Ross-on-Wye Town Council

Cemetery Administrative and Operational Policy

THE FOLLOWING POLICY SHOULD BE READ IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE CEMETERY MEMORIAL REGULATIONS.

Purchase of Exclusive Burial Rights

1.
Residents of the parish, and those who die within the parish boundary, have a right to be buried in the Cemetery subject to payment of the appropriate fee. Anyone who dies in a retirement or care home outside the parish, but who was previously resident in the parish immediately before they moved into care, will be treated as if they were still resident in the parish at the date of death. Non-residents may also be buried in the Cemetery subject to payment of the appropriate fee and provided, in the opinion of The Appointed Officer, there is space available to accommodate them.

2.
The Appointed Officer will determine which grave or cremation plot should be allocated in liaison with the Cemetery Officer. The purchase of Exclusive Burial Rights does not confer title to the land and therefore the grave or cremation plot remains the property of the Town Council.

3.
In accordance with article 10 of the Local Authorities' Cemeteries Order 1977 the Town Council may at any time grant to a resident of the parish and on payment of the appropriate fee, the right to bury remains in a grave or cremation plot within 50 years of the date of the deed. Exclusive Burial Rights to a grave space may be purchased by a maximum of four owners.

4.
If the owner of the Exclusive Rights dies, it is assumed that they gave permission to have themselves interred in the grave. After this the Rights become part of their estate and may be left in a will, or assigned by their executors to someone else. If the Rights are not specifically mentioned in the will, they will form part of the 'residue' of the will, usually willed as 'and all my other worldly goods' at the end of the will. Please seek advice from the Appointed Officer to arrange a transfer.

5.
Exclusive Rights may be transferred to another person on application to The Appointed Officer and on payment of the appropriate fee. The transfer will be treated as if it is a new purchase but will not alter the expiry date of the deed. If the new owner wishes to be buried in the grave and is a non-resident, the appropriate fee will apply.

6.
Exclusive Rights may be surrendered at any time, without refund of the purchase fee, on return of the deed to The Appointed Officer. If the owner of Exclusive Rights fails to notify The Appointed Officer of a change of address and cannot be contacted subsequently, the deed will

be deemed to have been surrendered. Before terminating the deed, The Appointed Officer will write to the last known address of the owner of the Exclusive Rights. If no reply is received within four weeks of the date of the letter The Appointed Officer will contact any known relatives who are resident in the parish to ask them to contact the owner of the Exclusive Rights. If no contact can be made within twelve weeks of the original letter to the owner of the Exclusive Rights the deed will be terminated. If contact is made after this time the deed may be restored, on its original terms, at the discretion of The Appointed Officer.

7.
Exclusive rights will be given for a period of fifty years. After the expiry of the right, the owner may apply to renew the lease for a further 50 years which may be granted subject to the payment of the fee in force for purchasing the exclusive rights at the time of renewal.

Digging of Graves and Cremation Plots

8.
The Town Council will arrange for the relevant grave plot to be dug. Cremation plots will be dug by the council's amenities operatives. Graves can only be dug by Town Council contractors.

9.
All graves will be double graves for two people and must be dug to a depth of seven feet. Cremation plots must be dug no more than 14 inches square and to a depth of 24 inches.

Burials

10.
Applications for interments must be delivered to The Appointed Officer between the hours of 9.30am and 1.00pm except Saturdays, Sundays and all Bank Holidays on the appropriate form, together with the registrar's form and the appropriate fee at least five working days prior to the burial.

11.
A member of the council staff will be present at all interments to check all coffins and cremated remains' caskets.

12.
Graves will be filled immediately after the mourners have left.

13.
The Town Council reserves the right to defer a burial (e.g. in extreme weather conditions).

Headstones, Vases, Tablets and other Monuments

14.
The Appointed Officer is responsible for ensuring that all new headstones, vases, tablets and other monuments conform to the Cemetery Memorial Regulations currently in force. All new headstones, vases, tablets and other monuments cannot be erected until they have been approved in writing by The Appointed Officer and the appropriate fee received. Such memorials may only be erected by a BRAMM registered mason and installed in compliance with the current edition of BS8415.

15.
The Appointed Officer is also responsible for ensuring that the inscriptions on new headstones, vases, tablets and other monuments are in keeping with existing standards. Additional inscriptions cannot be added until written permission from The Appointed Officer has been given and the appropriate fee received.

16.
The Town Council will not be responsible for any other artefacts placed around a grave area. In the lawned area of the Cemetery this practice is not allowed due to the difficulties caused to grounds maintenance operations, and also the potential to cause distress to other Cemetery visitors.

17.
To enable the ground to settle sufficiently approved headstones cannot be erected within six months of the burial, except in the case of infant burials for which headstones can be erected as soon as deemed appropriate by The Appointed Officer.

18.
Memorials must be erected to be in line with the other memorials in the same row and will be checked after fixing by the cemetery officer, as all memorials must harmonise with the existing memorials.

Maintenance of monuments

19.
The applicant, or his/her heirs or successors, is responsible for making arrangements for ensuring that the headstone, vase, tablet or any other monument is maintained in good condition.

20.
The Town Council will inspect each memorial on a regular basis to assess its condition. All headstones over 18" must be tested and prior notice of the inspection will be advertised on the Town Council's website, Facebook page and the cemetery noticeboard. Notice will be given at least one month prior to testing. After each inspection, the Cemetery Officer will provide a record of inspection and a report to The Town Clerk. The condition of each headstone, vase, tablet or other monument will be categorised as:

1 – DANGEROUS. Action required. Memorial should be laid flat, but a more respectful action is for memorial to be staked and banded.

2 – UNSAFE. Action required. Memorial to be staked and banded.

3 – SAFE BUT SOME MOVEMENT. No action required (re-visit in one year)

4- SAFE. No action required. (re-visit in five years)

21.
The results of all inspections will be recorded onto the cemetery software and where memorials have been categorised 1 or 2, the Cemetery Officer will write to the owners of Exclusive Rights. If no reply is received, the Town Council will refer to Section 6 of this document and if no owner can be established, the Town Council will be responsible for making the memorial safe. If the Exclusive Rights have expired and have not been renewed,

(see Section 7), Ross Town Council are responsible for making the memorial safe.

Fees and Charges

22.
Fees and Charges are reviewed regularly by the Town Council and come into effect once the review has been approved.

23.
Current fees and charges are published on the Town Council's website at www.rosstc-herefordshire.gov.uk.

Breach of conditions

24.
Sanctions may be put in place for any contractor found to be in breach of the Cemetery Administrative and Operational Policy and the Cemetery Memorial Regulations. Failure to abide by instructions issued by the Town Council in relation to any burial or memorial management may result in a suspension which will be imposed by the Town Clerk or Cemetery Officers in conjunction with the Amenities Sub-Committee Chairman. The duration of the suspension will be determined by the seriousness of the breach.

Grounds Maintenance

25.
The Town Council is responsible for grounds maintenance at the Cemetery, but new graves will be allowed to settle for six months before being levelled and re-lawned.

Cemetery Rules

26.
In addition to the Memorial Regulations, the following rules shall apply and be displayed on the Cemetery Notice Board.

- Cremated remains - the scattering of ashes is not permitted in the Cemetery.
- Dogs - No dogs are allowed in the Cemetery with the exception of assistance dogs.
- Games - no games, balls, sports, riding of bicycles, skateboards, roller blades, etc. are allowed in the cemetery.
- Vehicles - please be considerate when parking and if there is an interment taking place, park outside the cemetery.
- Glass vases, jars or bottles made of glass are not allowed within the cemetery and the Town Council reserves the right to remove them without prior notice.
- Solar and wind powered items - lights, windmills and windsocks are not allowed in the cemetery. They may be removed without notice.
- A bin is provided for refuse from the cemetery only. Un-authorised use is not permitted.

Reviewed by the Amenities Sub-Committee October 2026