

## Report to Cabinet

**Subject:** Saturday Ashes Internments  
**Date:** 26 March 2026  
**Author:** Andy Burgin, Parks Operations Manager

### Wards Affected

All Wards

### Purpose

This report presents the findings of a review undertaken by Environmental Services to assess the business case, feasibility, and operational implications of introducing Saturday ashes internments, following the motion presented to Council in January 2024.

The report outlines the costs of providing the service on two Saturdays per month on a trial basis, as set out in the motion. Along with the costs and options if this service was to be implemented going forward, current position, identifies key considerations, and sets out a range of options for Cabinet to consider.

### Key Decision

This is not a key decision.

### Recommendation

#### THAT Cabinet:

- 1) Considers the information within the report.
- 2) Reject the proposal due to additional budget that would be required, and the risk of reputational damage to the Council.

### Background

A review was undertaken by Environmental Services to assess the feasibility of introducing Saturday ashes internments for a trial period of six months. Consultation with the Cemetery Administrator found that there is no historic or current demand for Saturday ashes internments, over three years they have very rarely been asked about ashes internments on Saturdays. Due to this very low demand, it is difficult to plan how to implement a programme of 2 Saturdays per month.

The review did highlight that Saturday is the day when most residents visit our cemeteries to pay their respects and maintain the graves of their loved ones. The usual procedure during a funeral is for the cemetery gates to be closed due to the restrictions on vehicle movements around our cemeteries while the funeral procession is in the cemetery grounds as they are parked close to the grave side causing blockages to the roads. This would likely lead to an increase in the number of complaints due to the impact on families wanting to visit loved one's graves whilst the cemetery is closed.

## 1 Proposal

- 1.1 Cabinet to consider the information contained in the report and reject the proposal due to the reputational damage that cancelling bookings would cause if there were no volunteers to work on a Saturday, along with the potential for an increased number of complaints from closing the cemetery gates, and the additional budget that would be required.

## 2 Service delivery

- 2.1 Overtime would be used only when a Saturday interment is booked, offering maximum flexibility.
- 2.2 The model relies on voluntary uptake from trained staff. If insufficient staff volunteer, the Council may be unable to deliver the service, causing reputational harm and distress to families.
- 2.3 Estimated cost per Saturday for operational service delivery of ashes interment at one site, excluding administration cost and operational expenses are set out in table 1 below (calculated at 2025/26 fees and pay rates)
- 2.4 If an afternoon booking is taken it would require the team to work the whole day as it unlikely that any of the team would volunteer to work only in the afternoon on a Saturday.

**Table 1**

Type of Internment	Staffing Cost	Fee	Service Cost	Total For Trail Period
Ashes interment (am one booking)	£365	£247	£118	£1,539
Ashes interment (pm or two bookings)	£819.60	£247 or £494 (2 bookings)	£484 or £237	£6,289 or £3,078

- 2.5 The information in table one only shows the costs of service delivery at one cemetery, if bookings were taken for more than one site the service cost would double.
- 2.6 With no available information on the number of internments the Council can expect to be booked it is not possible to project what the overall cost of providing the enhanced service would be over a six-month period. Based on the current fees and pay rates the costs of providing the service would not be covered by the income.

### **3 Operational Risks**

- 3.1 Reliance on voluntary overtime may lead to service failure and be reputationally harmful to the Council due to having to cancel bookings.
- 3.2 Increased sickness due to reduction in rest periods at weekends for frontline staff.
- 3.2 Increased complaints due to cemeteries being closed for periods on Saturdays.

### **4 Financial Implications**

- 4.1 Due to the number of staff required and the enhanced rate for overtime the current fee does not cover the cost. Therefore, additional budget is required to conduct this trial which could be up to £6,289.
- 4.2 The demand for Saturday internments of Ashes is currently unknown therefore unable to estimate total cost of trial along with the income it could generate.
- 4.3 Costs may exceed estimates if higher graded members of the team are asked to work overtime to deliver the enhanced service.

### **5 Legal Implications**

- 5.1 The powers and duties of the Council to arrange funerals are within the Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984 and the Local Government Act 1972. The Council also has statutory duties under the Local Authorities' Cemeteries Order 1977 (LACO 1977) to manage and regulate cemeteries in a safe and dignified manner. There is no legal obligation to offer Saturday interments, many local authorities restrict interments to Monday – Friday due to staffing capacity and costs.
- 5.2 Introducing Saturday interments would create an additional operational function, and the Council must ensure it has sufficient trained staff available to deliver the service reliably. Failure to meet a published service offer, particularly if bookings

need to be cancelled due to insufficient staffing, may expose the Council to legal risk, including complaints.

- 5.3 Given that Saturday is the most popular day for public access to cemeteries, the temporary closure of cemetery gates during interments could lead to access related complaints or allegations of inconsistent treatment. While these issues may not give rise to direct legal implications, they could have reputational consequences and increase the risk of complaints.

## **6 Equality Impact Assessment**

- 6.1 Appendix 1

## **7 Carbon Reduction / Sustainability Implications**

- 7.1 None.

## **8 Background Papers**

- 8.1 None.

## **9 Reasons for Recommendations**

- 9.1 To ensure the reputation of the Council is maintained, reduce the risk of increased costs which would not be offset by income.

### **Statutory Officer approval**

**Approved by: Scott Anderson**

**Date: 16/03/2026**

**On behalf of the Chief Financial Officer**

**Approved by: Laura Chaplin**

**Date: 16/03/2026**

**On behalf of the Monitoring Officer**