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Briefing Note

Cemetery Capacity Increase Assessment

For Finance, Governance and Estates Committee 16 October 2025

Introduction

This briefing note set out a proposal to assess the viability of creating additional burial plots at South Avenue Cemetery, due to limited remaining capacity. The results will help secure future burial provision and guide responsible use of the remaining space.

The cemetery currently has only seven new burial plots available. With a steady demand for new interments, we are quickly approaching full capacity. Several areas within the cemetery have been identified as having potential for additional plots, but require professional assessment due to unknown presence of unmarked graves or remains, possible underground obstructions (tree roots, utilities) and ground conditions and drainage concerns.

We would also like to explore the introduction of half-size ashes-only plots with headstones, to accommodate the increasing number of ashes burials where families prefer a headstone.

A cemetery map has been prepared, and photographs of the proposed areas have been taken to support this proposal.

Works Required

In order to assess the viability of creating additional burial and ashes plots, it is proposed that a topographical survey, ground penetrating radar (GPR) survey, and desktop utility search be undertaken across selected areas of the cemetery grounds.

A quotation has been obtained for the following services:

- Topographical Survey – £1,430 + VAT
- Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) Survey – £2,880 + VAT
- Desktop Utility Search – £425 + VAT

Total Cost: £4,735 + VAT

These surveys will provide a detailed assessment of land suitability, covering:

- The presence of unmarked graves or human remains
- Potential underground obstructions, such as tree roots and underground utilities
- Ground conditions and drainage capability for safe future use

Initial site assessments carried out in house suggest the following potential:

- Up to 66 new full-size burial plots
- 8 of these are located on the newly formed mound area and are considered immediately suitable for use
- 21 half-size ashes-only plots, with a further 15 possible depending on drainage suitability

In addition, several plots appear to have been reserved but possibly never paid for, and may be available for reallocation if confirmed as unpurchased, further improving capacity.

A cemetery map has been marked to indicate the proposed areas for survey, and photographs are included below to show current site conditions.

Justification

Each new burial plot currently generates £475 in income, with additional potential from:

- Double-depth interments – £238 (second interment)
- Ashes interments – £120 per set
- Memorial permits – £177 per application

The identification of 10 new burial plots would recover the full cost of the survey works.

The surveys will:

- Ensure informed and respectful use of land
- Avoid the disturbance of unmarked or unknown graves
- Support long-term planning for burial provision
- Clarify opportunities for reallocating unused reserved plots
- Enable the introduction of ashes-only areas in response to changing demand

This is an important step in managing the cemetery as a parish and providing for future needs of the local community.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Committee authorise the proposed survey work to confirm land suitability for increased burial capacity at a cost of £4,735+VAT. The results will help secure future burial provision and guide responsible use of the remaining space. The Committee can either use the Cemetery Earmarked Reserve or include the cost of this work in the 2026/7 budget.

'S' Mound – potential "half size" plots along western boundary for ashes in a burial plot



'L' Area – potential space at the southern end of rows

