been granted.

The scattering of ashes on grave plots is strictly not permitted, even where the Exclusive Right of Burial has been purchased for the plot. This restriction is necessary to ensure scattered ashes are not distributed onto neighbouring plots by weather conditions or during the scattering process, which may cause distress or offence to other grave owners and visitors.

Any unauthorised scattering or disposal of ashes may be collected and interred by the council into an unmarked area.

6.9 Memorial Plaques and Stones

Memorial plaques may be installed on the memorial wall at Tower Hill Cemetery or on the memorial monolith at Windrush Cemetery.

Memorial pebbles may be installed into the designated area within the children's memorial garden at Windrush Cemetery.

The individual named on a memorial plaque or pebble need not be interred within the cemetery.

A completed application form must be submitted and approval granted prior to a memorial plaque or stone being installed.

The size, material and inlay colour of memorial plaques will be determined by cemetery officers to maintain a consistent and uniform appearance.

7. Schedule of Interment

The Town Council will follow the process below for all interments within its cemeteries. The interment process will be managed in cooperation with the funeral organiser.

Interment Application

A completed interment form must be submitted to the Council as formal notice of the interment. The form must include the grave plot number and the proposed date and time of the interment.

Where the grave plot is not owned by the deceased, the owner of the Exclusive Right of Burial must provide written permission for the plot to be used. This permission must be submitted with the interment form.

Date and Time

The date and time of the interment must be arranged with the Town Council before arrangements are confirmed with any other party.

The Council will make reasonable efforts to accommodate the requested date and time. However, as the burial authority, the final date and time of an interment will be determined by the Town Council.

Interment dates and times will be managed with regard to factors including:

- Other interment bookings
- Staffing
- Equipment availability
- Grave location
- Proximity to open graves
- Excavation time
- Public holidays

Grave Preparation and Documentation

Once a completed interment form has been received, cemetery operatives will begin the process of excavating and preparing the grave space.

All required paperwork must be submitted no later than 24 hours before the scheduled time of the interment.

Following the interment, cemetery operatives will record the burial in the relevant cemetery burial register. The register entry must be signed by the funeral organiser.

8. Graveside Preparation and Backfilling

Graves will be prepared to minimise the visibility of excavated soil. The graveside will be dressed with artificial grass, and excavated soil will be covered where appropriate. This also applies to ashes interments within the ashes path at Windrush Cemetery.

Excavated soil will normally be placed temporarily on the nearest neighbouring grave until the interment and backfilling have been completed. The Council will seek to minimise the duration of its placement and any disturbance to neighbouring graves.

Any request for excavated soil to be placed elsewhere must be made when the first notice of interment is given and is subject to the Council's approval. An additional charge will apply as specified in the current burial charges schedule.

Following the interment, the grave will be backfilled and the surrounding area reinstated. Any ground damage arising from the works will be repaired when weather, ground and seasonal conditions permit.

9. Cancellations and Additional Charges

9.1 Cancellations

Where an interment is cancelled by Witney Town Council because the required paperwork has not been submitted, the full burial charge will be payable by the funeral organiser.

The deadline for submission of all required paperwork is 24 hours before the scheduled time of interment. By that point, the grave plot may already have been prepared and, in some circumstances, may need to be backfilled following cancellation.

The funeral organiser is responsible for ensuring that the funeral procession arrives at the time stated on the interment form.

The Town Council may take exceptional circumstances into account when considering a cancellation charge. Any reduction or waiver will be at the discretion of the Town Council.

9.2 Late Arrivals and Departures

The Funeral Organiser is responsible for the timekeeping of the ceremony.

The standard time allocated for a ceremony is 45 minutes. Additional fees will be charged for late arrivals or departures in increments of 15 minutes, at the rate specified in the current burial charges schedule.

9.3 Existing Memorials

Where a second interment is proposed within a lawn burial plot or ashes plot, the Funeral Organiser will be responsible for any charges associated with the removal of an existing memorial from the grave plot being used for the interment.

The presence of an existing memorial must be identified when the first notice of interment is given.

9.4 Changes to Interment Dates

A fee, as specified in the current burial charges schedule, will be charged where an amendment is made to a final submitted interment date. The date stated on the submitted interment form will be treated as the final submitted date.

Booking an interment date removes that date and time from availability for other applicants. Reasonable changes to the time of an interment will not normally incur a charge.

9.5 Oversized Burials

An additional oversized burial fee will apply where the coffin or casket exceeds any of the maximum dimensions shown below. The applicable oversized burial fee, in addition to the standard burial fee is specified in the current burial charges schedule.

Measurement	Maximum size
Length	213 cm / 84 inches

Measurement	Maximum size
Width	71 cm / 28 inches
Depth	58 cm / 23 inches

9.6 Weekend Burials

In exceptional circumstances, a weekend burial may be arranged at the discretion of Witney Town Council, subject to the availability of three cemetery operatives. Weekend burials cannot be guaranteed and, where accommodated, will be charged at the applicable weekend hourly rate for three cemetery operatives, together with the standard burial fee and any other charges set out in the current burial charges schedule.

10. Burial Times

Burials are available within both cemeteries from Monday to Friday, excluding public holidays. Available burial times vary throughout the year in accordance with daylight hours.

Period	Days	Available booking times
November to March	Monday to Friday	11:00 to 14:00
April to October	Monday to Thursday	11:00 to 15:00
April to October	Friday	11:00 to 14:00

The times stated above are booking times and are not inclusive of the total ceremony duration. A burial booking may be accepted for the latest stated time within the applicable period.

11. Burial Notice

A minimum of three working days' notice, excluding the day of interment, is required to allow sufficient time for the Council to complete the necessary administration and prepare the grave or ashes plot. The Council will make reasonable efforts to accommodate the requested date, but operational circumstances may require a longer notice period.

Where an existing headstone or memorial must be removed to permit excavation, the funeral organiser is responsible for arranging its removal. Excavation and preparation of the grave cannot begin until the headstone or memorial has been removed.

The Certificate for Burial or Cremation, commonly known as the Green Form or Registrar's Certificate, must be provided to the Town Council no later than 24 hours before the interment.

The certificate may be:

- Emailed
- Posted
- Delivered in person

Witney Town Council accepts no responsibility for certificates lost in the postal system and no burial will be allowed to take proceed prior to receipt of the certificate.

It is an offence for a burial certificate to be forged, or otherwise improperly handled. (Births and Deaths Registration Act 1953)

12. Exclusive Rights of Burial

The Exclusive Right of Burial permits the Grantee to authorise burials within a specified grave space. The Exclusive Right of Burial also grants permission to erect a memorial, subject to compliance with the Cemetery Regulations.

The grant will contain details including:

- Burial authority
- Cost of the grant
- Grave space number
- Cemetery
- Section reference
- Date of purchase
- Duration of the grant
- Grantee contact information

The grant will be issued to the Grantee.

A copy will be retained by Witney Town Council and stored digitally.

12.1 Limitations

An Exclusive Right of Burial does not convey ownership of the land.

The right only permits the Grantee to:

- Determine who may be buried within the grave space
- Authorise the installation of a memorial

All other cemetery rules and regulations remain applicable.

12.2 Term of Exclusive Rights of Burial

The Exclusive Right of Burial is granted for a fixed period from the date of purchase. The applicable term will be stated on the Grant.

The current term granted for non-baby or child plots is:

Cemetery	Current term
Windrush Cemetery	30 years
Tower Hill Cemetery	30 years

Witney Town Council may amend the term applicable to future purchases and renewals.

The Council does not grant or renew burial rights to be held in perpetuity or for periods that would exceed one hundred years.

An exception applies to Commonwealth War Graves, where rights may be granted or recognised in perpetuity.

12.3 Transfer of the Exclusive Right of Burial Back to the Burial Authority

The Grantee may transfer an Exclusive Right of Burial back to the Council at any time.

The Council will purchase the right at the original purchase price paid as stated on the grant.

The Council will only repurchase rights where usable grave space remains.

13. Transfer of the Exclusive Right of Burial

All transfers of Exclusive Rights of Burial shall be administered by the burial authority.

Witney Town Council will charge a transfer fee as set out within the burial charges schedule.

Only the remaining term of the Exclusive Right of Burial will be carried over on transfer.

A revised grant shall be issued to the new Grantee.

A copy of the grant shall be retained by Witney Town Council and stored digitally.

13.1 Living Grantee

An owner of an Exclusive Right of Burial may transfer the right to another person at any time. The original Grant must be produced together with supporting documentation.

The following documentation must be provided:

- Proof of identity of the current owner.
- Proof of identity of the proposed new Grantee.
- Proof of residency of the proposed new Grantee.

Where the proposed new Grantee does not meet the Council's residency requirements, or where satisfactory evidence of residency cannot be provided, the transfer will be treated as a non-resident transaction. The Council reserves the right to charge an additional amount, up to the full non-resident Exclusive Right of Burial fee applicable at the date of transfer, taking account of any resident fee already paid.

The fee shall only be payable where usable grave space remains available for a future full burial or additional ashes interment.

Written and signed confirmation of the transfer must be provided by the existing Grantee.

The transfer document must clearly identify the person receiving the Exclusive Right of Burial.

13.2 Deceased Grantee

Where the Grantee is the deceased person being interred within the grave space, a transfer of the Exclusive Right of Burial is not required before the interment takes place.

Where the Exclusive Right of Burial has not been spent and future use remains possible, transfer to a successor Grantee should be arranged.

There is no requirement to transfer the Exclusive Right of Burial immediately upon the death of the owner.

Transfer is only required where a beneficiary wishes to make use of an unspent Exclusive Right of Burial.

Documentation Required

To transfer the Exclusive Right of Burial following the death of a Grantee, the following documents must be provided:

- The original Exclusive Right of Burial grant.
- The deceased Grantee Will, where one exists.
- Original Grant of Probate or Letters of Administration where applicable.
- Proof of identity of the proposed new Grantee.

Statutory Declarations

Where the deceased owner did not specifically leave the Exclusive Right of Burial to a named beneficiary, the burial authority may transfer the right through a Statutory Declaration.

Such transfers may be made to a family member with a valid claim to the Exclusive Right of Burial.

The cost of investigations and due diligence associated with the transfer shall be borne by the applicant.

Where multiple family members have potential claims, each claimant must formally renounce their claim before a Statutory Declaration can be completed.

Where competing claimants cannot be contacted or do not renounce their claim, the Exclusive Right of Burial cannot be transferred.

Memorial Permission Pending Transfer

At the discretion of the burial authority, permission may be granted for a memorial to be erected before a transfer has been completed.

Any such permission shall be given on the basis that the applicant accepts responsibility for removal of the memorial at their own expense should a competing claimant subsequently establish a legal entitlement to the Exclusive Right of Burial.

14. Renewal of Exclusive Rights of Burial

A Grantee may renew an Exclusive Right of Burial on its expiry date or within the 90 day period immediately preceding expiry.

The renewal fee and renewal term shall be those in force at the date of renewal.

Witney Town Council will endeavour to contact Grantees whose Exclusive Rights of Burial are approaching expiry where usable grave space remains available.

The purpose of such contact is to allow the Grantee the opportunity to renew before the Council considers future re-use of available grave space.

Renewal procedures will only be considered where future burials can be accommodated without disturbing previous interments and where unused grave capacity remains available.

The Council may attempt contact using:

- Telephone.
- Post.
- Email.
- Updated contact details held on Council records.
- Notices attached to the memorial where appropriate.

If a period of 90 days has passed following the first contact attempt, no further attempts may be made.

Where all reasonable efforts to contact the Grantee have been exhausted and the renewal period has elapsed, the Council may commence procedures to re-use available grave space in accordance with its regulations.

15. Re-use of Grave Space

Following the expiry of an Exclusive Right of Burial, the Town Council may reclaim and reallocate any unused burial capacity remaining within the grave space, provided that a further interment can be accommodated without disturbing any existing interment.

Any re-use of grave space shall be undertaken in accordance with the Council's procedures for expired Exclusive Rights of Burial.

The Council reserves the right where appropriate, to raise the level of the ground above an existing single interment in order to create sufficient depth for a future burial. Such measures will only be considered following the expiry of the Exclusive Right of Burial.

16. Commonwealth War Graves

As the burial authority, Witney Town Council may grant permission to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission to install or maintain a memorial on an identified Commonwealth War Grave.

Exclusive Rights of Burial relating to Commonwealth War Graves may be granted or recognised in perpetuity.

The Town Council shall not exercise powers to remove a Commonwealth War Grave memorial without the consent of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

17. Public Graves

Public graves, also known as common graves, have no associated Exclusive Right of Burial and may be used where no alternative burial arrangements have been made. No private memorial, headstone, plaque or monument may be placed on a public grave.

18. Record Keeping

All interments shall be recorded on the date of burial within the cemetery burial register.

Interments shall also be recorded separately within the Register of Burials maintained by the Council.

The Register of Burials shall record:

- Surname
- Forenames
- Address
- Profession
- Age
- Date of death
- Place of death
- Date of burial
- Section and grave number

For woodland and meadow burials, the RFID tag number shall also be recorded within both the burial register and the Council's digital burial management system.

Full details of all interments shall be retained within the Council's digital burial records system.

Plans of graves are held in either digital or physical form at the Town Council offices.

19. Residency

For the purposes of these Regulations, a resident of Witney is defined as a person who:

- Currently resides within the Witney town boundary; or
- Has resided within Witney during the previous five years; or
- Has accumulated a total of thirty years' residence within Witney.

For non-residents, Exclusive Rights of Burial and interment fees will be charged at double the resident rate shown on the burial charges schedule.

Where a grave space is reserved, the Exclusive Right of Burial must be purchased and the residency status of the purchaser shall determine the applicable Exclusive Right of Burial fee.

The interment fee shall be determined by the residency status of the deceased rather than the owner of the Exclusive Right of Burial.

Proof of identity and residency may be required when purchasing an Exclusive Right of Burial.

Acceptable evidence may include:

- Driving licence
- Passport
- Utility bill dated within the previous three months
- Bank statement dated within the previous three months

Where the Certificate for Burial or Cremation records an address outside the Witney town boundary, proof of identity and residency may be required with the interment application

20. Reserving a Grave Space

Grave spaces may only be reserved for the following plot types:

- Lawn burial plots.
- Ashes plots.
- Family ashes plots.

Separate areas of the cemetery are designated for reserved grave spaces and immediate need burials.

When reserving a grave space, the Exclusive Right of Burial must be purchased.

No individual may reserve more than two burial plots.

21. Children's Funeral Fund

The Children's Funeral Fund for England (CFF) may assist with the funeral costs of a child under 18 or a baby stillborn after the 24th week of pregnancy. Witney Town Council will submit any eligible claim relating to its burial fees.

Applicants should contact the CFF directly for current information about eligibility, available support and the application process:

Website: childfuneralcharity.org.uk

Telephone: 01480 276088

Email: enquiries@childfuneralcharity.org.uk

The Children's Funeral Fund will only cover the cost of an appropriately sized grave suitable for the child being interred. Full body interments are currently available only within Windrush Cemetery, where adult, child and baby plots are provided. Witney Town Council will only claim funding for a grave size appropriate to the deceased. Where an applicant requests a full-sized double-depth adult grave, any difference in cost must be paid by the applicant. Where a child or baby plot is unavailable, a full-sized adult grave may be offered as an alternative.

22. Cemeteries Maintenance

22.1 Grave Mounds

For a period of one year following an interment, a soil mound will be maintained at approximately 20 centimetres above ground level.

This mound is required because excavated soil gradually recompacts over time following burial.

The grave mound shall not be planted during this period.

Flowers and wreaths may be placed on the grave, although they may be moved to the head of the grave when soil levels require topping up.

22.2 Levelling

Approximately one year after the date of interment, the grave may be levelled during the following spring or autumn maintenance programme.

The grave shall be levelled using topsoil free from large stones and reseeded with grass.

Graves may subsequently require additional levelling in order to maintain safe and consistent ground levels for cemetery maintenance purposes.

Levelling works are generally undertaken on a sectional basis.

Notice of works may be provided through signs displayed within the cemetery.

22.3 Grounds Maintenance

Tower Hill Cemetery and Windrush Cemetery are generally maintained as lawn cemeteries with regularly cut grassed areas.

The historic central section of Tower Hill Cemetery is maintained under a wildflower management regime.

The meadow and woodland burial sections of Windrush Cemetery are also maintained using wildflower management practices.

23. Memorial Testing

All memorials shall undergo a formal safety inspection every five years.

Safety inspections shall be carried out by Witney Town Council, either through its employees or appointed contractors acting on behalf of the burial authority. All inspections shall be undertaken by personnel trained in S.I.A.M. (Safety Inspection and Assessment of Memorials).

The inspection process uses non-intrusive methods to assess the safety and stability of memorials against recognised N.A.M.M. standards.

Advance notification of memorial testing may be provided through signs displayed within the relevant cemetery.

Responsibility for remedial works arising from memorial testing rests with the owner of the Exclusive Right of Burial.

The Town Council will attempt to contact the owner of the Exclusive Right of Burial and advise them of any remedial works considered necessary.

Where an adequate period has elapsed following notification and no remedial action has been taken or an immediate risk is identified, the Town Council may make the memorial safe using the most practical and economical method available.

Such actions may include:

- Laying the memorial flat on the ground.
- Fencing off the grave area for safety purposes.

24. Damage to Memorials

The Town Council accepts no liability for damage to memorials unless the damage results directly from the actions of cemetery operatives or contractors acting on behalf of the Council. Where such damage occurs, including where plant machinery strikes and fractures a memorial, the Council may accept responsibility for reasonable repair costs.

To establish liability, the incident must be documented.

Evidence may include:

- An incident report.
- Photographic evidence.
- Other supporting records.

Owners of Exclusive Rights of Burial are advised to obtain appropriate insurance cover for memorials, including public liability insurance where applicable.

25. Removing Headstones to Gain Access to Reserved Plots

Access to certain reserved grave spaces may require the temporary removal of existing memorials.

Notice of the proposed removal shall be issued, where possible, to the owner of the Exclusive Right of Burial recorded on the grant.

The owner of the Exclusive Right of Burial cannot refuse removal where it is necessary for the burial authority to facilitate access.

The Town Council shall meet the cost of removal and may offer cleaning of the memorial prior to its reinstatement.

26. Removing Headstones for a Second Interment

Where a further interment is proposed within a grave containing an existing memorial, responsibility for arranging and paying for the removal of the memorial rests with the Funeral Organiser. The memorial must be removed before excavation of the grave begins. Its presence must be identified when the first notice of interment is given.

27. Item Clearance

Additional cemetery clearance operations may be undertaken periodically throughout the year.

These are typically carried out following periods when large numbers of commemorative items are placed within the cemetery, including:

- Christmas.
- Easter.
- Mother's Day.
- Father's Day.

Such clearance operations will normally occur approximately one month after the relevant occasion.

28. Tree Works

The Council will not normally accept liability for damage caused by severe weather, natural events or the unforeseen failure of a tree or branch where the risk could not reasonably have been identified or prevented. This does not exclude liability arising from the Council's negligence or breach of a legal duty.

29. Stone Masons

Stone masons carrying out work within Witney Town Council cemeteries must be registered with the Town Council.

The following documentation must be provided annually and maintained in a current and valid condition.

Public Liability Insurance

Stone masons must maintain Public Liability Insurance with a minimum indemnity value of £5 million.

Risk Assessment

A risk assessment covering all activities undertaken within a burial ground must be provided.

The risk assessment should address all aspects of memorial installation, repair, maintenance and removal activities conducted within the cemeteries.

Professional Registration

Stone masons must be registered under the National Association of Memorial Masons (NAMM) Register of Qualified Memorial Fixers (RQMF) scheme.

All works must be carried out in accordance with the NAMM Code of Working Practice.

30. Memorials

30.1 Memorial Application and Approval Process

A memorial may only be commissioned by the Grantee and must receive the written approval of Witney Town Council before it is manufactured or installed.

Where a memorial is intended to cover two adjoining grave plots, the applicant must hold the Exclusive Right of Burial for both plots.

A completed memorial application must be submitted to the Council and must include full details of the proposed memorial, including its dimensions, materials, inscription and design. The memorial must comply with the specifications set out in the Council's Memorial Sizes document.

A permanent memorial may only be installed on a lawn grave after 12 months have elapsed from the date of interment. This period allows the ground to settle and the grass cover to become established.

During the 12-month waiting period, a temporary plaque or wooden cross may be placed on the grave. A temporary marker must not exceed 10 centimetres in width and 25 centimetres in height. Temporary markers may be removed during grass seeding or other grave-maintenance works and placed in storage within the cemetery depot.

Before installation, the memorial delivered to the cemetery will be checked against the approved application. Installation will be refused where the memorial:

- differs from the approved application;
- does not comply with the Council's Memorial Sizes document; or
- has not received written approval from the Council.

Any memorial installed without permission, or which differs from the approved application, will be removed by the Council. The Grantee will be responsible for all associated removal, storage and, where applicable, reinstatement costs.

30.2 Memorial Materials, Designs and Inscriptions

With the exception of approved wooden crosses, memorials must be manufactured from stone.

All inscriptions, images, symbols, artwork and designs must be dignified, respectful and suitable for the cemetery environment. The Council reserves the right to refuse any inscription, image, symbol, artwork or design that it considers offensive, inappropriate or unsuitable.

Every memorial must display the cemetery section and grave number on the rear of the base stone in lettering at least 15 millimetres high.

The Council's decision regarding the acceptability of the material, inscription or design of a memorial will be final.

30.3 Headstones

All headstones installed within Witney Town Council cemeteries must comprise:

- A foundation slab.
- A base stone.
- A headstone.

The upper surface of the foundation slab must be installed level with the surrounding ground level.

30.4 Monoliths

Where a monolith is installed without a foundation or shoe, a minimum of one-third of the total stone height must be located below ground level.

Where a monolith is installed using a shoe or foundation system, at least one-third of the total structure, including its foundation, must be located below ground level.

The maximum height of a monolith is 111 centimetres with at least 37 centimetres installed below ground level.

30.5 Wooden Crosses

Wooden crosses are permitted within the cemeteries provided they are constructed in a professional and durable manner. A memorial application must still be submitted.

The application must include a detailed drawing or photograph along with full measurements of each component of the cross.

Conditions of Approval

Wooden crosses must:

- Comply with the maximum memorial dimensions.
- Have at least one-third of their total height located below ground level.
- Be manufactured from hardwood.
- Not contain ornate or excessive decorative features.
- Display the name of the deceased through engraving or an attached plaque.
- Display the section and grave number on the reverse side.

Wooden crosses shall be inspected annually to assess their condition.

If a wooden cross deteriorates, the Town Council will contact the owner of the Exclusive Right of Burial and request restoration or removal. Where no action is taken within six weeks of the notification, cemetery operatives may remove the cross and place it into storage within the cemetery depot for no longer than 30 days before disposal.

30.6 Babies' and Children's Memorials

Due to the smaller dimensions of children's and baby graves, reduced memorial sizes apply.

The maximum permitted memorial height for these plots is 75 centimetres.

30.7 Memorial Tablets

Only sloping desk-style memorial tablets are permitted within the ashes path at Windrush Cemetery and must comply with the dimensions and specifications set out in the Memorial Sizes document.

31. Placement of Items on Graves and Gardens

Graves may be adorned with flowers and small commemorative items made from safe, non-hazardous materials, including wood, plastic and ceramic. Ceramic items are permitted as they generally present less risk than glass, although they should be sufficiently robust and maintained in a safe condition. All items must be placed within the designated garden area or on the memorial foundation slab. Items placed elsewhere, or found to be broken or hazardous, may be removed without prior notice and stored at the cemetery depot for collection. Witney Town Council accepts no responsibility for items lost or damaged during removal or storage.

Prohibited Items

The following items are not permitted within the cemeteries. This list is not exhaustive, and Witney Town Council may prohibit other items where necessary for safety, maintenance or the appropriate appearance of the cemetery:

- Glass objects, including candle holders, photo frames and ornaments containing glass.
- Shrubs and trees planted in or placed on graves.
- Electrical items, including solar-powered lights.
- Fencing, kerbing or other structures intended to define or enclose a grave.
- Large ornamental items, including statues, unless approved by the Council.
- Balloons and large floral displays as permanent grave adornments.

Balloons and large floral tributes placed following an interment may remain temporarily but will normally be removed seven days after the interment.

Prohibited, unsafe or unauthorised items may be removed without prior notice and disposed of immediately. Where an item appears to have significant financial or personal value, the Council may retain it temporarily for collection. However, the Council cannot reasonably identify the sentimental value of every item and does not guarantee that any removed item will be retained.

Where appropriate, the Council may contact the holder of the Exclusive Right of Burial and allow up to six weeks for a large or unauthorised item to be removed. If no action is taken, the Council may remove, store or dispose of the item.

32. Garden Area

All lawn graves include a designated garden area which may be used by the owner of the Exclusive Right of Burial for the placement of permitted commemorative items.

The permitted garden area is the width of the memorial foundation slab and extends to a depth of 45 centimetres from the base of the memorial.

Where no memorial has been installed and the owner wishes only to create a garden area, the permitted area may be extended to a maximum square area measuring 90 centimetres by 90 centimetres.

The Exclusive Right of Burial must still be purchased before a garden area may be established.

Fencing, kerbing or other forms of enclosure are not permitted around garden areas and shrubs and trees must not be planted within garden areas.

33. Vaults

The construction and reopening of vaults shall be strictly managed by Witney Town Council.

Applications may be submitted for the construction of the following types of vault at Tower Hill Cemetery or Windrush Cemetery:

- Brick vaults.
- Concrete block vaults.

- Concrete chambers.
- Vault liners.

Applications will be assessed on a case-by-case basis and may be refused where the installation of a vault is not considered practical or appropriate.

Factors that may influence a decision include:

- Ground conditions.
- Availability of suitable plot sizes.
- The presence of neighbouring oversized plots.
- Achievable excavation depth.

Vault construction should ideally be undertaken at the same time as the reservation of the grave space.

Where a vault is requested at the time of an interment application, the burial timescale shall be determined at the discretion of Witney Town Council.

Charges for vault construction shall comprise:

- The contractor construction cost incurred by the Council.
- An administration and project management fee.

Interments into vaults shall be charged at the applicable single-depth burial rate.

Reopening of Vaults

Notice of a request to reopen an existing vault must be provided to Witney Town Council before an interment booking is made.

This requirement allows Council staff sufficient time to:

- Open the vault.
- Inspect its condition.
- Measure the internal dimensions.
- Confirm the maximum coffin size that can be accommodated.

34. Review and Adoption Information

These Cemetery Regulations shall be monitored and reviewed by the Council's Policy, Governance and Finance Committee every twelve months, or sooner where changes in legislation require review.

Adopted by the Policy, Governance and Finance Committee on **xxx**

Minute Number: **xxxx**

Proposed Review Date: **xxx**.

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