



THIS ITEM IS FOR INFORMATION ONLY

(Please note that "Information Only" reports do not require Integrated Impact Assessments, Legal or Finance Comments as no decision is being taken)

Title of meeting:	Culture, Leisure and Economic Development Decision Meeting
Subject:	Cemetery Memorial Management Policy
Date of meeting:	28 July 2023
Report by:	Director of Culture, Leisure and Regulatory Services
Wards affected:	All

1. Requested by Councillor Steve Pitt

1.1 Purpose

To advise the Cabinet Member on the updated Memorial Safety Policy to be implemented in Portsmouth's cemeteries.

2. Background

- 2.1** Historically there have been several accidents in cemeteries around the UK, some of which have resulted in fatalities, due to memorials being unsafe. Whilst there have not been any fatalities in Portsmouth, it is prudent to formally adopt a memorial safety procedure. The procedure outlined in this report has been updated in consideration of professional standards (see 2.3 below) and also benchmarked against the adopted procedures of other local authorities.
- 2.2** Any memorial purchased and erected on a grave space is owned by the registered grave owner and it is that person or persons who are ultimately responsible for its upkeep and maintenance. Whilst the memorials are the responsibility of the registered grave owner, Portsmouth City Council has a responsibility for ensuring that its sites are safe for both staff to work in and for the public to visit.
- 2.3** The Memorial Management Policy sets out the actions the Council will take to ensure its cemeteries remain safe. All works carried out are following guidance from The Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management ("ICCM") and in accordance with good industry practice. The order of works to be carried out will be determined by a site-based risk assessment with higher priority areas being undertaken first.

3. Memorial Fixing

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- 3.1** All memorials over 24.5 inches in height must be fixed to, and fully compliant, with the current British Standard (BS8415). This also extends to ANY memorial over 24.5 inches that is being re-fixed following an interment or removal for any other reason.
- 3.2** The key requirements are that memorials must be fixed to an approved and suitable foundation and must be further secured using an approved locking or anchoring system. Further details on the materials and methods used for fixing and re-fixing of memorials can be found at www.bramm-uk.org.
- 3.3** Any re-fixing or repair works to memorials must be completed by a British Register of Accredited Memorial Mason ("BRAMM" - or other equivalent scheme). Temporary works to make memorials safe and remove the risk of danger will be undertaken by trained cemetery staff or registered memorial masons as required.
- 3.4** All memorials in Portsmouth Cemeteries have been fitted using the current approved anchoring/locking system since 2012 and are checked within twelve months following installation.

4. Memorial Inspections

- 4.1** All memorials over 24 inches in height in all cemeteries will be inspected by trained staff at least once during a rolling 5 year period to assess their safety. This will be done through both a visual assessment and a basic hand test to determine if there is movement in the memorial and to what extent.
- 4.2** Prior to any inspections being undertaken notices will be placed around the cemetery to notify the public accordingly.
- 4.3** Memorials under 24 inches in height in all cemeteries are deemed as "low risk" of causing injury and will be checked on a visual basis only.
- 4.4** The individual undertaking the assessment will make the decision on the memorials overall safety based on a dynamic risk assessment for which they have been trained. Once inspected each memorial will fall into one of three categories, detailed as follows:

RED – Memorial is unsafe and poses a risk and will require immediate attention to make safe and/or protect from the public.

AMBER – Memorial is safe but there are minor concerns and it should be reassessed in 12 months' time to ensure it has not deteriorated further.

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GREEN – Memorial is Safe and should be re-inspected in 5 years as part of the next round of inspections or as part of any other check that may occur, for example when checking memorials around a planned burial ahead of excavation of the grave.

4.5 Staff undertaking the inspections will record the details of every memorial and an assessment of its safety using the categories above. These details will be recorded onto the Bereavement Services administration system. The details will include:

- Date of Inspection
- Name of Inspector
- Grave Identification (Section and Number)
- Safety colour of memorial (red, amber, green)
- Details of any actions taken

5. Actions Post Inspection

5.1 Should a Memorial be identified as RED and fail the inspection, staff will need to take immediate action to make that memorial temporarily safe or cordon it off until permanent repairs can be made by the grave owner. These actions will be based on several factors and the best solution will be administered by the memorial inspection team based on their assessment of the memorial and the surrounding area. Any works will be undertaken by registered memorial masons as required. These actions may include:

5.1.1 Laying the memorial flat – This will be the preferred course of action and in most cases this will invariably be where a memorial can be laid down on or within an existing kerb set so as not to cause a new trip hazard. A notice will be placed near to the memorial advising that such action has occurred.

5.1.2 Staked and Banded – The memorial will be fastened tight to a wooden post which will act as a temporary support. The banding will also hold a warning notice. The stake and band will be re-inspected every 12 months to ensure neither have deteriorated.

5.1.3 Monolith Conversion – This involves digging out a depth roughly one third of the overall height of the memorial from the last joint in order that it can be sunk into the ground and made safe. The memorial will have a suitable material wrapped around the part under the ground and a memorial warning notice will be added to the grave.

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Due to foundations, it may be necessary for the memorial to be moved slightly forward into the grave space to avoid existing foundations.

5.1.4 Cordoned Off – In some cases it may be necessary to cordon off a particular memorial or an area containing several memorials due to their safety. Warning signs will be attached to any cordon placed around a memorial or group of memorials.

5.1.5 Removal – In extreme cases it may be necessary to remove a memorial from the grave and place into storage if none of the above options are suitable.

5.2 All of the above are regarded as ‘Temporary Fixes’ and should not be seen as a permanent solution to deal with an unsafe memorial - the intention is to reduce or remove the risk of a memorial causing harm or damage to someone.

5.3 Very large memorials, those over 8 feet will be visually assessed and if any concerns are recorded the memorial will be cordoned off and if it is safe and possible to do so the cemetery staff will carry out works to ensure the memorials are safe. If the cemetery staff are not able to make the memorial safe, arrangements will be made for a specialist contractor to undertake an inspection and provide a detailed report including costs and options to make safe.

6. Informing Grave Owners

6.1 The cemeteries team will endeavour to contact the grave owner where any action has been taken due to a memorial failing a safety inspection. Correspondence will only be sent providing that the grave owner is not recorded as being in the grave or if it is apparent that the registered address no longer exists. For any memorials over 50 years of age, no correspondence will be sent but a notice will be left on the grave space for a period of not less than 12 months.

6.2 For any memorial that fails an inspection that has been installed within the previous 6 years, the service will contact the memorial mason directly to request repairs be made to ensure the memorial is fully compliant with BS8415.

6.3 Following adoption of this policy by the Council, the service will:

6.3.1 communicate the policy on the Council website;

6.3.2 inform customers in the post burial information pack;

7. Grave Owners Responsibilities



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- 7.1** The registered grave owner has a responsibility to ensure the memorial is made safe through being properly re-fixed to the current BS8415 standard and works must be undertaken by a qualified and BRAMM registered Memorial Mason. *'Do it yourself'* repairs by families will not be permitted.
- 7.2** All costs associated with organising a memorial to be repaired, including the reversal of any works undertaken by Cemetery Services staff, remain the responsibility of the grave owner.

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Signed by
Stephen Baily
Director of Culture, Leisure and Regulatory Services

Appendices: None

Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location