



Barrowby Parish Council

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Barrowby Burial Ground Memorial Safety Policy

Document control

- **Owner:** Burial Ground Committee
- **Responsible officer:** Clerk / Proper Officer
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- **Next review due:** January-March 2027 at Burial Ground Committee meeting for formal adoption at Parish Council May 2027

1. Purpose

Barrowby Parish Council is responsible for managing Barrowby Burial Ground in a safe, respectful and proportionate manner.

This policy sets out how the Council will manage the safety of memorials in the burial ground, balancing:

- public safety;
- respect for the deceased and their families;
- the dignity and appearance of the burial ground; and
- the historic and memorial significance of monuments.

The Council will follow a risk-based, sensitive and proportionate approach, as recommended in Ministry of Justice guidance. That guidance notes that precautions should be proportionate to the level of risk and that burial authorities should keep records and communicate clearly with the public.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all memorials within Barrowby Burial Ground, including headstones, crosses, tablets, kerb sets, cremation memorials, vases and other approved memorial structures.

For the avoidance of doubt, this includes:

- temporary wooden crosses;
- permanent memorials;
- plinths, bases and integral containers for flowers; and
- items placed at or around memorials where these may affect safe maintenance of the burial ground.

3. Principles

The Council will manage memorial safety in line with the following principles.

3.1 Sensitivity

All memorial safety work will be carried out with care and respect. The Council recognises that memorials are highly personal and that intervention can be upsetting for families.

3.2 Proportionality

The Council will act in proportion to the level of risk. Memorials will not be interfered with unnecessarily.

3.3 Risk-based approach

The Council will assess memorials according to their apparent condition, location and likely risk to visitors, staff and contractors. The MoJ guidance supports a risk-assessment based approach and does not recommend routine mechanical testing as standard practice.

3.4 Record keeping

The Council will keep clear records of inspections, defects found, actions taken and communications issued. Record keeping is specifically identified in the government guidance as part of good memorial safety management.

3.5 Use of competent contractors

New memorials and permanent repairs or refixing must be carried out by suitably competent and insured memorial masons working to current recognised standards. Industry guidance used by burial authorities points to BS 8415 and the NAMM Code of Working Practice for fixing and refixing memorials.

4. Responsibilities

4.1 The Council

The Council is responsible for:

- approving and reviewing this policy;
- ensuring there is a memorial inspection programme;
- determining the Council's approach to unsafe memorials;
- ensuring suitable records are maintained.

4.2 The Clerk or authorised officer

The Clerk, or another person authorised by the Council, is responsible for:

- arranging inspections;
- maintaining inspection records;
- arranging temporary safety measures where needed;
- contacting grave owners where details are available;
- reporting significant issues to the Council;
- recording follow-up actions, repairs, re-fixing works and completion dates;
- arranging reinspection where required.

4.3 Contractors / memorial masons

Contractors and memorial masons must:

- be suitably competent and insured;
- comply with Council regulations and permit requirements;
- carry out work to current recognised standards;
- leave the area safe and tidy.

4.4 Competent person

For the purposes of this policy, a "competent person" means a person who has sufficient training, knowledge, experience and understanding of memorial construction, deterioration, inspection methods and current safety standards to carry out the relevant inspection or assessment safely and appropriately.

This may include:

- a suitably trained officer or contractor instructed by the Council to carry out visual memorial inspections;
- a qualified memorial mason carrying out repair, refixing or technical assessment work;
- another specialist contractor with relevant competence and insurance.

Any person carrying out inspections involving physical assessment, repair or refixing must be suitably competent for that role and adequately insured.

5. Memorial design and maintenance requirements

In order to support the safe and dignified maintenance of Barrowby Burial Ground, and to reduce the risk of damage to memorials, tributes and maintenance equipment, the following requirements apply.

5.1 Temporary wooden crosses

Temporary wooden crosses may be placed on a grave following an interment, subject to the Council's burial ground regulations.

A temporary wooden cross must be removed no later than **18 months** after the date of interment, unless the Council has agreed otherwise in exceptional circumstances.

After this period, any permanent memorial must comply with the Council's current regulations and permit requirements.

5.2 Requirement for plinth on new memorials

Any new memorial installed after the adoption of this policy must include a **plinth, base or other approved integral area** designed to accommodate flowers, small ornaments or tributes. Flowers, containers and permitted ornaments should be placed on the plinth or within the memorial footprint, rather than directly on the grassed area.

This requirement is necessary to:

- allow routine grass cutting and maintenance of the burial ground;
- help keep the site tidy, safe and accessible;
- reduce the risk of damage to tributes, memorials and maintenance equipment; and
- maintain a consistent and respectful appearance across the burial ground.

5.3 Existing memorials

This plinth requirement will apply to **new memorials going forward** and to replacement memorials, but the Council will apply the requirement to older memorials reasonably and proportionately, recognising that historic memorials may have been installed under previous rules.

5.4 Items outside the memorial footprint

To allow safe and effective maintenance, items should not be placed directly on grassed areas around graves unless expressly permitted by the Council.

Where items left outside the memorial plinth or memorial footprint interfere with mowing, routine maintenance, or create a risk of damage or obstruction, the Council reserves the right to move them temporarily or remove them in accordance with its burial ground regulations and any related floral tribute or ornaments policy.

6. Floral tributes and ornaments in relation to memorial safety and maintenance

The Council recognises that flowers and small ornaments are an important part of remembrance. However, they must be managed in a way that allows the burial ground to be safely maintained.

Accordingly:

- flowers and permitted ornaments should be placed on the memorial plinth or within the memorial footprint;
- items should not be spread onto surrounding grassed areas;
- loose items may be moved temporarily to allow mowing or other maintenance;
- broken, faded, unsafe or unserviceable items may be removed at the Council's discretion.

7. Inspection regime

The Council will operate a rolling memorial inspection programme based on risk, practicality and available resources.

7.1 Frequency of inspections

The burial ground as a whole will be subject to periodic general inspection.

In addition:

- memorial safety inspections will normally be carried out on a rolling basis, with the aim that all memorials are visually inspected at reasonable intervals;
- higher-risk memorials, or memorials in areas of greater public use, may be inspected more frequently;
- memorials that have previously been identified as defective may be subject to earlier reinspection;
- inspections may also be carried out following reports from members of the public, contractors, councillors or staff, or after severe weather or other events which may affect memorial stability.

7.2 Method of inspection

Inspections will normally involve:

- a visual inspection for signs of damage, leaning, movement, weathering, failed joints, failed foundations or other visible instability; and
- where justified, a careful hand assessment by a competent person.

The Council will take a proportionate approach and will not use unnecessarily intrusive methods. Routine mechanical testing will not normally be used unless specifically justified.

7.3 Inspection frequency statement

The Council will operate a rolling programme of memorial inspections.

All memorials will be subject to routine visual inspection at intervals determined by the Council's inspection programme. As a minimum, the Council will aim to ensure that every memorial is visually inspected at least once every five years.

In addition:

- any memorial previously identified as presenting a medium or high level of risk will be reinspected within the timescale appropriate to its risk category;
- any memorial reported as potentially unsafe or dangerous will be inspected as soon as reasonably practicable;
- additional inspections may be undertaken following severe weather, reports of damage, or any other event likely to affect memorial stability.

8. Unsafe memorials

Where a memorial is found to present a risk, the Council may take proportionate action to make it safe.

Depending on the level of risk, action may include:

- attaching a warning notice;
- placing a temporary support or stake;
- recording the memorial for monitoring or reinspection;
- contacting the grave owner or family representative;
- cordoning the area;
- laying the memorial down as a last resort;
- arranging urgent temporary works where there is an immediate danger to the public.

8.1 Risk categories

For administrative purposes, memorial defects may be recorded using the following broad categories:

Category A – Immediate danger

A memorial that is unstable or otherwise presents an immediate risk of collapse or injury.

Category B – Significant defect requiring prompt action

A memorial that is not in immediate danger of collapse but has defects that could reasonably become dangerous if not addressed.

Category C – Minor defect / monitor

A memorial with minor defects, weathering or movement that do not currently justify urgent action but should be recorded and monitored.

Category D – No action required

No apparent defect requiring action beyond routine inspection.

8.2 Indicative response times

The Council will normally aim to respond as follows:

- **Category A:** immediate action to make safe, with reinspection or follow-up as soon as practicable;
- **Category B:** owner contact and/or temporary action, with reinspection normally within 3 to 6 months or sooner if appropriate;
- **Category C:** record and monitor, with reinspection at the next routine cycle or sooner if concerns increase;
- **Category D:** no further action until the next routine inspection unless circumstances change.

These timescales are indicative only and may be shortened where the location, condition or usage of the area increases risk.

9. Contact with grave owners and families

Where possible, and unless there is an immediate safety risk, the Council will seek to contact the grave owner or family representative before permanent works are carried out.

Where contact details are available, the Council will normally:

- explain the concern;
- explain any temporary safety action taken;
- request that repair or refixing is arranged within a reasonable timescale;
- explain what the Council may do if no action is taken.

9.1 Where the owner cannot be traced

If the grave owner or family representative cannot be traced after reasonable enquiries, the Council may:

- place a notice on or near the memorial where appropriate;
- record the steps taken to try to identify or contact the owner;
- take such temporary or permanent action as is reasonably necessary to manage the risk;
- retain records of the defect, the action taken and the reason for proceeding without owner contact.

Reasonable enquiries may include checking:

- the Exclusive Right of Burial Register;
- burial records and memorial records;
- any last known correspondence details held by the Council.

The Council is not required to leave an unsafe memorial in place simply because no owner can be contacted.

9.2 Emergency action and routine notice procedure

Emergency action

Where a memorial presents an immediate risk to public safety, the Council may take emergency action without prior notice. This may include:

- cordoning the area;
- staking or supporting the memorial;
- laying the memorial flat;
- removing detached or dangerous parts;
- arranging urgent contractor attendance.

The Council will record the reason for the emergency action taken and, where possible, will seek to contact the grave owner afterwards.

Routine notice procedure

Where a memorial does not present an immediate danger, the Council will normally follow a routine procedure by:

- recording the defect;
- notifying the grave owner where details are available;
- allowing a reasonable period for repair or refixing;
- carrying out reinspection within an appropriate timescale;
- considering further action if no satisfactory response is received.

This procedure will be applied proportionately, taking account of the level of risk, location and condition of the memorial.

10. New memorials and refixing

All new memorials and all memorials re-fixed after removal, inscription work or repair must:

- comply with Council regulations and permit procedures;
- be installed by a suitably competent and insured memorial mason;
- be fixed in accordance with current recognised standards and good practice;
- include an approved plinth or integral base area suitable for flowers and permitted ornaments, so that routine maintenance can be carried out without avoidable obstruction or damage.

Where repair or refixing work is undertaken, the Council may require confirmation from the memorial mason that the memorial, as left on site, complies with current standards.

11. Historic memorials

Where a memorial may have special historic, artistic or heritage significance, the Council will seek to act with additional care and may obtain specialist advice before major intervention where appropriate. Historic England advises careful management of monuments in cemeteries and burial grounds because of their heritage significance.

12. Records

The Council will maintain suitable memorial safety records, including:

- memorial reference or plot number;
- date of inspection;
- name of inspector;
- apparent condition;
- risk category;
- action taken;
- date and content of any notice or correspondence;
- temporary safety measures taken;
- date of repair / re-fixing where known;
- date repair or re-fixing was confirmed as complete;
- date of any reinspection;
- final outcome / closure of the case.

12.1 Repair completion records

Where a memorial has been repaired, re-fixed or otherwise made safe by a memorial mason or contractor, the Council should record:

- the date the work was completed;
- who carried out the work;
- whether written confirmation or a completion certificate was received;

- the date the memorial was reinspected or otherwise confirmed as satisfactory;
- any further action required.

Records should be kept in sufficient detail to show how the Council identified the defect, what action was taken, and when the matter was resolved.

13. Review

This policy will be reviewed periodically and updated as required.