

**CHIGWELL PARISH COUNCIL
OFFICERS REPORT TO THE FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**

Meeting Date: 11/06/2026

Subject: Specialist Contractor- Cemetery Works

Purpose of Report

This report provides details of unplanned expenditure in the sum of £1,950 incurred for the engagement of a specialist contractor to undertake cemetery works.

Background

Following a recent burial and in preparation for a subsequent interment within the same grave, an exploratory excavation was undertaken by the Council's Open Spaces team. During this process, it became evident that the original grave depth did not meet the required standard for multiple interments.

The grave in question had been purchased historically, prior to current Council operational arrangements. The exploratory works identified that the existing interment had been placed at a shallower depth than would normally be required to safely facilitate a further burial.

Operational and Legislative Considerations

Under accepted burial practice and guidance, including provisions within the Local Authorities' Cemeteries Order 1977 and associated industry standards, it is necessary to ensure that graves intended for multiple interments are of sufficient depth and structurally safe.

Where adequate depth cannot be achieved, it is standard practice to undertake grave capping. This involves the installation of a reinforced concrete layer above the existing interment to:

- Provide structural support
- Safely separate interments
- Ensure compliance with health, safety, and environmental requirements
- Protect the dignity and integrity of the burial process

Grave capping is a specialist process requiring:

- Controlled excavation
- Installation of concrete to an appropriate specification
- A curing period (typically up to 48 hours) to allow the concrete to set sufficiently before further works can proceed

Due to the technical nature of this work, and the need to ensure compliance with legal and safety requirements, it was not appropriate for the Council's internal team to undertake this activity, as they are neither trained nor equipped for such specialist operations.

Financial Considerations

While the Council would ordinarily seek to recover costs in circumstances where historic arrangements may have contributed to an issue, this case represents a matter for which the Council accepts operational responsibility.

The expenditure was therefore necessary to ensure:

- Compliance with statutory and industry requirements
- Safe and dignified continuation of burial services
- Mitigation of any potential risk or liability

Governance and Reporting

The expenditure was approved as an urgent operational necessity, and the Chair was notified at the time in accordance with good governance practice.

This report is presented to the Finance and Governance Committee for:

- Transparency
- Proper recording of the decision
- Oversight of unplanned expenditure

In line with data protection and sensitivity considerations, no information is included within this report that could identify the specific grave, individuals, or bereaved families concerned.

Recommendation

That the Committee:

- Notes the contents of this report, and
- Acknowledges the expenditure incurred as necessary and appropriate in the circumstances

Prepared by: **Jason Selvarajah** MSc
Clerk & Proper Officer
Chigwell Parish Council