



KNUTSFORD CEMETERY MANAGEMENT PLAN

2022-2027



LOCAL COUNCIL
AWARD SCHEME
QUALITY GOLD



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INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND TO THIS PLAN

Knutsford Cemetery opened on 23rd December 1901 and for the last 120 years has provided a place for the town to bury and remember its dead.

The cemetery was created by the Knutsford Urban District Council and upon local government reorganisation in 1974 its management was transferred to Macclesfield Borough Council whilst the ownership was vested in the new Knutsford Town Council. In 2020 the town council took back responsibility for the cemetery and is committed to making it one of the best cemeteries in Cheshire; this is our first management plan and a key part of delivering on this commitment.

This management plan sets out the council's current strategy for the management of the cemetery, the vision it is working to and a series of actions it will take over the next five years to deliver improvements and maintain standards for the community.

This plan has been developed with consideration to the *Green Flag Award* principles and the council aspires to achieve this award for the cemetery.

SITE DESCRIPTION

The cemetery is situated on Tabley Hill Lane on the very edge of Knutsford. It extends to some 5 acres and is surrounded by mature trees and shrubbery and secured with iron railings around most of its perimeter. It is surrounded on three sides by open fields whilst along its southern boundary runs Tabley Road/Tabley Hill Lane which is the single access point to the site.

To the southwestern boundary is the Cemetery Lodge which was sold by the council in 2016; in early 2022 the extension and renovation of the building will be completed by its new owner. The works include creating a new permanent boundary with the cemetery and removing access to the lodge from within the cemetery grounds.

At the centre of the cemetery is a Grade II listed chapel which was refurbished in 2021 and the cemetery also contains a detached toilet building (original to the cemetery and

comprising a male and female toilet) and a detached garage which is used by the groundskeeper.

The ground is composed of a deep sandy soil layer which holds little organic matter and as a result new planting struggles to fully establish without added assistance.

The ground is free draining and due to the wider landscape water saturation is low.

The mature trees around the perimeter are in generally good health and comprise a mix of various species. No trees are covered by tree preservation orders nor is the site within a conservation area.

The cemetery itself is divided into 15 sections with tarmacadam paths, the parking area is around the chapel along the main driveway and vehicle movement is restricted around the chapel by roadblocks.

Four sections of the cemetery are consecrated in accordance with the rites of the Church of England (E, F, H and G) all other sections are not consecrated. Individual graves may be blessed at the point of interment, but this does not have an impact on the management of the cemetery.

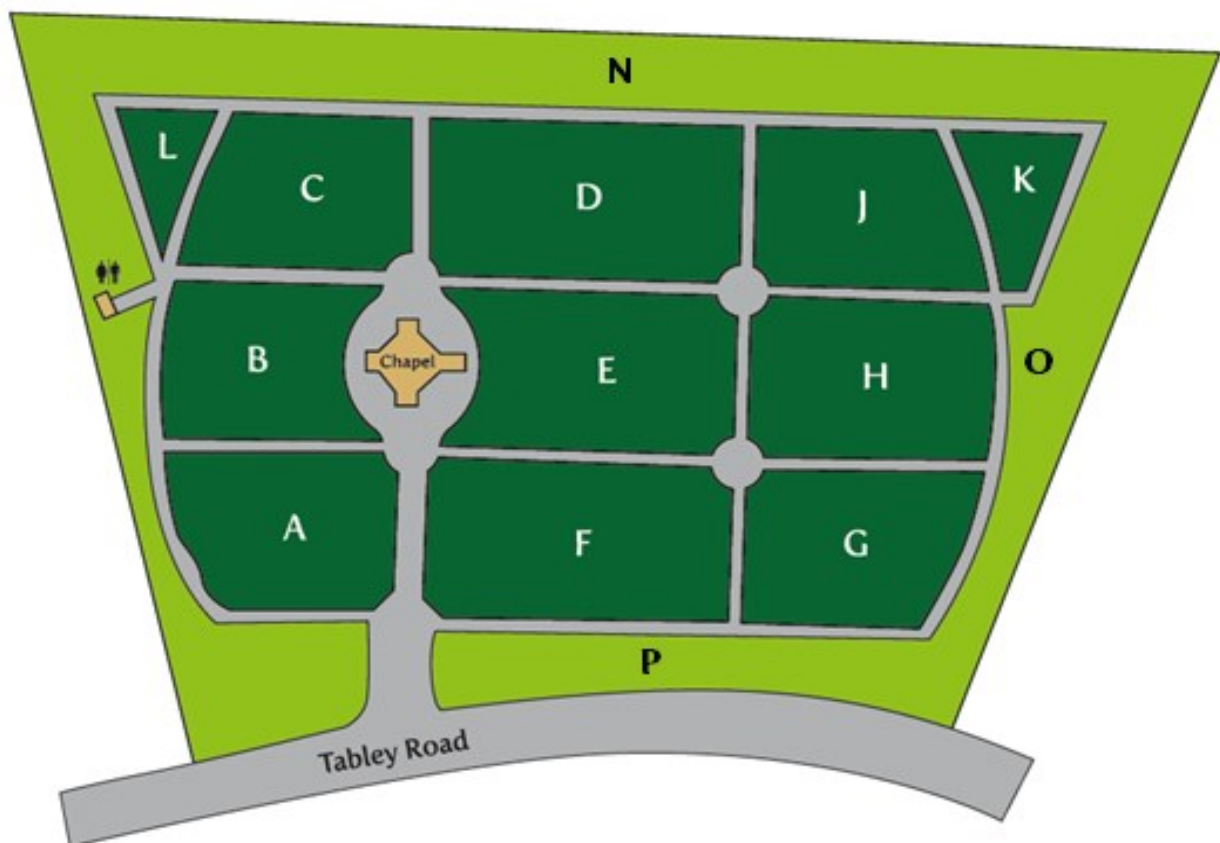


Figure 1 Cemetery Plan

OUR VISION, AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

OUR VISION

The vision for Knutsford Cemetery is to deliver a beautiful cemetery which the community is truly proud of. The cemetery will offer families a range of bereavement options and the appropriate facilities to make visiting the cemetery a comfortable and pleasant experience.

The grounds will be maintained to a high standard with flower beds and planting year-round; entering the cemetery visitors will feel that it is well cared for and loved.

The chapel will be regularly used for funerals and other life events such as weddings and for suitable community and personal hire uses that support the building being financially sustainable and create a wider connection to the cemetery.

OUR AIMS

The council has eight core aims for its cemetery service:

1. Provide a cemetery of which the community is proud
2. Make visiting the cemetery a comfortable and pleasant experience
3. Offer a range of bereavement options to meet the needs of the community
4. Ensure long-term burial provision
5. Maintain the grounds to a high standard
6. Increase community and volunteer involvement in the cemetery
7. Maximise use of the chapel
8. Minimise any negative impact on the environment and maximise biodiversity and nature conservation

OUR OBJECTIVES

To deliver on the vision and aims, we have identified a number of core objectives of that will be delivered over the plan period. Each objective is aligned to one of the aims and Appendix A contains a detailed action plan of how and when we will deliver.

- P1 The council will look to remove the tarmac outside the gates to reveal the cobbles.
- P2 The gates will be rubbed down and repainted.
- P3 A new external sign will be installed on the railings.
- P4 The two yew and holly trees will be removed and replaced with ornamental trees e.g. acers.
- P5 A wreath/tribute will be placed at each war grave annually
- P6 A future Friends of the Cemetery Group to research the heritage within the cemetery
- P7 The stored railings from the Benger memorial will be reinstated.
- P8 Suitable planting schemes will be implemented at the large kerbed memorials; where notable a small information plaque will be considered.
- P9 Weathervane to be refurbished and reinstalled on chapel spire
- P10 Chapel bell to be refurbished and reinstalled in tower
- V1 To improve access by foot, the pavement along Tabley Road should be 'sided out' to reveal its full width.
- V2 To encourage travel by bicycle uncovered cycle parking will be provided at a suitable location within the grounds.
- V3 The council will explore options to improving the flow of cars within the site and the provision of parking spaces

- V4 The council will work with Cheshire East Council to provide a directional sign at the Manchester Road / Tabley Road junction.
- V5 The council will investigate options for the provision of solar lighting along the main driveway to the chapel.
- B1 Investigate provision of a book of remembrance
- B2 Investigate provision of above-ground cremated remains storage
- B3 Investigate provision of memorials within the rose garden
- B4 Investigate provision of a grave care service
- L1 Investigate the acquisition of the adjacent field to expand the cemetery.
- L2 Prepare an appraisal of alternative expansion options if expansion to adjacent field is not possible
- G1 Create additional flower beds around path intersections
- G2 Create new rose garden in section K
- G3 Implement programme of kerb removal
- G4 Implement a maintenance programme for the iron railings.
- G5 Repaint toilet building
- G6 Cut back shrubbery to reveal railings along Tabley Road.
- I1 Develop an e-newsletter for cemetery users
- I2 Undertake a survey of cemetery users
- I3 Install a noticeboard within the cemetery
- I4 Prepare and implement an annual social media plan.
- I5 Publish and disseminate information literature
- C1 Publish a promotional leaflet for the chapel

- C2 Develop and implement a chapel marketing plan
- C3 Host regular events or activities to bring users into the chapel.
- E1 Undertake review to ascertain if recycling separate is required for cemetery waste
- E2 Ascertain usage of peat from plant suppliers
- E3 Create wildflower strip to rear of cemetery

HOW WE WILL DELIVER

RELEVANT POLICIES

The Town Council has a number of policies relevant to the cemetery, the primary of which are its Cemetery Regulations which set out the core rules which govern the use of the cemetery and the granting of burial rights. The council also has a Memorial Safety Testing policy which governs routine safety testing of gravestones and an Assets Policy which requires regular building and arboricultural surveys and the production of five-year maintenance plans for all assets. The council's Environmental Policy sets out a series of environmental objectives which apply to all its operations.

In addition to its formal policies, the Town Council has two operational procedure documents. The first sets out the detailed processes for undertaking the administration of the cemetery and is designed to be a resource for the administration team, the second sets out the grounds maintenance specification which details maintenance standards and timescales for the grounds team.

FINANCE AND RESOURCE ALLOCATION

The Town Council aims to ensure its assets are financially self-sustaining and the cemetery generates a significant income (62k in 2020/21) but has a significant level of cost associated with its effective management both in direct costs (22k in 2020/21) and associated staffing costs (approx. £37k excluding management costs). Any surplus generated at the cemetery offsets the council's costs in other areas and helps it minimise the level of council tax it is required to raise.

The council budget is set annually through a process which commences in September and concludes in January. As part of the budget process this plan will be reviewed and proposals for expenditure in the following financial year will be included in the draft budget which is presented to the Assets and Operations Committee.

The council's staffing structure provides officer resource to ensure the effective administration and management of the cemetery. Included within this is resource for the Town Clerk to oversee the implementation of this plan and facilitate the strategic aspects of the cemetery management and for the Planning and Facilities Officer to develop the detailed actions and projects which the plan aspires to. Both officers are supported by the Administration and Support Officers who additionally undertake the day-to-day administration of the cemetery. The council employs a Cemetery Groundskeeper to maintain the grounds and a Caretaker to maintain the buildings.

MONITORING AND REVIEW

The plan will be continually monitored by the Town Clerk and Planning and Facilities Officer who are responsible for its implementation.

The cemetery working group will periodically (and at least annually) review the plan as part of its role in reviewing the effectiveness of cemetery policy and working with officers to develop proposals for improvements at the cemetery.

The plan will also be subject to a formal monitoring process annually through the Assets and Operations Committee which has oversight of its implementation. This will include an annual report outlining performance against the action plan.

The council will also invite any Friends of Knutsford Cemetery group or volunteers it engages at the cemetery to review and comment on the plan periodically.

PROVIDING A CEMETERY OF WHICH THE COMMUNITY IS PROUD

CREATING A WELCOMING SPACE

The cemetery is accessed by a gated entranceway with an attractive view of the chapel lined by two new flower beds. There are two poor form holly trees at the entrance and the chapel is framed by two yew bushes. There is a clear sightline from the entrance gates across the cemetery.

There is no external sign identifying the cemetery and the iron gates and railings are tired and in need of repainting. The tarmac entrance to the cemetery has broken away revealing the cobbles underneath and creating slight potholes which make access uneven. Whilst the new flowerbeds and improved maintenance have greatly improved the welcome to the cemetery, The council is keen to make the entrance more welcoming.

P1 The council will look to remove the tarmac outside the gates to reveal the cobbles.

P2 The gates will be rubbed down and repainted.

P3 A new external sign will be installed on the railings.

P4 The yew and holly trees will be removed and replaced with ornamental trees e.g. acer.

HERITAGE FEATURES AND WAR GRAVES

The cemetery is not especially old

compared with some other towns' principal cemeteries with the earliest graves dating to 1902.

There are a number of large memorials which stand out within the cemetery, such as the grave of Frederick Baden Benger in section G (shown below). Benger was a pharmaceutical chemist who ran FB Benger and Co Ltd and a short overview of his life was recently collated (Sherwin, 2020). The railings surrounding this memorial are in need of repair and parts of it are in storage. Other standout memorials include the graves of James Hesketh, JP Cox MBE, and the Downie family.



Figure 2 The Benger family memorial

The majority of the heritage within the cemetery comes from the headstones themselves and the council seeks to minimise the loss of headstones where possible with its Memorial Safety Inspections Policy placing removal of a headstone as a last resort.

There are 32 Commonwealth War Graves within the cemetery; 22 for soldiers of the First World War and nine of the Second World War. Many of these are marked with the Commonwealth War Grave Commission (CWGC) headstones. The CWGC maintains their memorials, aiming to

clean headstones at least every two to three years.

P5 A wreath/tribute will be placed at each war grave annually

There are few old photographs of the cemetery with only three being held by the Town Council¹ the most interesting of which is the funeral of Sgt Reuben Bull in 1907 (photo courtesy of Mary Gracie) which shows soldiers firing a salute as a large crowd gathers.



Figure 3 Funeral of Sgt Reuben Bull

Whilst the history of the cemetery is known, more research could be undertaken to identify notable graves within the cemetery and collate information. The council currently has volunteers collating its archives and any information on the cemetery will be recorded. Researching the heritage within the cemetery would form a good task for volunteers or a *Friends of* group and onsite display of the heritage could be explored.

Graves such as the Bengier memorial could be repaired (where necessary) and a greater feature made of them through planting and possibly small information panels. Research

could also look to find further old photographs of the cemetery.

P6 A future Friends of the Cemetery Group to research the heritage within the cemetery

P7 The stored railings from the Bengier memorial will be reinstated.

P8 Suitable planting schemes will be implemented at the large kerbed memorials; where notable a small information plaque will be considered.

The cemetery chapel is a Grade II listed building and the central focus of the cemetery. It is open for visitors of the cemetery to use whilst the council's groundskeeper is on site. The chapel was refurbished in 2021 and the council has further aspirations to develop the character of the building through refurbishing and reinstalling the original weathervane and reinstating the chapel bell; these are both subject to funding in the future.

P9 Weathervane to be refurbished and reinstalled on chapel spire

P10 Chapel bell to be refurbished and reinstalled in tower

¹ A photograph of the chapel, a photograph of the lodge and the photo of Sgt Bull's funeral.

MAKING VISITING THE CEMETERY A COMFORTABLE AND PLEASANT EXPERIENCE

ACCESS TO THE CEMETERY

The cemetery is 1 mile from the centre of Knutsford. There is no public transport serving the site meaning all visitors travel by foot, bicycle or private vehicle.

It is a 20 minute walk from the town centre to the cemetery along a pavement which runs the length of Tabley Road and ends opposite the cemetery gates; there is a dropped kerb for wheelchair users to cross. The pavement is narrowed by vegetation overgrowth but is otherwise in good condition.

Within the cemetery the tarmac paths provide an accessible route to all sections for pedestrians.

Travel by bicycle takes 6 minutes from the town centre. Tabley Road is a relatively quiet road although the speed limit is unrestricted; whilst this may make some cyclists apprehensive there is no identified improvement for the stretch of Tabley Road in the Knutsford Cycling Infrastructure Plan. There is no provision for bicycle parking within the cemetery.

The cemetery is a 3 minute drive from the town centre. There is limited on site parking along the driveway and around the chapel which during funerals and peak visiting times can be an inconvenience for visitors. Road blocks prevent vehicles from traveling around the cemetery paths which are reserved for pedestrian use and these have recently been upgraded to planters.

V1 To improve access by foot, the pavement along Tabley Road should be 'sided out' to reveal its full width.

V2 To encourage travel by bicycle uncovered cycle parking will be provided at a suitable location within the grounds.

V3 The council will explore options to improving the flow of cars within the site and the provision of parking spaces.

SIGNAGE

The council is keen to minimise signage within the cemetery and only install signage where it is strictly necessary or enhances the user experience. Within the site there is a welcome sign at the entrance to the cemetery which features a plan of the site, provides the contact information for the council's cemetery team and outlines some of the cemetery regulations. A second sign features more detailed memorial regulations which are a common enquiry. There is no further signage and it is not considered necessary to add any; the cemetery is open plan and no directional signage seems to be required.

There is no signage in Knutsford directing visitors to the cemetery and it would be beneficial to install a sign at the junction of Tabley Road.

V4 The council will work with Cheshire East Council to provide a directional sign at the Manchester Road / Tabley Road junction.

ONSITE FACILITIES

The cemetery includes an outdoor toilet building comprising a male and female toilet. Neither toilet is accessible, but an accessible toilet is provided for users of the chapel.

There are currently nine benches within the cemetery in a range of styles. All new and replacement benches will be of a uniform style which will be wooden benches with arms. The council may elect to install new benches or they may be installed as a memorial bench funded by a family. The council will be installing additional benches in the new rose and cremation gardens.

The council has installed four pairs of bins (general and green waste); their suitability is continually monitored and the council will consider additional bins should it be needed.

In deciding whether to install new facilities the primary consideration will always be that the cemetery is a place of rest where families visit their loved ones and not a place of play or general recreation.

ENSURING SAFETY AND SECURITY

All activity within the cemetery is risk assessed annually (or following any material change / new activity) by the Planning and Facilities Officer. All staff working on site are provided with adequate training for their work and staff using machinery undertake formal certification (City and Guilds Level 2 Awards as standard). All machinery is maintained monthly by users in accordance with manufacturer recommendations and

staff are provided with suitable PPE for use whilst working (e.g. ear defenders). The safety of visitors to the cemetery is paramount and staff are instructed not to use equipment outside a safe working distance from the public and where necessary to cordon work areas off. All excavated graves are boarded over to prevent accidents.

The Cemetery Groundskeeper is on site Monday to Friday (summer) and three days per week (winter) with a responsibility to inspect the site for issues and report any issues they cannot resolve to the Planning and Facilities Officer.

Memorials are inspected every five years as part of an inspection programme developed in accordance with ICCM recommended practice. Memorials which fail the safety test are staked and banded to make them safe temporarily whilst permanent repair or individual risk assessment is undertaken.

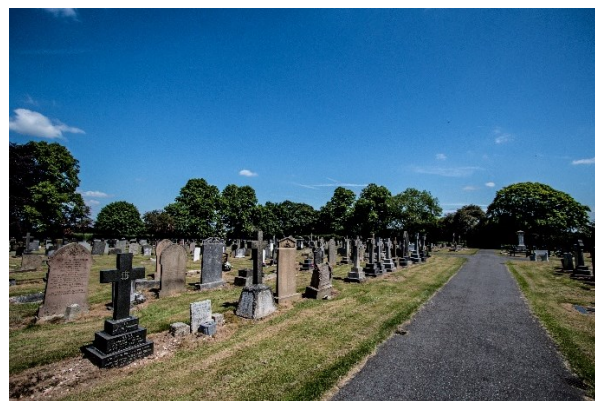


Figure 4 View across the cemetery

The site is predominantly open with clear sightlines across the whole of the active cemetery. The only secluded area is the spoil pile and compost heaps to the north-east of the site which are only used by the Cemetery Groundskeeper.

There is no lighting within the cemetery and whilst the council does not consider it necessary nor desirable to seek to light the whole cemetery, lighting of the main pathway to the chapel would be desirable.

V5 The council will investigate options for the provision of solar lighting along the main driveway to the chapel.

There have been no safety issues reported to the council in the period it has been managing the cemetery. The council will maintain a log of any issues which are reported and in addition to responding appropriately at the time will review them annually as part of the review of this plan.

BEREAVEMENT OPTIONS TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY

CURRENT PROVISION

The cemetery currently offers the following options within the cemetery.

STANDARD LAWN GRAVES

A standard lawn grave is approximately 4ft wide and accommodates three coffin burials (to a depth of 7'6") and/or up to eight cremated remains interments. A headstone can be installed at the head of the grave and the remainder is maintained as lawn.

CREMATION WALL

The cremation wall is to the western edge of

the cemetery. Each plot accommodates two cremated remains burials, one at the foot of the wall and one in front. There are eight plots remaining on the wall. Once full it is not planned to create an additional wall.

CREMATION KERBS

The cremation kerbs line the edge of plot F alongside the driveway. They are sandstone kerb memorials of a standard design each accommodating a single burial. There is space for approximately six further kerbs to be installed. Once full this option will no longer be offered.



Figure 5 Cremation Kerbs

CREMATION GARDEN

The cremation garden is being created in 2022 on an area of unpurchased graves. It is designed to provide a new and attractive option for the interment of cremated remains. Each plot will usually accommodate a single burial and memorials will be of a uniform design. The cremation garden will provide 230 plots.

MEMORIAL BENCHES

A number of potential bench locations have been identified and the council offers the

option for families to fund the purchase, installation and dedication of a memorial bench.

Families can also purchase a memorial plaque for installation on a shared bench.

FUTURE SERVICES

The council wishes to provide a range of options for families and will respond to user feedback on potential new services. In particular, the council will investigate provision of a book of remembrance in the chapel, options for above-ground storage of cremated remains and the provision of memorials within the planned rose garden.

The council will also explore providing a grave care service for those who wish to ensure graves are tended (e.g. fresh flowers placed) whilst they cannot visit in person.

The opportunity for providing a wider variety of bereavement options will be provided by the extension of the cemetery and longer term the council aspires to provide woodland/natural burials.

B1 Investigate provision of a book of remembrance

B2 Investigate provision of above-ground cremated remains storage

B3 Investigate provision of memorials within the rose garden

B4 Investigate provision of a grave care service

ENSURING LONG TERM BURIAL PROVISION

CURRENT CAPACITY AND FUTURE EXPANSION OPTIONS

The Cheshire East Council Cemeteries Strategy (2018) reported a 29-year capacity in the cemetery based on 426 available graves and 15 new graves being used per year. Adjusting for ONS predictions on the increase in deaths in Cheshire East, the cemetery would have a 21-year capacity.

New calculations undertaken by the Town Council in 2021 indicate a higher availability of graves (568) providing burial space for approximately 30 years (to 2051). The available graves are shown in Figure 2.



Figure 6 Available graves (Dec 2021)

The Town Council wishes to ensure the long-term provision of a cemetery for the residents of Knutsford and considers that an extension to the existing cemetery is the most practical way to ensure this. The council's aspiration is to purchase the land to the east of the existing cemetery to the boundary of Green Lane (see Figure 7); this field extends to approximately 2.6 acres and is part of the privately owned Dairy House Farm. Alternatively land to the west could

also be desirable. Subject to the layout, this could create burial provision for an additional 120 years.

During this first plan period the council will explore the purchase of one of these areas with the landowner. The council recognises that this may not be possible and may prove protracted. Looking to acquire the land early will ensure there is no interruption to burial provision in the future.



Figure 7 Potential expansion sites

If this extension proves not to be feasible, the council will develop an options appraisal for alternatives for delivering burial provision past 2051.

L1 Investigate the acquisition of the adjacent field to expand the cemetery.

L2 Prepare an appraisal of alternative expansion options if expansion to adjacent field is not possible

ALLOCATION OF GRAVES

The allocation of graves within the cemetery allows for families to choose the location which they feel is right for their loved one.

Sections C and D are fully sold.

Where families do not request a specific plot or section, the council's policy is to fill sections in order, identifying the next available grave in sections in the following order:

Consecrated – E, F, H then G

Unconsecrated – L, A, B then N

Sections O and P will be opened once all unconsecrated plots within the open sections have been sold and the need for a new consecrated section will be reviewed once section H has been sold.

MAINTAIN THE GROUNDS TO A HIGH STANDARD

OUR STANDARDS

The council sets out its standards of maintenance in its Grounds Maintenance Plan which details a range of standards and work frequencies to which the Cemetery Groundskeeper works. The aim is to ensure the site is kept well maintained with a focus on delivering a beautiful open space.

The major maintenance is the regular mowing of the lawns which takes place between March and October approximately every two to three weeks and it is accompanied by strimming around graves. Grass is mulched and blown under the shrub borders to breakdown out of sight.

Prior to the council taking back responsibility, the flowerbeds in the cemetery had been removed. The council has introduced flowerbeds along the main entrance to the cemetery and these are

replenished twice annually for summer and winter planting.



Figure 8 Quality of grass cutting

The flowerbeds are designed to provide impact and will comprise a mixture of annuals and perennials. It is planned to create additional flowerbeds around the intersections of the path. In 2022 the council is introducing a cremation garden which will comprise an assortment of small shrubs and flowers. The council also plans to introduce a small rose garden into plot K, utilising the space above unpurchased graves to provide a rest area.

All flower and shrub beds will be maintained by the Cemetery Groundskeeper.

G1 Create additional flower beds around path intersections

G2 Create new rose garden in section K

Following ground settlement, the council levels recent graves and re-seeds them. Where a turf-cutter is used to lift turf (e.g. for creating flowerbeds) it is reused to turf bare graves. The council is also undertaking a gradual programme of releveling the ground where graves have sunk historically.

A number of old graves still have kerb sets. Whilst some of these are in good condition and/or contain inscriptions, many are not. The kerbs require additional resource to remove weeds and in many cases detract from the overall quality of the cemetery.

There is a defined process set out in the Local Authority Cemeteries Order 1977 for removing kerbs from graves which are no longer maintained. This will make maintenance of the cemetery easier and improve the aesthetic.

G3 Implement a programme of kerb removal

ARBORICULTURAL MAINTENANCE

There are approximately 40 mature trees around the border of the cemetery, a mix of Beech, Norway Maple, Western Red Cedar, Lime, Whitebeam, Rowan, Horse Chestnut, Sycamore, Ash, Hawthorn, English Oak, Yew and Holly.



Figure 9 Re-levelled and seeded grave

A full arboricultural assessment of the mature trees on site is undertaken every three years and those which front Tabley Road are re-assessed annually. The focus of the report is both on tree safety and

ensuring the longevity of the trees. Between inspections, the Groundskeeper visually inspects trees following severe weather and reports any concerns to the Planning and Facilities Officer. Any trees which are required to be felled are replaced, with suitable species from UK suppliers.

For the majority of the site, when trees are felled the wood will be taken off site to maintain the aesthetic of the cemetery. Where appropriate, trees/limbs that can be left discretely within the shrub border will be left to decay to provide a habitat of wildlife.

BUILDING AND INFRASTRUCTURE MAINTENANCE

The cemetery is enclosed by iron railings with a set of architectural gates at Tabley Road. The fencing and gates are overdue maintenance and will be maintained over a programme of several years starting in 2022 with the main entrance. Along Tabley Road, the shrubbery has grown through the railings obscuring them. Gates are left open and the cemetery is not closed at night.

Benches in the cemetery are formally inspected by the Cemetery Groundskeeper annually with ad hoc inspections as part of everyday maintenance duties. All benches are maintained at least annually with a thorough clean and re-stained/varnished (wooden benches).

There are three buildings on site - the chapel, toilets and garage. All are in active use and kept well maintained. The chapel was renovated in 2021 and the toilets were last repainted in 2017. The council obtains quinquennial building surveys for all assets with the next planned at the cemetery in 2023. The toilets will be repainted in 2022;

the gutters on buildings are maintained regularly to remove any blockages or weed growth.

G4 Implement a maintenance programme for the iron railings.

G5 Cut back shrubbery to reveal railings along Tabley Road.

G6 Repaint toilet building

The tarmacadam paths are in a good condition. They are kept free from weeds and overgrowth as part of the regular site maintenance. Should a pothole develop, it will be filled with instant lay within three days of being identified.

There have been no instances of vandalism, flyposting or graffiti within the cemetery; should this occur it will be removed/attended to within 24hours of being identified.

EQUIPMENT MAINTENANCE

Staff undertake routine tool and equipment maintenance as recommended by manufacturers. This is undertaken at least monthly with reports provided to the Planning and Facilities Officer.

The cemetery toilets are cleaned and inspected routinely by the Caretaker and/or Cemetery Groundskeeper. Weekly system flushes are undertaken in accordance with legionella risk management.

LITTER AND WASTE MANAGEMENT

The Cemetery Groundskeeper undertakes regular litter picks of the site and keeps

waste bins emptied. Green waste is separated from general waste. There is minimal littering and no fouling. The bin provision appears adequate but the location and quantity is under continual review. The bins are fenced off to keep it out of view and the compost heaps are out of view behind a hedgerow. Green waste generated on the site is being composted and will be used in flowerbeds.

Dogs are permitted within the cemetery provided they are kept under control and on a short lead. There have been no fouling problems reported.



Figure 10 Bins for general / green waste

INCREASE COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTEER INVOLVEMENT IN THE CEMETERY

DEVELOPING COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

There has traditionally been little community involvement in the management of the cemetery and this is

something the council is committed to change with the longer term aspiration that a Friends of Knutsford Cemetery group can be established.

The council will start with developing improved communication channels with cemetery users. This has already commenced with the creation of a Facebook page for the cemetery and in 2022 will be extended to developing an e-newsletter. The council has also invited recently bereaved families to attend a Christmas remembrance service with the aim of both welcoming people to the refurbished chapel and connecting users of the cemetery. To further aid communication with visitors, a noticeboard will be installed and regularly updated.

To date, the council has not undertaken any surveys of users of the cemetery. In 2022 the council will develop a survey for users and use the information gathered to both measure the success of its work in the cemetery and inform future management decisions.

The council will explore opportunities for developing further community engagement and involvement at the cemetery, potentially using the chapel as a vehicle to achieve this.

- I1 Develop an e-newsletter for cemetery users
- I2 Undertake a survey of cemetery users
- I3 Install a noticeboard within the cemetery

MARKETING AND COMMUNICATION

The council's website has been the primary

source of information for users of the cemetery, it contains all necessary forms and policies as well as some general guidance information.

In an effort to improve the clarity of information as well as promote the range of bereavement options provided, the council will be producing a new set of marketing literature in early 2022. This will comprise two printed brochures, for the cemetery and the chapel, which will principally be distributed via local funeral directors.

The council is producing a printed cemetery folder which will be provided to customers as a place to store the paperwork associated with the cemetery (e.g. grave deeds). Alongside this will be a suite of information sheets which will be provided to customers at different stages, such as on the purchase of a grave or following a burial; these will be designed to be stored in the folder.

A Facebook page for Knutsford Cemetery was created in 2021 and is used to highlight activity within the cemetery and provide service information. In 2022, a social media plan will be prepared to increase the interest and interaction with the page; this will include posts introducing local businesses (e.g florists and funeral directors) and providing information to support customers such as signposting services or initiatives such as grief awareness week.

14 Prepare and implement an annual social media plan.

15 Publish and disseminate information literature



Figure 11 Interior of the chapel

MAXIMISE USE OF THE CHAPEL

The Tabley Hill Chapel was built with the cemetery and opened on 23rd December 1901. In 2021 a thorough refurbishment programme was undertaken to modernise the neglected building and bring it back into active and regular use. The building is Grade II listed and is open for quiet reflection when the Cemetery Groundskeeper is on site.

The building is licensed for civil wedding ceremonies and available for casual hire for suitable uses. The council is conscious that it is located within a cemetery and that any use must be respectful of this.

The chapel comprises a large hall (seats approx. 50) with a small accessible toilet and kitchenette. It is maintained by the Caretaker and, following its next survey (2023) will have a five-year maintenance plan.

The building has been infrequently used for a number of years and the council needs to re-establish interest and usage.

A marketing plan for the building will be developed, in particularly looking to promote the chapel as a wedding venue.

A promotional leaflet for the chapel will be published in 2022 and it will be promoted via Funeral Directors for use at funeral services.

In December 2021 the council hosted a Christmas service in the chapel and this will be repeated annually and near Mothering Sunday as an opportunity to bring new visitors into the chapel.

C1 Publish a promotional leaflet for the chapel

C2 Develop and implement a chapel marketing plan

C3 Host regular events or activities to bring users into the chapel.

MINIMISE IMPACT ON THE ENVIRONMENT AND ENHANCE BIODIVERSITY

MINIMISING ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

The council has an adopted Environmental Policy which sets out its key environmental objectives. In addition, the council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to reducing its own and the wider town's impact on the environment. Through our Environment Policy, an annual audit is undertaken to measure performance and identify areas for improvement in the ensuing 12 months.

The council's overall objectives including minimising freshwater usage, ensuring recyclable materials are recycled, reducing

fossil fuel usage and generally working to promote biodiversity and conservation.

A water butt has been installed connected to the cemetery chapel to reduce freshwater usage in grounds maintenance and by users of the cemetery. Within the chapel, LED lighting was installed in the chapel as part of its refurbishment and the council will procure electric tools (where suitable) when existing tools require replacement. The council's policy is to buy locally where possible and, for example, the flowers used within the cemetery are purchased from a nursery under 3 miles away. The council is introducing more perennial plants into its planting schemes to increase sustainability.

In 2020 the council introduced green waste separation on site, enabling floral tributes to be composted on site and the cemetery groundskeeper composts all green waste generated in maintenance of the cemetery. The level of recyclable waste is being monitored in 2022 with a view to identifying if a separate waste collection is needed. Recyclables from the chapel are recycled.

The council does not routinely use pesticides or herbicides in cemetery operations. Any use would be an exception and focused treatment were an alternative solution was not possible and such use would be approved by the Planning and Facilities Officer. Previous examples have included stump killer to kill stumps which are growing out of graves where digging would not be an option. No chemical fertilisers are used; where soil improvement is required compost / top soil is introduced.

The council does not purchase peat-based composts. The use of peat within plants grown by suppliers is unknown and in 2022

will be ascertained and discussions take place to seek to reduce peat usage.

The cemetery has a low vulnerability to climate change as it is a managed green space with no natural landscape features which would be disturbed by climate change. The council actively manages its open spaces with biodiversity in mind, as discussed later, and has a commitment to considering the impact of all decisions on the climate emergency.

E1 Undertake review to ascertain if recycling separate is required for cemetery waste

E2 Ascertain usage of peat from plant suppliers

The introduction of additional flower and shrub beds will enhance the biodiversity on the site and the council will predominantly use native and perennial plants. To further support pollinators and add interest, the council will be introducing wildflower strips to the northern border.

The council keeps all trees under good arboricultural management; it seeks to avoid felling where possible but where felling is necessary it will replant a suitable native species in its place to maintain the character of the site.

E3 Create wildflower strip to rear of cemetery

ENHANCING BIODIVERSITY

The cemetery is a traditional lawned cemetery on flat open land, it has no natural landscape features. Being open to the fields surrounding it, the cemetery visited by a range of birds and mammals including bats, rabbits and voles. The site is not connected to any green corridors as the surrounding fields are routinely ploughed.

The council has installed a number of bird/bat boxes in the mature trees around the edge of the cemetery; these are cleaned out annually after nesting season. The mature trees strongly contribute to biodiversity, although the southern shrub border is predominantly rhododendron which does not. It is not planned to change this southern border as it contributes strongly to the character of the cemetery and provides screening from the road.

REFERENCES

Cheshire East Council (2018) 'Cemeteries Strategy'.

Keppel-Green, A. (2018) 'Review of Cemetery Operations'. Knutsford Town Council.

Sherwin, C. (2020) 'Frederick Baden Benger'. *Friends of Knutsford Heritage Centre Monthly Bulletin*. December 2020.

APPENDIX A: ACTION PLAN

These are the specific actions required to implement the key changes outlined in the strategy. It does not include 'business as usual' actions.

Ref	Area	Action	Responsible	Estimated Cost	Due Date
E3	Wildflower Strip	Create wildflower strip to rear of cemetery	Groundskeeper	£200	Feb-22
C1	Chapel Promotional Leaflet	Publish a promotional leaflet for the chapel	Town Clerk / ASOs	£500	Mar-22
C2	Chapel marketing plan	Develop and implement a chapel marketing plan	Town Clerk / ASOs	£250	Mar-22
C3	Events to bring users to the chapel	Host a service around Mothering Sunday	Civic Events Officer	£100	Mar-22
I4	Social Media Plan	Prepare and implement an annual social media plan.	Town Clerk / ASOs	NIL	Mar-22
I5	Cemetery Information Literature	Publish and disseminate information literature	Town Clerk / ASOs	£500	Mar-22
P2	Renovate Gates	Obtain quotes for sandblasting and painting gates and front rail.	Planning and Facilities Officer	NIL	Mar-22
B4	Grave Care Service	Options for a service to be prepared for committee consideration	Town Clerk / Cemetery WG	NIL	Apr-22
E2	Ascertain usage of peat from plant suppliers	Enquiries to be made with main suppliers	Planning and Facilities Officer	NIL	Apr-22
P2	Renovate Gates	Compare quotes against in house options to determine how to progress.	Planning and Facilities Officer / Cemetery WG	£2,500	Apr-22
G1	Additional Flowerbeds	Create new flowerbeds at intersections	Groundskeeper	£200	May-22
I1	Develop an e-newsletter for cemetery users	Quarterly newsletter to be prepared	Town Clerk / ASOs	NIL	Jun-22
P1	Reveal cobbles at entrance	Engage with Cheshire East Highways concerning the extent of the section which is considered highway.	Planning and Facilities Officer	NIL	Jun-22
E1	Review need for recycling collection	Groundskeeper to inspect waste when emptying bins and report on recyclable waste to Planning and Facilities Officer.	Groundskeeper	NIL	Sep-22

G3	Kerb Removal	Survey to be undertaken to identify graves to be included in programme	Groundskeeper / Planning and Facilities Officer	NIL	Sep-22
G5	Repaint Toilet Building	Toilet building to be repainted	Caretaker	£250	Sep-22
G6	Cut back shrubbery to reveal railings along Tabley Road.	Works to be undertaken in advance of works to railings at the front.	Groundskeeper	NIL	Sep-22
P1	Reveal cobbles at entrance	Determine most appropriate method of removing tarmac.	Planning and Facilities Officer	NIL	Sep-22
P10	Chapel Bell and Weathervane to be refurbished and installed	Funding Plan for works to be agreed.	Assets and Operations Committee	NIL	Sep-22
V1	Siding out of Tabley Road Pavement	Methodology for works to be explored looking at in house and contracted options.	Planning and Facilities Officer	NIL	Sep-22
V3	Car Parking	Review of options to improve the flow of cars within the site and the provision of parking spaces	Planning and Facilities Officer / Cemetery WG	NIL	Sep-22
V5	Solar lighting along driveway	Quotes for a lighting scheme to be obtained and decision taken on whether to progress.	Planning and Facilities Officer / Assets and Operations Committee	NIL	Sep-22
G4	Iron Railings Maintenance Programme	Programme to be developed	Planning and Facilities Officer	NIL	Nov-22
P5	Annual tribute to be placed on war graves	Town Mayor to place wreath / tribute annually	Civic Events Officer	£100	Nov-22
C3	Events to bring users to the chapel	Host a service at Christmas	Civic Events Officer	£100	Dec-22
P1	Reveal cobbles at entrance	Removal of tarmac and replacement of any damaged/lost setts.	Planning and Facilities Officer	£250	Dec-22
P4	Replacement of Yew and Holly trees with ornamental trees	Trees to be felled	Planning and Facilities Officer	£400	Dec-22
I2	Undertake a survey of cemetery users	Survey developed with Cemetery WG and disseminated.	Town Clerk	NIL	Mar-23
P4	Replacement of Yew and Holly trees with ornamental trees	Four replacement trees to be planted	Planning and Facilities Officer	£500	Mar-23
V1	Siding out of Tabley Road Pavement	Works undertaken / commissioned	Assets and Operations Committee	£1,500	Apr-23

P3	A new external sign will be installed on the railings.	Install new sign on railings	Planning and Facilities Officer / Cemetery WG	£300	May-23
B3	Rose Garden Memorials	Options to be explored as part of planning the garden	Town Clerk / Cemetery WG	NIL	Jun-23
G3	Kerb Removal	Programme of kerb removal to be planned and developed	Town Clerk / Planning and Facilities Officer	NIL	Jun-23
L1	Expansion of Cemetery	Engagement with adjacent landowner and outcome reached.	Town Clerk / Cemetery WG	£1,000	Jun-23
V4	Installation of directional sign at Tabley Road/Manchester Road junction	Permission to be obtained from CEC for the installation of a sign	Town Clerk	£400	Jun-23
G3	Kerb Removal	Commence programme implementation	Planning and Facilities Officer	£1,000 pa	Sep-23
P7	Repair of Bengier grave railings	Cost for repairs to be established	Planning and Facilities Officer	NIL	Sep-23
P7	Repair of Bengier grave railings	Subject to cost, repairs undertaken	Planning and Facilities Officer	£500	Dec-23
P8	Enhancement of large grave areas	Planting scheme to be implemented	Groundskeeper	£500	Jun-24
V2	Bicycle Parking	Style and location to be agreed and parking installed.	Town Clerk / Cemetery WG	£250	Jun-24
B1	Book of remembrance	Options to be explored and prepared for committee consideration	Town Clerk / Cemetery WG	NIL	Sep-24
G2	Creation of new Rose Garden	Plan for garden to be developed and approved by Cemetery WG	Groundskeeper / Planning and Facilities Officer	NIL	Sep-24
L2	Appraisal of alternative expansion options	Subject to outcome of discussions with adjacent landowner, options appraisal to be developed.	Cemetery WG	NIL	Dec-24
P10	Chapel Bell and Weathervane to be refurbished and installed	Funds to be raised	Town Clerk	NIL	Dec-24
G2	Creation of new Rose Garden	Garden to be created	Groundskeeper	£1,000	Apr-25
P10	Chapel Bell and Weathervane to be refurbished and installed	Bat Survey to be Undertaken	Planning and Facilities Officer	£2,500	May-25

I3	Install a noticeboard within the cemetery	Noticeboard to be installed	Town Clerk	£1,500	Jun-25
P10	Chapel Bell and Weathervane to be refurbished and installed	Works to install bell and weather vane to be undertaken.	Planning and Facilities Officer	£10,000	Dec-25
P6	Heritage of Cemetery to be researched	Volunteers to undertake research	Volunteers	£100	Jun-26
P8	Enhancement of large grave areas	Research to be commissioned through Knutsford Heritage Centre / a Friends of on identified graves.	Town Clerk	NIL	Jun-26
B2	Above-ground cremated remains storage	Options to be explored and presented to committee.	Town Clerk / Cemetery WG	NIL	Sep-26
P8	Enhancement of large grave areas	Subject to information obtained, small information signs to be prepared and installed.	Town Clerk / Cemetery WG	£500	Sep-26
C3	Events to bring users to the chapel	Consider any further suitable events	Cemetery WG	£250	Ongoing

APPENDIX B: SITE MAINTENANCE PLAN OVERVIEW

This plan is taken from the council's Cemetery Operational Standards Plan.

Activity	Frequency	When	Notes / Standards	Responsible
Toilet Cleaning	Daily	All year	Toilets will be cleaned and re-stocked twice weekly	Caretaker
Path Clearance	Weekly	All year	Pathways blown/swept for access	Groundskeeper
Litter Pick	Weekly	All year	Check site and remove litter	Groundskeeper
Empty Rubbish Bins	Weekly	All year	Rubbish bins will be emptied weekly or before reaching 75% capacity	Groundskeeper
Remove Dead Flowers	Weekly	All year	Dead flowers to be removed from graves and recycled where possible	Groundskeeper
Waste Collection	Fortnightly	All year	Waste collection from refuse Contractor	External
Turn Compost	Monthly	All year	Compost areas are to be turned to aid in decomposition	Groundskeeper
Level Graves	Ad-hoc	All year	Levelled after 6 months, soil added, and grass seed applied	Groundskeeper
Memorial Tributes	Ad-hoc	All year	Funeral flowers and tributes will be removed after two weeks	Groundskeeper
Application of Pesticides and Herbicides	Ad-hoc	All year	Targeted application for difficult areas, tree, and shrub stumps – with approval of Planning and Facilities Officer.	Groundskeeper
Wreath Clearance	Annually	Late January	Wreaths cleared by end of January.	Groundskeeper
Weed Pedestrian Areas	Quarterly	January, April, July, October	Remove weeds	Groundskeeper
Hedge Cutting	Biannually	February and August	Bird survey to be undertaken before work commences	Groundskeeper

Formal Tree Trimming	Biannually	February and August	Bird survey to be undertaken before work commences	Groundskeeper
Grass Cutting	Every 2/3 weeks	March to October (inc)	Mulch-cut. Grass length kept at 35mm-65mm	Groundskeeper
Strimming (Edges, Headstones, etc)	Every 2/3 weeks	March to October (inc)	Grass length kept at 35mm-65mm	Groundskeeper
Weed Grave Plots	Quarterly	March, June, September, December	Hoe soil and apply grass seed	Groundskeeper
Refresh/Repair Benches	Annually	April	Inspect and refurbish benches as required, including to re-stain / replace slats.	Groundskeeper
Plant Summer Bedding	Annually	May	Agree planting order with office.	Groundskeeper
Tree Pruning	Annually	September	Removal of overhanging branches to maintain clear access	Groundskeeper
Leaf Clearance	Every 2/3 weeks	September to November	Mulch leaves where possible. Grave sections, pathways, drains and grass areas to be cleared	Groundskeeper
Tree survey and remedial work	Annually	Autumn	Trees survey along Tabley Road to detail any safety issues	External
Tree survey and remedial work	Triennially	Autumn	Full tree survey for all trees on site	External
Plant Winter Bedding	Annually	October	Agree planting order with office.	Groundskeeper
Site Drains	Annually	November	Inspected and cleared of debris and excess effluent material	Groundskeeper