

West Rainton Parish Council - 19 November 2018

Item 8a: Grave adornment policy

Report of G Keedy, Project Officer

Background

The Parish Council continues to work towards improving the appearance of the cemetery.

Actions agreed by Parish Council so far to achieve this aim include the introduction of an environmental maintenance contract, firm plans to demolish the brick building, new burial areas being classified as lawn cemetery and recent agreement with Durham County Council to enhance the external perimeter through landscaping.

An important next step is to address issues relating to grave adornments.

Current arrangements

Whilst the Parish Council has long had a policy relating to memorial sizes, it stops short of prescribing what is and is not allowed in terms of adornments.

This has led, over a period of many years, to a "free for all" in terms of the nature of adornments placed on graves.

Examples of current adornments include alcoholic drink bottles / cans and poor quality mementoes. The placing of loose items also presents a safety hazard for our maintenance contractors.

Floral tributes are often left for many weeks leading to decay and an untidy appearance.

These items are often highly personalised by the families of the deceased and can carry significant sentimental value.

The Parish Council will recognise the sensitivity and emotive nature of this topic, but should acknowledge a requirement to develop a policy on the placement of adornments (including floral tributes) which is clearly understood and provides a more ordered approach to enhance the cemetery.

Enquiries with other local councils which are burial authorities produces a varied picture and there is no single approach to addressing this issue.

Establishing a policy

The following suggestions are made to ultimately form part of a comprehensive guide for cemetery users which will include rules and regulations.

Memorials and kerb surrounds:

Kerb sets are not permitted at:

New graves in the designated lawn section of the cemetery or older parts of the cemetery where existing graves currently have no memorial or kerb set.

Parish Council needs to determine what is permitted in those parts of the cemetery where kerb sets currently exist.

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Improvised or makeshift grave surrounds are not permitted and any identified as potentially unsafe will be dismantled and removed. Any costs incurred will be recovered from the burial plot owner

Tributes (Flowers, Wreath, Ornaments)

In the interest of health and safety, glass vases, jars, pottery or flimsy ornaments are not allowed in any part of the cemetery. Any items placed on a grave that could represent a health and safety risk will be removed.

Fresh floral tributes should be removed no later than two weeks after placement. Those tributes considered to be in decay will be removed and disposed of.

Artificial floral tributes/wreaths laid for specific seasonal occasions ie. Remembrance Day and Christmas should be removed within 3 months of the event.

All faded artificial tributes should be removed.

All waste should be placed in the waste bin provided.

Free standing vases and pots are not permitted at:

- new graves in the designated lawn section of the cemetery
- in older parts of the cemetery where existing graves currently have no memorial or kerb set

Flower containers in these areas must be requested as an integral part of a memorial headstone when these are commissioned.

All ornaments, flowers and other tributes are placed at the owner's own risk.

Solar lights

These will not be permitted in the cemetery.

Note: Cemetery users requiring advice on the implications of these rules should contact the Parish Council.

The Parish Council reserves the right to amend these rules annually or when required.

Parish Council is asked to consider the suitability of the suggested approach and a date for implementation.