

Environmental Committee Meeting	
Meeting Date	13 March 2024
Report Title	Iwade Cemetery Regulations
EMT Lead	Emma Wiggins
Head of Service	Martyn Cassell
Lead Officer	Jay Jenkins
Classification	Open
Recommendations	That the Environment Committee designate the current used plot area and designated children's plots as is (outside of the lawned requirements) but with the remainder of the cemetery as lawn only.

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Environmental Committee on the ongoing situation at Iwade cemetery and seek agreement on a way forward.

2 Background

- 2.1 Following its opening in 2021 Iwade is classified in the approved Cemetery Regulations as a lawn plot cemetery. This means that families can place a memorial stone at the head of the grave but are then not allowed to place anything over the length of the grave (e.g., a laid memorial stone, chippings, fencing or plastic memorabilia).
- 2.2 Over 12 months, back filled soil settles and then we top up to level and turf over. The grounds maintenance team can then mow over the graves keeping the cemetery tidy and maintenance costs down.
- 2.3 Unfortunately, with a number of the initial burials at Iwade, families appear to have not been told about the 'lawn' regulations by funeral directors and when approached to remove items they have placed on their plots, they have refused advising they weren't told.
- 2.4 The issue has been identified in local media including ITV Meridian News. We continue to get complaints from those with existing graves and obviously as we are making new applicants aware, they are questioning why it applies to them and not those who have already got graves.
- 2.5 An initial meeting (25 July 2023) on site with family representatives resulted in us gathering a range of views on the situation and it was clear from the meeting that the families felt very strongly about reverting to the original 'lawn' plot. A second

visit (30 October 2023) has taken place and several options were discussed to address the issue.

3 Proposals

- 3.1 Designate the current used plot area and designated children's plots as is (outside of the lawned requirements) but with the remainder of the cemetery as lawn only. This is achievable due to the layout of the cemetery as shown on the map in Appendix 1. This will avoid further conflict with the current families who maintain they were not informed by funeral directors.
- 3.2 Individual plots within the designated area that wish to continue with lawn will be turfed at the appropriate time.
- 3.3 There is a risk new family burying in the other areas will follow the current families' actions, creating further conflict. This is mitigated by recent actions including better signage, changes to funeral director processes and requesting that families sign to confirm they have received the regulations.

4 Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

- 4.1 Hold the line and insist that all plots revert to the original lawn plot concept. This will result in several very sensitive and emotionally charged liaisons with each of the families. Officers would of course lead this, but a number of the families have requested that Cllrs making the decisions attend the site so they can understand their views.
- 4.2 Invoke an agreed area (1.4mtr x 1mtr) area directly in front of the headstone that can remain soil and the remainder of the plot laid to lawn. This has been agreed with the grounds maintenance contractor as feasible and would still allow them to maintain the majority of the plot space as lawn. At the meeting, it was clear that several of the families would not be happy with this option, but we believe this would offer a compromise that some families would accept.
- 4.3 Revert the cemetery to allow planting across the whole of the plot but no kerb stones. This would have an estimated cost uplift of £2,300 per annum. This amount will increase annually.

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 Consultation has taken place with representatives from 6 families with ongoing electronic correspondence with the group representative and two on site meetings taking place.
- 5.2 There have been informal discussions with the Administration, the more recent of which was on Monday 27 November 2023

6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	This issue will fall under public realm as the cemetery is an important community asset.
Financial, Resource and Property	<p>The annual uplift in GM costs to convert the existing section of the cemetery (Appendix 1) back to a traditionally maintained (No Lawn), with the remainder maintained as a Lawn cemetery is estimated at £400.</p> <p>The annual uplift in GM costs to convert the whole cemetery back to a traditionally maintained (No Lawn) have been calculated at £2,300.</p>
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	There is likely to be a legal implication if the line is held as families have confirmed that they have already sought legal advice on their options around the situation at Iwade.
Crime and Disorder	None identified
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	None identified
Health and Wellbeing	None identified
Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	None identified
Risk Management and Health and Safety	None identified
Equality and Diversity	None identified
Privacy and Data Protection	None identified

7 Appendices

7.1 Appendix I: Layout of Iwade Cemetery and existing regulations.

8 Background Papers

None