

**DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL  
MEMORIAL SAFETY POLICY**

**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The Town Council has a responsibility under the Local Authorities Cemeteries Order 1977 and health and safety legislation to take all reasonably practicable measures to maintain safety within the cemeteries for which it is responsible.
- 1.2 A significant source of potential danger within burial grounds (but by no means the only one) arises from unstable memorials.
- 1.3 The Council's powers to incur expenditure on the maintenance of memorials (which are privately owned structures) are constrained by the Local Authorities Cemeteries Order 1977 which contains conflicting provisions. Article 3 says that a burial authority cannot take "any action in relation to any ... memorial, other than action which is necessary to remove a danger which arises by reason of the condition of ... the memorial itself". However, Article 16(1) says "A burial authority may put and keep in order any ... memorial in a cemetery".
- 1.4 This Policy sets out the Council's approach to ensuring so far as is reasonably possible the safety of the memorials within its cemeteries. In particular, it seeks to balance the (often only slight) risk presented by unstable memorials with the distress caused to the bereaved by the levelling of memorials.
- 1.5 In this Policy 'memorial' includes vaults, tombstones, headstones and all other forms of memorial placed on graves.
- 1.6 In addition to the requirements of this policy, the Council will take into account the guidance contained in Institute of Cemetery & Crematorium Management's document on *Management of Memorials*.

**2. Information**

- 2.1 Prior to embarking on a general testing programme the Council will give notice of its intention by way of notices within the cemeteries or by posts on social media.

**3. Survey**

- 3.1 The Council staff will, after receiving appropriate training, undertake a comprehensive inspection of the memorials in all the cemeteries no less frequently than once every five years. However, these periodic inspections may identify memorials that need to be monitored more frequently by Council staff.
- 3.2 All those engaged in testing are aware of the provisions of British Standard 8415 which requires a memorial to remain upright when a force of 25kg is applied (by hand) to its apex.

3.3 The results of the memorial surveys will be stored by the council and updates on the survey programme reported to the relevant council committee on an annual basis.

#### **4. Taking action**

4.1 On the basis of the survey the Council will consider the most appropriate means of reducing the risk presented by unstable memorials.

4.2 In some instances it will be necessary to lay the memorial flat to remove an immediate danger and this will be undertaken by an accredited monument mason or, in the case of smaller memorials, by council staff. However, this will not always be the most appropriate treatment. Where possible the Council will take other action to stabilise the memorial consistent with the powers contained in the Local Authorities Cemeteries Order 1977, either by repacking the area around its base or by providing appropriate external support, possibly with a warning notice affixed. This will afford the opportunity for the owners of the memorial to become aware of the matter if it has not been possible to notify them direct and to arrange their own remedial works.

4.3 Where it is possible to identify the owner of a right of burial the Council will notify that person if a memorial fails the test and will display lists of memorials which have failed the test in the cemetery and will also place individual notices on or near memorials which fail the test giving the Council's contact details and the period for making contact.

4.4 In some instances a memorial which moves may not be sufficiently unstable to pose a danger to visitors or staff. If this is the case the condition of the memorial will be monitored annually and appropriate action taken in the future if the level of risk posed requires it.

**Dorchester Town Council**

**Policy reviewed and adopted: March 2024**