

CREWKERNE AND WEST CREWKERNE
JOINT BURIAL COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Joint Burial Committee held on Tuesday 6 October 2026 at 18.45 in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Market Square, Crewkerne

PRESENT:

Cllrs. M. Best (Chair), J. Borland, C. Rawe and A. Samuel.

Also in attendance: G. Hughes, Town Clerk and A. Legg, Administration Officer and one member of the public

026 TO NOTE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

26/27

Councillors Broom, Cosgrove, Draycott and Holt (personal reasons).

It was **RESOLVED** to accept the reasons for absence.

027 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

26/27 in items on the agenda

No declarations of interest were made at this point.

028 TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 1 JULY 2026

26/27

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 July 2026 were APPROVED as a true and accurate record.

029 OPEN FORUM

26/27

A representative of a local funeral director raised the following points regarding the cemetery:

- Whether a new entrance would be provided for the new section.
- Whether any part of the cemetery would be deconsecrated to accommodate multi-faith graves.
- The maximum number of interments permitted in a grave, noting that this had previously been four, with the option of six.
- The minimum periods required before headstones can be installed. This was not considered an issue, provided the requirements are clearly communicated to funeral directors.
- Concerns regarding noise levels arising from the nearby Taylor Wimpey building works.

Councillors advised that new hearse access may be possible once the adjacent development is complete. The Clerk was asked to put the funeral directors in contact with Taylor Wimpey to discuss noise concerns.

There are currently no plans to revisit the deconsecration of any part of the cemetery for multi-faith graves. The number of permitted interments would be discussed later in the meeting.

It was explained that some coffins now use materials that biodegrade more quickly, which can cause ground movement and headstones to sink. The minimum period before headstone installation helps reduce this risk and avoid additional costs to families if a headstone needs to be reinstalled.

Councillors Best and Borland, as Chair and Vice-Chair, together with the Clerk, offered to meet with representatives of both local funeral directors before each Joint Burial Committee meeting to discuss any matters they wished to raise.

030 CLERKS PROGRESS REPORT

26/27

The Clerk reported the following:

- The chapel is now open daily. A visitors' welcome sign, visitors' book, history information card and donation box have been provided. Any donations received will be earmarked for the conservation and repair of the cemetery.
- The cemetery open day recently took place, attracting 38 attendees, a significant increase on previous years. The Clerk thanked Stoodleys for providing an informative tour.
- An increase in deer activity has been noted since Taylor Wimpey commenced building works near the cemetery, with deer moving closer to the lodge. Grounds staff are consequently having to fence off more trees and shrubs to protect them from damage.

031 FINANCIAL MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION

26/27

a. To receive the financial update report for quarter two

Councillors noted with approval the report.

b. To consider the allocated reserves

The reserves were noted, and the Clerk was asked to transfer funds from the unallocated reserves to the Trees reserve.

c. To note the receipts report

The receipts were noted, and Councillors expressed a preference for this in a landscape format.

032 HEADSTONE INSTALLATION

26/27

To consider introducing minimum periods of 6 months for ashes plots and 12 months for burial plots before a headstone may be installed

Councillors discussed the need for longer settling periods due to the variety of coffin materials now in use. It was **RESOLVED** to introduce a minimum period of six months before installing a headstone on an ashes plot and 12 months on a burial plot.

033 NUMBER OF INTERMENTS

26/27

To review the number of interments permitted in a plot

A representative of a local funeral director explained that ashes must be the final interment, as previously interred remains cannot legally be disturbed. Unlike burials, there is no prescribed legal depth for ashes. Historical records do not always show their exact location, and ashes may be buried beneath kerbs.

Councillors discussed the limited space available for additional names on memorials. Alternatives suggested included flat tablets, plinths and memorial vases. The representative also advised that ashes in the Old Section had historically been interred loose rather than in caskets.

It was **RESOLVED** that, with effect from 1 January 2027:

- a) In the New Section, double-depth plots would accommodate up to two bodies and six ashes, and ashes plots would accommodate up to four ashes. Interments in the Old Section would be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- b) Triple-depth plots would be permitted on request.
- c) Triple-depth plots would accommodate up to three bodies and six ashes in the New Section. Interments in the Old Section would be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- d) The maximum number of ashes interments permitted in a triple-depth plot would be the same as for a double-depth plot.
- e) The location of ashes within each plot would be recorded as accurately as reasonably practical.

The Clerk would prepare a template to record the location of ashes.

034 CEMETERY RECORDS SEARCHES

26/27 To consider introducing a fee for searches of cemetery records

The Administration Officer reported an increase in the number of requests received. Following discussion, it was **RESOLVED** that a fee of £40 per individual request be introduced to cover officer time, and that the non-resident fee shall not apply to such requests.

035 DOUBLE FEES

26/27 To review the policy for applying double fees

It was **RESOLVED** to defer consideration of Agenda Item 035 26/27 'To review the policy for applying double fees', until later in the meeting.

036 OUT OF HOURS INTERMENT POLICY

26/27 To consider and approve an Out of Hours Interments policy

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the Out of Hours Interments policy.

037 TO REVIEW AND APPROVE THE CEMETERY RULES:

26/27 a. Cemetery General Rules

Councillors reviewed the Cemetery General Rules and **RESOLVED** to approve the revised document, subject to the inclusion of a definition of the term "Committee", the addition of a prohibition on the release of Chinese lanterns and balloons within the cemetery, and minor grammatical amendments.

Councillors noted an increase in the number of items being placed on graves, including vases positioned outside grave boundaries, which was making grass maintenance more difficult. It was suggested that the Clerk prepare a guidance leaflet for funeral directors to issue to new grave owners, outlining the importance of keeping items within grave boundaries, and that similar guidance be displayed on the cemetery noticeboard.

Councillors also noted that grave owners may maintain their own graves, provided they are kept to an appropriate standard and do not interfere with adjacent graves. Where graves are not maintained appropriately, items may be removed and stored by the Council.

b. Cemetery Monumental Mason Rules

Councillors reviewed the Monumental Mason Rules and **RESOLVED** to approve the revised document, subject to the inclusion of a definition of the term "Committee".

c. Cemetery Funeral Director Rules

Councillors reviewed the Funeral Director Rules and **RESOLVED** to approve the revised document. The Funeral Director added that cremation certificates may occasionally be received on the day of interment and that, for some multi-faith burials, mourners may participate in backfilling the grave. Councillors noted that this aspect of the Rules could be reviewed if the cemetery is deconsecrated in the future.

038 **GROUND'S MAINTENANCE 2027**

26/27 To review the grounds maintenance arrangements for the 2027 season

Councillors agreed that the transfer of cemetery maintenance to the Grounds Team and open spaces maintenance to the contractor had been successful. It was noted that the estimated cost of the Grounds Team maintaining the cemetery for a season was £18,304, representing only a modest increase in cost. Councillors also considered that using a contractor to maintain the open spaces presented less risk than using a contractor for cemetery maintenance.

Councillors commented that the cemetery looked beautiful, neat and tidy, and that the Grounds Team clearly took pride in their work. It was felt that the condition of the cemetery demonstrated that the site was respected and well cared for.

It was **RECOMMENDED** that the Grounds Team continue to undertake grounds maintenance at the cemetery until the end of October 2027, subject to approval by Full Council.

039 **TREE FELLING**

26/27 To consider quotations and whether to fell the identified tree

A dead cypress tree (T75) at the end of the driveway was discussed. Councillors commented on the symmetry provided by the pair of trees. It was noted that T75 had been confirmed as structurally sound and that there was no evidence that retaining it would pose a risk to the adjacent tree or that disease could spread from T75 to the adjacent tree.

It was **RESOLVED** to monitor the tree and not to fell it at this time.

040 **GARDEN OF REMEMBRANCE BOLLARDS AND CHAIN**

26/27 To consider quotations for the installation of bollards and a chain around the Garden of Remembrance

It was **RESOLVED** to purchase five bollards and 14 metres of chain, at a total cost of £717.25, to mark the area.

041 **BADGERS SETT**

26/27 To note the relocation of a sett adjacent to the cemetery

The committee **NOTED** Taylor Wimpey's intention to relocate and close the badger sett in the future.

042 **INSURANCE RENEWAL**

26/27 Consideration of a three-year agreement

It was **RESOLVED** to enter into a new three-year agreement with Aviva, at a renewal premium of £6,827.66 for the current year, representing a saving of £338.39.

043 TO RECEIVE FEEDBACK FROM RECENT INSPECTIONS.

26/27

Councillors commented on the significant improvement in the condition of the cemetery since the Grounds Team took over its maintenance. It was noted that the number of ornaments left on graves had increased. The Joint Burial Committee thanked the cemetery volunteers and welcomed the repair of some of the older graves.

044 TO APPROVE THE APPLICATIONS, TRANSFERS AND MEMORIALS RECEIVED

26/27

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the applications, transfers and memorials received.

045 MATTERS OF REPORT

26/27

Councillor Rawe suggested entering the Cemetery of the Year competition. The Clerk explained that the cemetery had been entered this year, but the entry had to be withdrawn due to issues with the previous grounds contractor, which had since been resolved. The funeral director present offered to share drone images of the cemetery with the Clerk. It was also noted that a bat in the chapel had been triggering the alarm.

046 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

26/27

Tuesday 1 December 2026 at 18.45 in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Market Square, Crewkerne.

It was RESOLVED that, in view of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, the press and public be excluded and instructed to withdraw.

CONFIDENTIAL SESSION: EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC – Confidential, personal and sensitive information

047 CEMETERY FEES

26/27

To consider cemetery fees in relation to a specific burial

A specific case was considered involving a deceased person who had been a long-term resident of the town but had moved into a care home four years before her death. It was noted that, under the current rules, double fees would apply. Councillors discussed the limited availability of care home places within the town.

It was **RESOLVED** that the single fees be applied in this case.

048 DOUBLE FEES (deferred from Minute 035 26/27)

26/27

To review the policy for applying double fees

It was **RESOLVED** that double fees would apply where the deceased's address at the time of death was outside the parishes of Crewkerne and West Crewkerne, except where they had moved away to receive residential care. The existing provision allowing resident fees where the deceased died within 12 months of moving out of the parishes would remain unchanged.

The meeting closed at 20.30

Signed.....

Dated.....

JBC6OCT2026