

CUMNOR PARISH COUNCIL MEMORIAL TESTING PROCEDURE

Issue History

Table 1 Issue history

Issue No	Date of Adoption	Reference in Minute Book	Comments
1	10/07/2023	198/23	Procedure valid from 10 July 2023

Introduction

The following documents sets out Cumnor Parish Council's (the Council) policy for the management of memorial safety in its burial ground.

The Council is currently responsible for Cumnor Parish Council's Burial and Garden of Remembrance Ground.

This policy does not include the War Memorial situated in the High Street, Cumnor, Oxford.

Responsibility and liability

The Council has primary responsibility for Health and Safety under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Occupiers Liability Act 1957 to ensure that, as far as reasonably practicable the Burial and Garden of Remembrance Ground which it owns is maintained in a safe condition.

In order to comply with the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, the Council has a systematic programme of memorial inspections ensuring that any memorials that pose a risk to Health and Safety are made safe.

The strategic aim of this policy is to ensure that the Burial and Garden of Remembrance Ground, which is under the responsibility of the Council, is a safe place for staff, visitors and all others who may visit or work in it.

Whilst the Council has overall responsibility for the safety in the Burial and Garden of Remembrance Ground, it does not own the memorials. The owners of the memorials are the grave owners, and they are responsible for maintaining the memorial in a good condition.

Memorial Stonemasons must ensure memorials are erected safely and in accordance with current standards available within the industry – British Standard 8415, the National Association of Memorial Masons (NAMM) code of working practice and the British Register of Accredited Memorial Masons Blue Book.

The Council has powers under the Local Authorities' Cemeteries Order 1977 to make safe any headstones or kerbs.

Publicity for safety testing

The Council recognises that the inspection programme has the potential to cause distress, particularly where action is required, and will aim to communicate the inspection and assessment programme as widely as possible. This will be achieved through prominent site notices in the burial ground and the Parish Council website a minimum of 2 weeks prior to assessment.

Where a memorial has been deemed at immediate risk and work needs to be undertaken, clear information will be posted in the burial ground. A notice will be placed on the main gate giving contact details and the period in which contact should be made.

Where the grave owner is known, the Council will contact them by letter to give them the opportunity to repair the memorial.

Type and frequency of checks

The Council will carry out a safety inspection by a specialist on all memorials as part of a rolling programme every 3 years and be guided by their advice.

The management of memorial safety is based on a risk assessment approach and as a priority, this will involve identifying those memorials, which present an immediate and significant hazard, and making them safe.

In case of immediate danger, the Council is empowered under the provision of the Local Authorities Cemeteries Act Order 1977 Article 6(1) to take immediate action to make safe dangerous memorials.

The Council will undertake visual inspections and hand tests looking for signs of decay, eg loose or cracked cement and degree of lean and any other issues. Where a visual check reveals defects outside the experience and knowledge of the person carrying out the inspection, specialist assistance will be sought. The Council will not utilise a mechanical method of testing (topple test) as these instruments are liable to overestimate the actual risk.

Repairs to memorials

It is Council policy that all repairs should be carried out by an approved memorial mason in accordance with the National Association of Memorial Masons (NAMM) approved methods or the British Standard 8415 current at the time of the works.

It is the responsibility of grave owners to instruct a suitably qualified mason to carry out the repairs. The Council must be informed as to which mason has been instructed to carry out repairs to ensure the correct standards are adhered to.

Prior approval must be obtained from the Council before any work is undertaken. Approval is subject to the methods to be employed to make the memorial safe and subject to adequate insurance cover being verified.

Where the grave owners cannot be traced, the Council will consider what action to take after an appropriate period.

It is not Council policy for Council to undertake permanent repairs.

Urgent action between inspections

In the event that urgent action is needed in the interests of Health and Safety on one or more specific memorials, the Council reserves the right not to give prior notice of testing, but notices will be displayed at the time of testing and every effort will be made to contact the grave owner to explain the situation.

Records

All inspection data will be retained by the Council.

Review date October 2029 or as necessary.