

Bereavement Services - Burial Strategy

Relevant Portfolio Holder		Councillor Whittaker
Portfolio Holder Consulted		Yes
Relevant Assistant Director		Simon Parry, Assistant Director of Environmental and Housing Property Services
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Wards Affected		All
Ward Councillor(s) consulted		N/A
Relevant Council Priority		Economic Development & Environment
Non-Key Decision		
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.		

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Cabinet is asked to RESOLVE that

- 1) The Bromsgrove District Council Burial Strategy be approved.**

and to note that

- 2) A further report will be prepared for Cabinet's consideration in due to course in respect of burial provision in Bromsgrove**

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1** In 2014 the Bereavement Services Team worked up a plan for expanding burial provision into Council owned adjoining fields at the Catshill Cemetery . This would provide in excess of 65 years of burial space at a 5-year average burial rate.
- 2.2** In more recent times, the same plot of land has been offered up for potential new housing provision putting a lack of suitable burial space in Bromsgrove sharply back on the agenda.

- 2.3 A Burial Strategy is crucial for the Council because it ensures long-term, respectful, and inclusive management of burial spaces while meeting legal, cultural and environmental needs.
- 2.4 Burial space is finite, and the Council must plan ahead to avoid shortages. This strategy will help forecast future demand and a suitable trigger point for beginning an exercise for seeking expansion to an existing site or seeking a new site in a timely fashion.
- 2.5 Without prior planning, the Council risks running out of burial plots, leading to distress for families and logistical challenges.
- 2.6 This Burial Strategy will also ensure cemeteries continue to accommodate diverse religious and cultural practices, such as Muslim and Jewish burial requirements or Hindu cremation preferences.
- 2.7 The Council must comply with laws such as the Burial Act 1857, registration of Burials Act 1864, Local Authorities Cemeteries Order 1977, Local Government Act 1972 and the Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984, which govern cemetery management and public health funerals.
- 2.8 This strategy will help align Burial Services with local planning policies and national legislation.
- 2.9 Cemeteries are valuable green spaces that offer areas for reflection and biodiversity. This strategy ensures our spaces are well-maintained and accessible.
- 2.10 The strategy outlines a clear vision: to ensure that all residents have access to dignified burial options that reflect their beliefs, traditions and personal wishes. It establishes key objectives around service quality, environmental sustainability, future capacity planning and community engagement.
 - 2.10.1 Key themes and content include:
 - 2.10.1.1 The Council's remaining capacity
 - 2.10.1.2 Reclaiming rights
 - 2.10.1.3 Up to date fees and charges
 - 2.10.1.4 Rule and Regulations
 - 2.10.1.5 Grounds maintenance
 - 2.10.1.6 Memorial Safety
 - 2.10.1.7 Memorialisation
 - 2.10.1.8 New IT systems
 - 2.10.1.9 Top level action plan against each theme.

3. OPERATIONAL ISSUES

- 3.1 In Bromsgrove, the service has gone from a comprehensive long term solution set out in 2014 to 5 years of capacity left before a new site or extension process needs to begin based on the new strategy and operational pressures.
- 3.3 In light of the national drive for housing, losing the Catshill expansion opportunity could create a scenario where nothing else suitable becomes available and the Council loses its ability to bury its local people appropriately, forcing people out of their area and away from existing loved ones.
- 3.4 This scenario will also have a fiscal effect because of the loss in income from losing the burial function in Bromsgrove. This, at a time when generating surplus, particularly revenue surplus, is so important for long term sustainability in local government.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The new unbudgeted costs associated with purchasing new land for burials. Circa £100,000
- 4.2 The loss of income from a failure to expand or secure new land needs to be noted. This would be circa £200,000 per annum.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Council is a burial authority and as such has the responsibilities associated with that status. Should the Council be unable to provide burial plots in future, this would create financial and reputational risks.

6. OTHER - IMPLICATIONS

Local Government Reorganisation

- 6.1 Entering into either North/South Unitary Authority arrangements or a One Worcestershire entity without have suitable burial provision in place would apply pressure on adjoining sites across borders.

Relevant Council Priority

- 6.2 This strategy supports both economic development and the environment as outlined in the current Bromsgrove Council Plan.

Climate Change Implications

- 6.3 The Burial Strategy has important climate change considerations. Traditional burial practices contribute to carbon emissions through land use, materials, and ongoing grounds maintenance. Cemetery expansion plans must incorporate climate resilience measures, including flood risk mitigation, tree planting, and sustainable drainage systems.

Operational activities—such as grounds maintenance and infrastructure upgrades—should align with the Council’s net zero ambitions. Cemeteries also offer opportunities to enhance green infrastructure and carbon sequestration, supporting wider environmental goals in the Bromsgrove Council Plan.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 No longer being able to offer burials to the Bromsgrove community is both a reputational and financial risk for the authority.
- 7.2 The mitigation would be to either agree an expansion at an existing site or secure a new site within the timeframes outlined within the Burial Strategy or begin a consultation and communication strategy to highlight that Bromsgrove will within 15 years phase out full earth burials and will simply maintain the closed sites.

8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix 1 – Bromsgrove District Council Burial Strategy

9. REPORT SIGN OFF

Department	Name and Job Title	Date
Portfolio Holder	Cllr Whittaker	20 th Oct 2025
Lead Director / Assistant Director	Simon Parry	20 th Oct 2025
Financial Services	Bev Docherty	20 th Oct 2025

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Cabinet

19TH November 2025

Legal Services	Nicola Cummings, Principal Solicitor - Governance	25/10/26
Policy Team (if equalities implications apply)	N/A	N/A
Climate Change Team (if climate change implications apply)	Matthew Eccles	28 th Oct 2025