

A summary of responses to Cheshire East Council's

## Cemeteries Strategy Consultation



# Contents

Executive summary and conclusions .....	3
Introduction .....	6
Section 1 – Survey feedback on the Cemetery Regulations .....	8
Section 2 – Survey feedback on the Cemeteries Strategy .....	10
Section 3 – Summary of formal consultation responses .....	16
Section 4 – Summary of consultation face to face meetings .....	18
Appendix 1 – Formal consultation responses.....	21

Report produced 4 December 2018 by the Research and Consultation Team, Cheshire East Council, on behalf of Waste and Environment Service, Cheshire East Council. Please email [RandC@cheshireeast.gov.uk](mailto:RandC@cheshireeast.gov.uk) for further information.

## **Executive summary and conclusions**

### **Consultation responses**

During summer 2018 Cheshire East Council consulted on its Cemetery Regulations, and on its Cemeteries Strategy. A wide range of stakeholders were invited to take part in the consultation, with 297 responses being received in total.

The overall response to the consultation was extremely positive, with very high levels of support for, and compliments about, both documents.

Respondents also took the opportunity to comment on how they felt the documents could be improved, and this feedback is summarised below.

### **Feedback on the Cemetery Regulations from survey respondents**

Feedback on the regulations from those completing the consultation survey was positive, with a very large proportion of respondents, 87%, agreeing that the regulations are suitable.

A number of respondents commented that they felt the regulations were comprehensive, reasonable and good. On the other hand, some felt the regulations were too long and impersonal, particularly for people who are recently bereaved.

The main improvements suggested for the regulations were around:

- Access – Some felt more needs to be done to tackle dogs and anti-social behaviour, as well as to regulate car usage around cemeteries (8 comments)
- Memorials – Opinion seemed to be split about regulation of memorials on graves, particularly children's graves. Some felt memorials should be allowed, while others felt the regulations on memorials should be enforced more strictly (7 comments).

### **Feedback on the Cemeteries Strategy from survey respondents**

Feedback on the strategy from those completing the consultation survey was also positive, with another very large proportion, 78%, agreeing the strategy is suitable. Respondents were slightly more likely to think the strategy is good for the short term (86%), compared to for the medium term (81%) and the long term (73%).

It is interesting to note that whilst only one third of respondents, 33%, read the full draft strategy during the consultation, a much larger proportion, 83%, read the summary of the draft strategy – this suggests that summarised strategies are more digestible for residents.

The main points raised about the strategy seemed to be around:

- Lack of burial provision – Some felt the strategy does not address the lack of long term burial provision adequately, and felt burial provision should be provided in all key towns in Cheshire East. Specific towns that respondents identified as being impacted included Alsager, Sandbach, Knutsford and Poynton (20 comments)
- The 2 principal cemeteries – Some felt having 2 principal cemeteries was inappropriate, feeling the 30 minute drive time was too far, and that public transport is not effective enough to enable convenient access to them (10 comments)
- Cremation – Respondents suggested that cremation should be encouraged as a solution to lack of burial provision, and felt that analysis of the long term trends of burials to cremations should be included in the strategy, as they felt burials may become even less common in future than they are now (currently 84% of funerals are cremations, with 16% being coffin burials) (12 comments)
- Alternative methods of burial – Others felt that a lack of burial space could be addressed by implementing alternative, modern burial methods, such as having green, woodland or natural burial grounds (9 comments)
- Local responsibility – Some felt responsibility for managing cemeteries and cemetery provision should be passed to local town or parish councils, and that more information about “Trusts” and how these might work is required (13 comments).

## **Feedback from formal responses and face to face meetings**

Feedback on the documents was also received from a number of key stakeholders as formal written responses, and in face to face meetings. Much of this feedback echoed and expanded on that received in the survey, touching on concerns about lack of burial space, particularly in Alsager, Sandbach and Poynton. There were also requests for alternative burial provision such as natural burial grounds, for increased levels of cremation, and for more detail about how local councils might contribute towards the delivery of the service.

## **Conclusions**

Overall there has been a positive response to the consultation. The **Cemetery Regulations** seemed to be deemed suitable, though suggestions around access and memorials could perhaps be given attention.

The **Cemeteries Strategy** was also well received, though respondents were slightly less convinced about the long term strategy being proposed, as compared the short term one.

It is clear that lack of burial provision, particularly in certain towns, causes concern – residents are used to there being sufficient burial provision in their local town/area. Concern was also raised about having 2 principal cemeteries, particularly for residents living

some distance away from them – access for visits, particularly for those using public transport, could be a problem.

Other respondents did seem to suggest however, that there is a trend away from burial towards cremation, and it does seem remiss that an analysis of these trends is not included in the strategy, as this could be informative. Alternative methods of burial, such as natural burial grounds, were also suggested to help ease the problem of a lack of space, and these could perhaps be explored as a long term solution within the strategy.

# Introduction

## Purpose of the consultation

Between 20 July and 14 September 2018, Cheshire East Council consulted on the two following documents:

1. Cemetery Regulations – These regulations are the general terms and conditions under which Cheshire East Council operates the 11 cemeteries which it manages. They are designed to ensure the safe and peaceful operational enjoyment of the cemeteries for all visitors and staff, and ensure that the peace, dignity and reverence of these facilities is maintained. These regulations had recently been reviewed at the time of the consultation.
2. Cemeteries Strategy – The purpose of this strategy is to ensure that the provision of cemeteries meets local need for existing and future residents within Cheshire East. This strategy had recently been created at the time of the consultation.

The purpose of the consultation was to gather feedback on these documents, before they could potentially be approved for adoption before the end of 2018. Harrison Design Development Ltd – specialists in cemetery and crematoria planning – had been commissioned to review and draft these documents prior to the consultation taking place.

## Consultation methodology and number of responses

The consultation was conducted with a wide range of stakeholders including:

- Cheshire East residents, who were advised of the consultation through the council's [Digital Influence Panel](#)
- The general public, via a media release on 10 July 2018
- Specific stakeholders who were contacted directly about the consultation. This included funeral directors, Parish and Town Councils, council Ward Members, church ministers, Orbitas Bereavement Services, Cemetery Friends Groups, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, Cheshire East Members of Parliament, Cheshire East Council Cabinet, the council Environment/Cemeteries Portfolio Holder, the council's Corporate Leadership Team, the Archdeacon (Ian Bishop)
- Members of the public and Alsager Town Council who requested face to face discussions and were met by representatives of Cheshire East Council.

297 responses were received as part of the consultation, and these included:

- 286 consultation survey completions
- 11 formal written responses.

## **Reading this report**

Sections 1 and 2 contain summaries of responses to the consultation survey.

Section 3 contains a summary of formal consultation responses (see Appendix 1 for the full formal consultation responses).

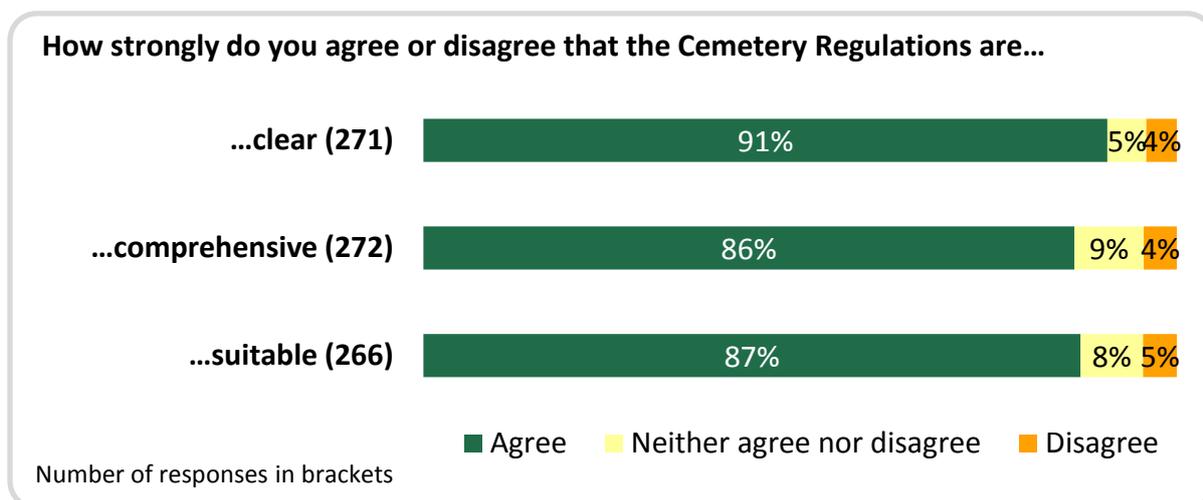
Section 4 contains a summary of face to face meetings held between the council and individual stakeholders.

Please note that results presented in charts throughout the report exclude those who didn't answer, or who answered "no opinion".

## Section 1 – Survey feedback on the Cemetery Regulations

### Suitability of the regulations

Large proportions of respondents agreed the regulations are clear (91%), suitable (87%) and comprehensive (86%).



### Comments about the regulations

In total, respondents made 52 comments about the Cemetery Regulations.

#### General comments

A number of respondents felt the regulations were comprehensive, reasonable and good (10 comments).

Others felt the regulations were too long at 17 pages, and that they need to be shorter. They felt people don't want a long list of instructions, which are a lot to take in for people who are recently bereaved, and perhaps lack some empathy (5 comments).

Other general comments about the regulations included that:

- They are not followed up in practice, and need to be enforced (3 comments)
- Cremation should be promoted/favoured over burials, as burial sites are running out (3 comments)
- Alsager cemetery will soon reach capacity, and needs more space (2 comments)
- The regulations need advertising better (1 comment).

Respondents suggested the following improvements for the regulations (7 comments):

- p.5 – A definition of what constitutes a "working day" could be added to the definitions section

- p.15 – Contact details need adding
- “Traditional and lawn graves” are not discussed in the main regulations, but are included in the definitions at the end.

### **Access to cemeteries**

There were a number of comments made about access:

- Dogs – Some felt stricter enforcement of dogs is required as they are allowed to run free, and that dog faeces are sometimes found on graves/memorials (2 comments)
- Anti-social behaviour – Some complained about anti-social behaviour in cemetery car parks, such as people meeting there, and suggested the minimum age to visit cemeteries unaccompanied should be increased from 10 to 16 (2 comments)
- Speed limit – It was felt the speed limit around cemeteries should be reduced to 5mph (1 comment)
- Car parking – More required, especially at Crewe (1 comment)
- Roads – Graves near roads in cemeteries need protection from cars (1 comment)
- Signage – Could be improved around cemeteries (1 comment).

### **Memorials**

Opinion on decoration of graves was split:

- Some felt that decoration of children’s graves should be permitted, that if plants are deemed suitable they should not be removed, and that the council should not be allowed to remove memorials, as long as they are properly contained within grave sites and are not offensive (3 comments)
- Others felt stricter rules were needed about what is allowed on graves, particularly those of children (e.g. teddy bears should not be permitted), that there needs to be more regulation about flowers on graves, particularly plastic and large ones, and that tributes should not extend beyond the boundaries of graves (4 comments).

Other comments included that 12 months wait to add a memorial seems a long time, and that remedial work by masons is not covered anywhere in the regulations (2 comments).

### **Other comments**

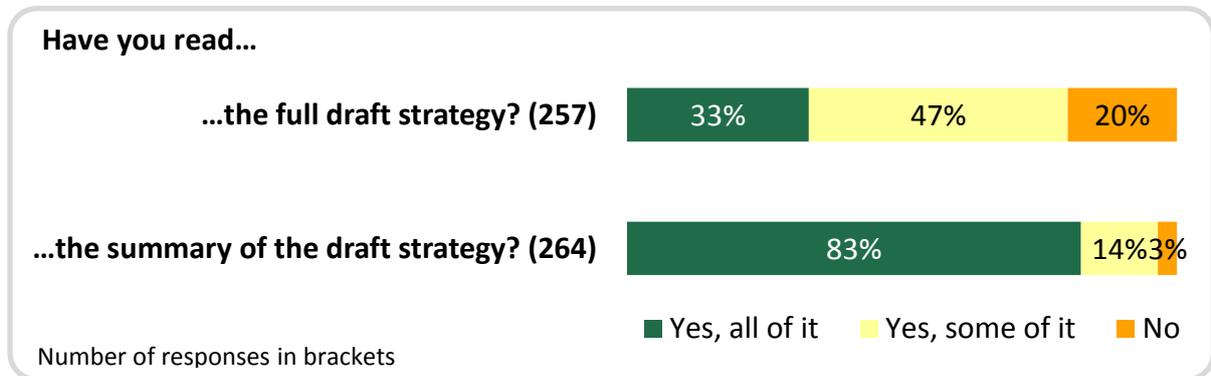
Finally there were a number of other comments made:

- One person commented that they felt graveyard maintenance is poor, with litter and green waste being a problem, particularly in Macclesfield cemetery (1 comment)
- One person asked if people can choose their own plots (1 comment)
- Another person felt charges should be made clearer (1 comment)
- Finally another person felt that green/natural burials should be offered (1 comment).

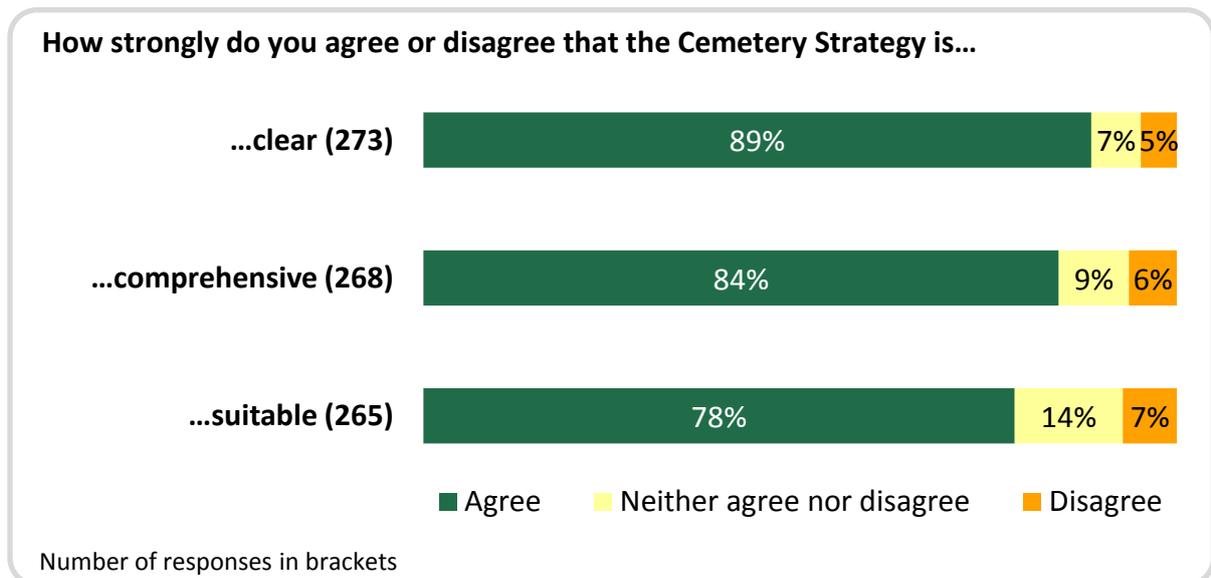
## Section 2 – Survey feedback on the Cemeteries Strategy

### Suitability of the strategy

Before giving feedback on the Cemeteries Strategy, one third of respondents (33%) had read the full version of it, and around 8 in 10 (83%) had read the summary version of it.

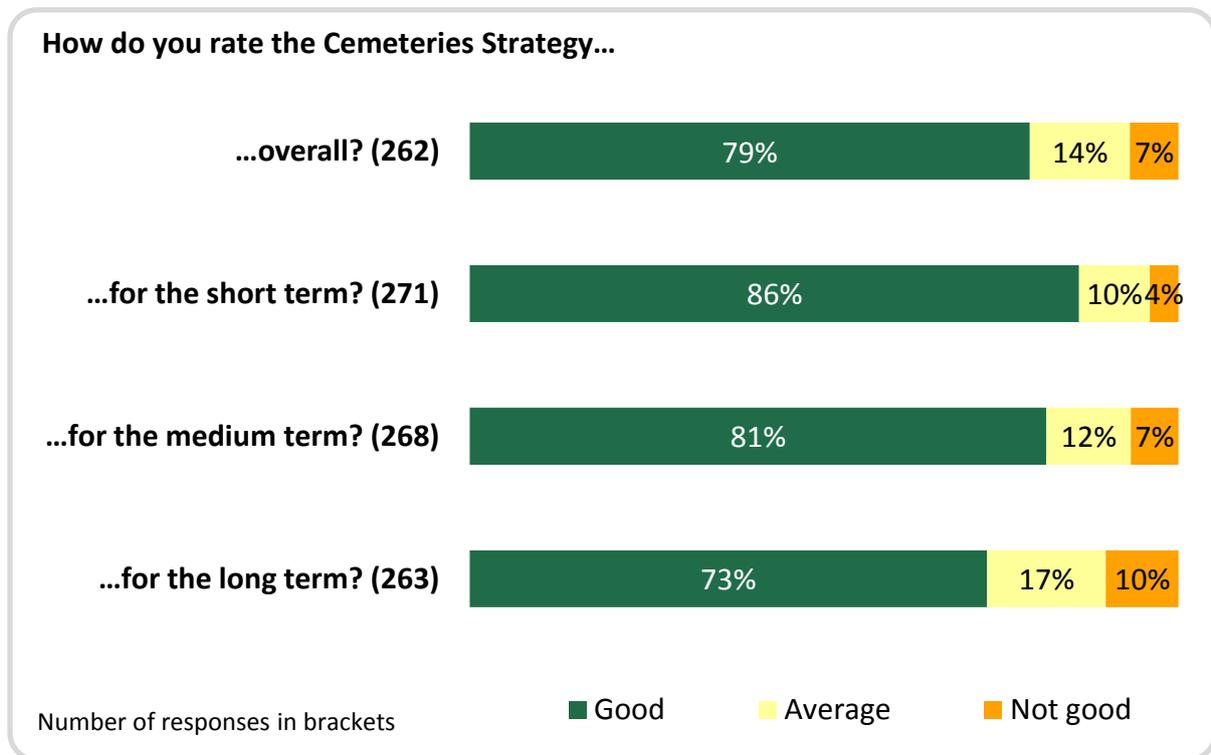


Large proportions of respondents agreed the cemeteries strategy is clear (89%), comprehensive (84%) and suitable (78%).



Large proportions of respondents also felt the strategy is good overall (79%).

However, respondents were more likely to think the strategy is good for the short term (86%), compared to for the medium term (81%) and the long term (73%).



## Comments about the strategy

In total, respondents made 106 comments about the Cemeteries Strategy.

### Lack of burial provision (20 comments)

The largest number of comments concerned a lack of cemetery provision, and suggested cemeteries should be established and provided in all key towns within Cheshire East.

They felt that local burial space is running out, more is needed, and that the council should provide it. They felt the strategy does not address this issue of a lack of space, and does not address the issue of demand on municipal cemeteries increasing as churchyard capacity is exhausted.

Some respondents listed specific towns where they felt cemetery provision was running low, including:

- Alsager cemetery – It was felt more provision is required here, as this town has a high level of demand, but low capacity. Respondents felt the strategy offers little for

Alsager, and that the town is outside the 30 minute drive time boundaries of both main burial grounds at Crewe and Macclesfield which is unfair (6 comments)

- Sandbach cemetery – Respondents felt this cemetery is quickly running out of space, and that given the population of the town is expected to increase by 40% by 2030, that having a cemetery in the town is essential. They felt its central location, good road access, availability of adjoining land, and award winning standards were reasons for the continuation of burial provision at this location (3 comments)
- Knutsford cemetery – Respondents stressed provision should always be provided here (2 comments)
- Poynton cemetery – One respondent felt Poynton is too far from Macclesfield to be reasonable to visit (1 comment).

### **The 2 principal cemeteries (10 comments)**

As well as citing a lack of space as an issue, some respondents also felt that having 2 principal cemeteries was inappropriate, feeling that the 30 minute drive time was too far, and that public transport is not effective enough to enable convenient access to them. Respondents felt that public transport travel times should have been factored into the modelling. Respondents also felt that having a “personal connection” to a place was a bigger factor than travel time when choosing which cemetery to use.

### **Cremation (12 comments)**

As a solution to the lack of space for coffin burials, respondents suggested that cremation should be encouraged more as an alternative – they felt cremation is more efficient and more affordable than coffin burial.

Respondents felt more emphasis within the strategy should be given to expanding and improving cremation facilities, to enable a higher rate of cremation if required. They felt this could be achieved by improving cremation facilities through more space for mourners and expanded parking provision, and by increasing cremation capacity through 7 day a week cremation provision, and faster cremation processes.

Respondents also highlighted that no analysis is presented in the strategy showing the long term trends of burials to cremations. They suggested that the proportion of cremations has increased over time, whereas the proportion of burials has reduced significantly. They suggested that in 30 years time, based on a continuation of these trends, the demand for burials might be reduced further. Respondents felt an analysis of this sort should be incorporated into the strategy.

### **Alternative methods of burial (9 comments)**

Other respondents suggested addressing a lack of space by using alternative, innovative methods of burial that have been developed over the past few years.

Suggestions included natural and modern methods of burial such as having green, woodland or natural burial grounds, or "park like" spaces where people can scatter or bury ashes/ash containers. Respondents felt these types of burials could be encouraged, and suggested consultation with other bodies, such as The Natural Death Centre, to help identify potential new solutions.

One respondent suggested that as there is a 30 year capacity in Cheshire East, there is no real urgency to address this – In 30 years time space burial might even be an option.

### **Local responsibility (13 comments)**

Some respondents felt that responsibility for managing cemeteries and cemetery provision should be passed to local town or parish councils. More information about "Trusts" and how they might work would be required, including what role they will play in acquisition of cemetery space, and what their pricing policies might be. Some were concerned that passing responsibility to Town and Parish Councils may be seen as a way of Cheshire East reducing future expenditure, rather than improving services.

Other respondents were concerned about "double taxation", for example residents paying for services not provided in their local area (e.g. cemeteries), or paying for the same service twice through council tax and a town/parish council precept.

Respondents emphasised that they felt the service should not become privatised, that it was important for this service to focus on resident need, rather than profit and price increases.

### **Cemetery maintenance (5 comments)**

Respondents made a number of comments about maintenance in cemeteries, including:

- All existing cemeteries should be maintained by CEC
- The council should be responsible for 3rd party damage to grave sites
- Grave stones deemed dangerous should not be knocked down
- Hedges and trees should not be removed, as this could cause stability issues (see the "Seymour Papers" legislation)
- Anti-social behaviour and crime at cemeteries needs to be clamped down on, CCTVs are needed.

### **Strategy format (22 comments)**

Respondents made a number of comments about the format of the strategy itself, including:

- That the strategy looks comprehensive, and all seems sensible and realistic, especially given funding constraints. It looks like a lot of thought has been put into it (7 comments)
- That the strategy is too long – information overload (2 comments)
- That it is poorly written, lacks specifics, and looks like the small print of an insurance policy (3 comments)
- That strategies are fine but they need backing with money and commitment (3 comments).

Others suggested the following individual improvements for the strategy document:

- The executive summary could be improved, as it currently summarises the problem statement, and not the whole strategy
- p.10 – The word "less" should be replaced with "fewer"
- p.26 – The paragraph numbering has gone awry
- p.26 – Remove the word "both" from 5.35, as "Pott Shrigley and Poynton East" is a single Ward
- p.33 – Paragraph 5.5.1 the word "with" is missing
- P.71 – Paragraph 8.3 – This is a key paragraph within the strategy, yet it contradicts itself. "The first sentence states that Cheshire East would continue to operate and maintain the other cemeteries, whilst the second sentence proposes that they would be better devolved to town and parish councils." Which is it?
- Calculations in the strategy would be better put into an Appendix.

### **Other comments (15 comments)**

Finally, respondents made a number of other comments about the strategy:

- There were a number of comments made around how long periods of rights should be set at. Some suggested anything less than 100 years was "abhorrent", with others arguing the period should be less. One respondent felt that those living in poorer parts of the community would be drawn to shorter term periods due to a lack of affordability, and that the periods instead should be set depending on how long people have lived in individual communities. It was also suggested that perpetuity agreements should be renegotiated if possible (5 comments)
- Others wondered if future population estimates can be relied on when creating such a long term strategy, and wondered if unexpected housing demand factored in (4 comments)

- Some wondered whether burial requirements for different ethnicities/faiths been accounted for, whilst on the other hand one respondent suggested that disposal of the dead in accordance with religious practises is not a right that councils should have to honour (3 comments)
- One respondent suggested this should be rated as low priority as compared other council services, so spending on it should be minimised (1 comment)
- One respondent pointed out that there is nothing in the strategy to cover a situation where the council is dissolved or combined with another local authority (1 comment)
- One respondent suggested there needs to be a memorial/book of remembrance for children lost during miscarriage (1 comment)
- Finally, some asked why the consultation survey did not include questions on whether they felt having 2 principal cemeteries, or a 30 minute drive time, is acceptable (2 comments).

## **Section 3 – Summary of formal consultation responses**

The following is a very brief summary of the formal responses received during the consultation. The full formal consultation responses can be found in Appendix 1 – it is strongly recommended these are read. Responses are presented in alphabetical order.

### **Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC)**

Provided background information on the purpose and set-up of the CWGC. Detailed the interest the CWGC has in specific cemeteries in Cheshire East, including numbers of First and Second World War casualties buried in each. Specified the requirements the CWGC has in regard to these cemeteries, and appreciated the support the council provides to ensure the upkeep of the Commonwealth War Graves from the two world wars.

### **Councillor John Hammond (Haslington ward)**

Felt that provision of woodland burial sites should be included/explored within the strategy, and that this provision could be delivered through an appropriate Trust arrangement.

### **Councillor Rhoda Bailey (Odd Rode Ward)**

Felt that additional cemetery provision is required for Alsager, especially given housing expansion in the town. Felt this was an omission from the strategy.

### **Councillor Sam Corcoran (Sandbach Heath and East Ward)**

Had understood that the football pitch alongside Sandbach cemetery would be used for cemetery provision in future, but could not find mention of this within the strategy. Specifically asked “Are there any plans to expand Sandbach Cemetery?”, and “Is the football pitch still being held for possible future cemetery expansion?”.

### **Fiona Bruce MP**

Concerned on behalf of a constituent at the lack of cemetery provision at Christ Church (Alsager), saying it should be extended onto Parsonage School Field.

### **Member of the public #1**

Felt that development of natural burial grounds, like the one in Swanlow near Winsford, should be encouraged within the strategy. Felt the one in Mobberley is not accessible and is unsafe, especially in winter. Felt there are not enough of these in Cheshire East, and that they are environmentally friendly.

## **Member of the public #2**

Suspects that the number of burials long term will decrease, and the number of cremations will increase, because people are more mobile now, less likely to have roots, and are more likely to rely on memories, rather than needing a dedicated burial plot. Felt therefore that more crematoriums are needed, within 20/40 minutes of the deceased's location. Also felt the length of eulogies at cremations for the deceased should be reduced, that demand from ethnic groups needs consideration, and that rigorous record keeping of the final events should be kept.

## **Member of the public #3**

Felt the Cemetery Regulations were a big improvement on the 2012 version, and listed a number of specific edits for the document.

Also provided detailed comments on specifics within the Cemetery Strategy, including on burial provision figures, number of church figures, demographic statistics, and on ONS data. They also queried some of the projected population forecasts, commented on legal context in the documents, suggested that cremations should be increased and promoted over coffin burials, and questioned "devolution" of services to town and parish councils.

Much detail was provided within this response (1,398 words in total), which should be read in full – see Appendix 1.

## **Nantwich Town Council**

Requested information about issues relating to the potential transfer of facilities from Cheshire East Council to Nantwich Town Council. See the full response for a list of these issues.

## **Poynton Town Council**

Felt that Poynton is not mentioned within the consultation, even though St George's parish churchyard is full for new burials.

## **Sandbach Town Council**

Supported the short term strategy, but had issues with the medium term and long term strategies as set out in sections 10 and 11. Requested that the capacity of Sandbach Cemetery is extended onto land currently used as a football pitch – the potential benefits of this were detailed. Requested more detail about point 10.3 of the strategy. Expressed major concern with the long term proposal of maintaining just two open cemeteries in the borough, and specified reasons why Sandbach Cemetery should be kept open.

## Section 4 – Summary of consultation face to face meetings

The following summarises two face to face meetings that were held with stakeholders during the consultation. These meetings were requested by stakeholders to discuss specific aspects of the consultation.

### Meeting 1 – Held with stakeholders representing Alsager

**Meeting date:** 13 August 2018

**Attendees:**

- M Junett and S Dykes (members of the public)
- Councillor Arnold (Portfolio Holder for Housing, Planning and Regeneration)
- Ralph Kemp (Corporate Manager Commissioning – Waste and Environment Services).

This meeting was requested by S Dykes during public speaking time at [the council's cabinet meeting of 10 July 2018](#).

**Summary of discussion:**

Representation was made for Cheshire East Council to continue providing burial space within Alsager Town, particularly given the lack of space for new graves within the existing church burial ground. A preference was voiced for the provision of “natural” burial ground for the town, which could also serve as a public open space.

### Meeting 2 – Held with Alsager Town Council

**Meeting date:** 13 August 2018

**Attendees:**

- Cllr Shirley Jones (SJ)– Chairman, Alsager Town Council
- Cllr Sue Helliwell (SH) – Alsager Town Council
- Cllr Martin Dealing (MD) – Alsager Town Council
- Cllr Ron Tyson (RT) – Alsager Town Council
- Cllr Phil Williams (PW) – Alsager Town Council
- Cllr Ainsley Arnold (AA) – Cheshire East Council cabinet member for Housing, Planning and Regeneration
- Ralph Kemp (RK) – Cheshire East Council
- Cllr Deric Hough (DH) – Alsager Town Council Cemetery Provision & Cheshire East Council

This meeting was requested in writing by Alsager Town Council.

### **Summary of discussion**

DH Alsager always has had a burial ground at the church which is now filling up they would like to fit in a replacement burial ground if possible.

PW The Consultation undertaken in preparing a neighbourhood plan for Alsager showed people 50.50 over traditional burial and those that want woodland burial ground.

SJ the church yard been extended twice since 1966 and there is no more available land. The Church has utilised all available space by narrowing paths and putting in extra rows of graves. It is now at capacity for internments and we need to look at other alternatives. They are also concerned once full the Church will not get addition fess to maintain. Currently the Town Council contributes £1200 annually for maintenance; the rest is borne by the church that are responsible for the church yard. Due to the reopening of family graves the church yard will be in operation for some years before it is declared closed. They have also tried to get involvement of other churches in looking at options for replacement.

AA would the town council see church taking on this role?

SJ The problem for the church is developers are snapping up land and escalating land cost. They would be interested in land owned by Cheshire East.

(there was some discussion on what land may be available Speeds Farm, or , close lane farm owned by CE were talked of)

SH the logical outcome would be if CE could provide some land for Alsager Council to manage and develop.

RT Proposed the decommissioned church at Oak Hanger 2 miles from Christ church.

(Discussion was not sure of how much land available.)

AA given this desire of the Town Council would the Council raise a precept to run the Burial Ground?

(Discussion on TC precept.)

SH believes residents would accept a precept if they could see it was going to provided local burial provision.

AA experience of Macclesfield Town Council was that if people could see something tangible that comes at the end of it. There a general acceptance of a precept.

AA Enquired about scope of extending burial ground in to school land as had been done in the past. The meeting felt there was no scope to extend to school and they wouldn't want school to lose more playing fields.

SJ Explained the problem for the council knowing how much land they would need for a 100 year provision of burial space.

DH Asked if CE give guidance on this on how a big a site would be needed and also appropriateness of the water table on eth site.

AA Indicated CE may be able to help with the size.

RK Indicated that would be at additional cost to CE as the strategy is unlikely to answer the question. He also pointed out that suitability of the ground can only be known by an intrusive survey which would also come at a cost.

#### AA Summarised Actions

- AA to establish ownership and tenancy of close lane farm as one potential site
- RK To work with constants to establish area needed for a 100 year capacity cemetery
- RK to provide meeting notes
- Town Council to submit a response to Cheshire East Consultation before 14th Sept. and CE would take note of there comments.

# Appendix 1 – Formal consultation responses

## Contents

Commonwealth War Graves Commission .....	22
Councillor John Hammond (Haslington ward).....	23
Councillor Rhoda Bailey (Odd Rode Ward) .....	23
Councillor Sam Corcoran (Sandbach Heath and East Ward) .....	24
Fiona Bruce MP .....	24
Member of the public #1 .....	24
Member of the public #2 .....	25
Member of the public #3 .....	26
Nantwich Town Council .....	30
Poynton Town Council .....	30
Sandbach Town Council .....	31

## **Commonwealth War Graves Commission**

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) honours the 1.7 million men and women of the Commonwealth forces who died in the First and Second World Wars, and ensures they will never be forgotten.

Our work commemorates the war dead, from building and maintaining our cemeteries and memorials at 23,000 locations in more than 150 countries to preservation of our extensive records and archives. Our values and aims, laid out in 1917, are as relevant now as they were 100 years ago.

The Commission's principles are:

- Each of the dead should be commemorated by name on the headstone or memorial
- Headstones and memorials should be permanent
- Headstones should be uniform
- There should be no distinction made on account of military or civil rank, race or creed

Since our establishment by Royal Charter we have constructed 2,500 war cemeteries and plots, erected headstones over graves and where the remains are missing, inscribed the names of the dead on permanent memorials. More than a million burials are now commemorated at military and civil sites in some 150 countries.

Within the United Kingdom there are over 300,000 Commonwealth burials and commemorations across some 12,500 locations.

### **COMMONWEALTH WAR GRAVES COMMISSION (CWGC) RESPONSE TO CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL CEMETERY REGULATIONS PAPER**

The CWGC has an interest in the following sites in Cheshire East:

- Alderley Edge Cemetery – 15 Casualties buried at this site.
- Knutsford Cemetery – 32 Casualties buried at this site.
- Macclesfield Cemetery – 85 Casualties buried at this site.
- The CWGC Cross of Sacrifice is inspected and maintained by CWGC on our cycle maintenance programme.
- Wilmslow Cemetery – 27 Casualties buried in this site.
- Crewe (Coppenhall) Cemetery – 16 Casualties buried in this site.
- Crewe Badger Avenue Cemetery and Crematorium – 73 Casualties buried in this site.
- Crewe Meadow Brook Cemetery – 1 Casualty buried at this site.
- Nantwich Cemetery – 8 Casualties buried at this site.
- Weston Cemetery – 4 Casualties buried at this site.

- These graves are marked and the casualties commemorated in perpetuity.

**Comments:**

- a. The CWGC teams inspect and maintain war graves across the United Kingdom. Our staff are NAMM registered and are provided with task based risk assessments and, in broad terms, site risk assessments highlighting potential risks such as slips, trips and falls. These relate to the areas our staff might work in only and are not full site risk assessments for public use.
- b. War graves within the sites listed above may be marked by either CWGC standard pattern headstones or by private (family memoria).
- c. The CWGC requires notification of cases where churchyards are closed and transferred to local authority responsibility. The CWGC also requires reassurances that war graves will not be re-used where a programme of re-use is introduced

The CWGC is appreciative of the support the Council provides to ensure the upkeep of the Commonwealth War Graves from the two world wars.

**Councillor John Hammond (Haslington ward)**

Hello Leanne,

Further to our recent telephone conversation one omission in the Strategy is any mention of the provision of woodland burial sites.

There appears to be a growing trend for this type of burial and this is something I feel the Authority should explore through the ongoing development of the Strategy. These could be delivered I assume through an appropriate Trust arrangement.

Best regards,

John Hammond.

**Councillor Rhoda Bailey (Odd Rode Ward)**

Dear Sirs,

In spite of significant expansion of Alsager in the form of additional housing, there is no provision in the strategy for cemetery space which is needed even without further building. This is an omission that needs to be addressed, and a strategically appropriate site found,

Kind regards,

Rhoda Bailey, Cheshire East Member for the Odd Rode Ward.

## **Councillor Sam Corcoran (Sandbach Heath and East Ward)**

I am the ward councillor for the ward covering Sandbach cemetery. I have previously understood that the football pitch alongside Sandbach cemetery would at some point be used for cemetery expansion. Indeed, some years ago I was told that the pitch stopped being hired out to local teams on the grounds that it would be needed for cemetery expansion in the near future.

However, I cannot find any mention of expansion of Sandbach cemetery in the Cemetery Consultation document.

Are there any plans to expand Sandbach cemetery?

Is the football pitch still being held for possible future cemetery expansion?

Best wishes,

Sam

## **Fiona Bruce MP**

The second issue is with regard to burial space, which my constituent is concerned will run out very soon as the cemetery at Christ Church is almost full. He suggests that the cemetery is extended onto a small area of Parsonage School Field as Alsager School will now have access to the sports facilities at the former MMU site. I look forward to receiving your comment.

## **Member of the public #1**

Dear Sirs,

I haven't had a chance to read your strategy so my apologies if this is covered. But I do hope you have included policies to facilitate and encourage the development of natural burial grounds like the one in Swanlow, near Winsford. They are so rare, and the one in Mobberley is really not suitable unless the access is improved. It just isn't safe in the winter.

I have recently had to use a natural burial ground, to comply with loved ones wishes, and was shocked by how few there are in the area. Places need to be local to the persons home for various reasons, and I do hope the council understands their importance going forward. They offer a real alternative that is both fitting for those seeking such a natural setting, and much more environmentally friendly going forwards.

Yours sincerely.

## Member of the public #2

Sirs,

Many thanks for your consultation document which was very illuminating and ventured into an area that passed me by, not really as I have always wondered how these things were managed. That there are people addressing these issues that most people take for granted is an encouragement to me.

While I wasn't prepared to study the 74 pages after the first 8 pages my response might not be very helpful but I think might provide an insight of my current thinking.

My thinking goes along the following lines:

1. Times are changing. The concept of a dedicated plot for the burial of a deceased is declining. I come to the view as the concept of static localities is yesterday's vision of 'home'. The reality is that we are mobile, we move locations as the economics demand such that a fixed location is no longer relevant.
2. Times are changing. We no longer have any one root and surprise, surprise we understand the fragilities of life while we are struggling to survive. The dead are dead, they live in our memories not in an obscure plot of ground remote from where we live, a plot probably occupied by several other people.
3. My suspicion is that the number of burials will continue to decrease while the demand on the Crematoriums will increase, it's time to increase the availability of the Crematoriums. I am thinking of 20/40 minutes away from the deceased, more than that it becomes quite stressful for the survivors.
4. As a passing comment, I have been subjected to a number of Cremations whereby the attendees have been subjected to prolonged eulogies of the deceased, eulogies that very few people recognised as relating to the deceased that they knew them; any chance of limiting the crematorium time slots to ease the pain and limit the hypocrisy on display?.
5. I have no idea as to what the demand might be from ethnic groups but something that needs consideration within reason.
6. BUT. I do expect rigorous record keeping of the final events.

Might not be very helpful to you, my focus is on the immediate stress to the survivors while recognising that time might bring rationality. There will always be exceptions to the rule, how one encompasses the exceptions with sympathy; empathy and style I know not but it is important to be achieved.

Regards.

### **Member of the public #3**

Comments on draft Cheshire East Council Cemetery Regulations 2018

This document is a big improvement on the 2012 Cemetery and Crematoria Rules. It is written in plain English and does not give an impression of coldness or insensitivity, but it covers all the welcome or unwelcome situations I can think of that are likely to occur.

Just two small points needing clarifying:

P13: Under Grounds maintenance: “the owner of the Exclusive Right of Burial in a grave may plant and cultivate suitable, low-growing plants or place cut flowers within a specified area of the grave.” How this area is specified? Who tells the owner where he can place flowers or plants? It would be good to give some guidance here.

P17: Under Definitions: “Lawn grave...An approved memorial may be erected and maintained at the head end of the grave space within a border 18” (457mm) deep.”: It is not clear what this means. Is the border measured from the head of the grave, or from the sides, or both?

An additional comment is that the terms “Traditional grave” and “Lawn grave” are defined on page 17 but not used elsewhere in the document. Are new traditional graves still allowed? If not, perhaps the document should say so and give reasons. In that case the restrictions under “Lawn grave” would apply generally and would be better placed under Memorials (unless they are covered by the professional standards for masons).

Comments on draft Cheshire East Council Cemetery Strategy 2018

P6-15: 3 (The Council’s cemeteries: demand and capacity):

3.2.8: The total number of new or reopened graves does not match the number of burials as given in 3.2.1. e. g. Crewe Coppenhall had 5 burials, apparently all in one new grave! What do these statistics mean? Does burial in an existing vault not count as reopening a grave?

P16-23: 4 (Other burial provision: demand and capacity):

4.2.1-3: 62% of 108 is 67 councils, but only five burial authorities are listed. Does this indicate that the other communities only used CEC or church cemeteries? I am also surprised that CEC was unable to get responses from the other 41 councils. That makes the figure of 58 burials as a total unreliable, as it implies that there no burial authorities under the other councils. Do we have any reason to believe that that is the case?

4.3.1-7 Again I am surprised that it was considered adequate to only contact 46 of the 61 churches recorded as having open churchyards in Cheshire East. Was no attempt made to contact the other 15 by telephone? Good research makes for good data.

4.4: Given the incomplete responses from churches and parish councils, it is likely that 178 is a low figure for new graves and that the majority of burials in Cheshire East are in local cemeteries and churchyards.

P24-35: 5 (Demographic context):

5.2.1-3: The latest NOMIS labour market statistics (and the CEC web site) puts the mid-2017 Cheshire East population at 378,800 and the figure for England at 55,619,400, giving a 2.3% increase for Cheshire East and a 4.9% increase for England over the 6-year period; and a 5.6% increase for Cheshire East and a 6.4% increase for England over the year 2016-2017. This shows the population growth rate in Cheshire East has doubled and is approaching that for England as a whole.

5.2.8 The latest ONS 2016-based population projection for Cheshire East in 2039 is 398,200, giving an increase of 24,000. This is only 6.4% - quite a bit less than 8.6%. The corresponding figure for England is 61,535,000 - an increase of 13.3%. So the projected percentage population increase for Cheshire East is a little less than half that for England.

5.32: I have not checked this bar chart, but it cannot have been sourced from the 2011 census because it is statistics for 2016.

5.3.6: Again this table does not match the latest ONS estimates:

Age band 2018 2039 Change Change

0-4 19,900 19,100 (800) -4.0%

5-9 22,000 20,400 (1,600) -7.0%

10-14 21,700 21,600 (100) -0.5%

15-19 19,400 20,900 1,500 7.7%

20-24 17,100 17,100 0 0.0%

25-29 19,400 19,000 (400) -2.1%

30-34 19,800 19,200 (600) -3.0%

35-39 21,500 19,000 (2,500) -11.6%

40-44 22,300 22,100 (200) -0.9%

45-49 28,000 24,800 (3,200) -11.0%

50-54 30,000 24,500 (5,500) -18.3%

55-59 28,000 24,300 (3,700) -13.2%

60-64 23,500 23,000 (500) -2.1%

Tot<65 292,600

275,000

(17600) -6%

65-69 23,200 26,500 3,300 14.2%

70-74 23,500 27,700 4,200 17.8%

75-79 16,100 25,000 8,900 55.2%

80-84 12,100 18,600 6,500 53.7%

85-89 7,500 13,600 6,100 81.3%

90+ 4,500 11,700 7,200 160.0%

Tot>64 86,900

123,100

36,200 41.7%

All ages 379,300

398,200 18,900 5.0%

i.e. The number of residents under 65 will decrease by 17,600 (4.6% of all residents) and the number over 64 will increase by 36,200 (9.5% of all residents).

5.3.8-9: This table and bar chart also needs updating.

5.4.1 Figure 21: The ONS source is 2012 data, which cannot be correct

5.4.5: The ONS 2016-based statistics for Cheshire East give projected deaths in 2039 as 4995. I cannot find the corresponding figures for England; ONS only gives figures for England and Wales.

5.7.1-3: The projected population increase needs updating, but in any case the ONS figure of a about 5,000 deaths projected in Cheshire East in 2039 (as opposed to 3,930 in 2017) has already been quoted, so this should be sufficient in itself; presumably it takes all the factors into account. It will probably decrease if the average lifespan stops increasing as a result of current unhealthy lifestyle trends (obesity and excessive alcohol consumption). I note that 2,057 of the 4,995 projected deaths in 2039 are of people over 90. Since many of those people will be living in care homes in the towns, the increase in deaths will not necessarily be in rural areas. According to the latest figures, Congleton West had a higher number of residents over-90 than any other ward in Cheshire East, and its death rate is correspondingly high (see 7.1.6).

P36-45: 6 (Legal Context): This is good: The legislation with regard to cemeteries is clearly laid out, so that it can be understood by a layman. I am not in a position to do a factual check, but I assume it is all true.

P46-70: 7 (Key issues and areas for development): Why do people opt for burial over cremation? Why is this not expected to change in the foreseeable future? Has consideration been given to making cremation more attractive in comparison to burial? Obviously such a campaign would need to be aimed at customers for pre-paid funerals, but it could have a knock-on effect on people who plan their funerals on sentimental rather than principles laid down by their religion (Orthodox Jews, Muslims, Orthodox Christians), whose traditions must be respected. At the very least, coffin burials should be restricted to a few CEC cemeteries where there is plenty of capacity; the additional drive-time should act as a discouragement to coffin-burials except where there is strong motivation. Religious groups should be encouraged to create their own cemeteries as charitable institutions, which could be restricted to their adherents and designed to provide a sympathetic environment for their faith. Caskets for ashes buried in CEC cemeteries should be restricted in size and in the size of the allocated plot, which could accommodate a number of caskets. Thought could be given to making this option attractive to local families and also to publicising the general location of such burials for more scattered families (e.g. optionally publishing on a web site a list of persons whose ashes are buried in each cemetery, with attractive photos). A general memorial wall could replace individual memorials, with actual locations being numbered rather than named.

P71: 8 (Vision, policies and objectives):

8.3: This implies devolution of cemeteries for management of town and parish councils. Would funding accompany this devolution? What if local councils were unwilling?

8.4: Squeezing more graves into existing cemeteries will provide only a few extra spaces and may spoil their peaceful character.

8.5: Fee structure may be a way of encouraging cremation.

8.6 If possible exclusive rights of burial should be reserved for families with a number of members living locally. For more scattered families it could be replaced with a compromise system allowing more flexibility about further burials but also allowing visiting relatives to pay their respects at a particular spot. Probably that would only be possible for cremations.

## **Nantwich Town Council**

Thank you for your e-mail and the opportunity to comment on the above strategy.

Unfortunately Nantwich Town Council will not be able to make a full response without information relating to the following issues relating to the possible transfer of existing facilities.

- Will the proposed transfer only relate to the transfer of Whitehouse Lane or will the Town Council be expected to take over All Saints Churchyard?
- Will any transfer be accompanied by a budget and if so for how long?
- Will there be any staff TUPE transfer from Orbitas or ANSA?
- Will the Town Council be offered equipment for maintenance or will it be expected to continue to use ANSA and Orbitas staff?
- Will the Town council be allowed to employ its own contractor or undertake maintenance using its own staff?
- Will Cheshire East expect the cemetery be available to residents who live outside the Nantwich Town council or will the Town Council be able to restrict burial plots to those who pay the Town Council precept?
- Which cemeteries will be available to parishes which do not have an existing facility within their boundaries e.g. Stapeley?
- Depending on the answers to the above will the Town Council be allowed to introduce differential pricing for precept / non precept payers?

Kind regards

Town Clerk, Nantwich Town Council

## **Poynton Town Council**

I am responding to the consultation on behalf of Poynton Town Council. The Town Council's response is that Poynton is not mentioned in the consultation, although St George's parish churchyard is full regarding new burials, as interments may still take place in family graves.

Kind regards,

Town Clerk.

## **Sandbach Town Council**

Dear CEC,

Please see below Sandbach Town Council's response to the Cemeteries Consultation.

Proposed response from Sandbach Town Council by 14 September 2018.

Sandbach Town Council have reviewed the Draft Cheshire East Cemeteries Strategy.

Whilst it is able to support Section 9 - Cemetery Strategy Short Term, making more efficient use of the existing cemeteries, there are issues with the proposals in section 10 and 11.

Sandbach Town Council request that the useful life of the award winning Sandbach Cemetery is extended by incorporating the adjoining council owned land to the south of the existing cemetery currently used as a football pitch. Local residents have understood that the playing field had been allocated to cemetery expansion. This would provide an additional principal Cheshire East cemetery close to the geographic centre of the borough, it would improve provision in a town that expects a 40% increase in population during the period of the Local Plan, and could optimise travel times for both funerals and family visits when compared to the two principal cemetery proposal.

Sandbach Town Council propose the inclusion of a fourth point under 10 Cemetery Strategy Medium Term "Progress the development of the extension of Sandbach Cemetery."

Point 10.3 is not derived from the main body of the report, if it is to be included as a recommendation then much greater detail should be included in the strategy report.

However Sandbach Town Council have major concern with the long term strategy of CEC maintaining only two open cemeteries in the borough, i.e. Crewe and Macclesfield.

- It is important to keep the Sandbach Cemetery open
- Central location within Cheshire East, with good road access.
- CEC already own adjoining land that is designated for cemetery expansion
- The Sandbach Cemetery operates to a high, award winning standard.
- Sandbach expects its population to increase by 40% by 2030.

On behalf of Sandbach Town Council Planning Committee.

