

Dunstable Cemetery

Management Plan 2023 to 2028



First Revision – January 2025

Foreword



I am delighted to be able to introduce our second management plan for Dunstable Cemetery, in support of our bid to retain Green Flag status.

Dunstable Town Council is very proud of the town's heritage and takes great care and effort in managing a number of Dunstable's main historical features. As part of this commitment, the Town Council owns and manages Dunstable Cemetery as burial authority.

The cemetery is an important place for local people. It is many things to many people including a place to commemorate and celebrate lives, a place to spend time in quiet contemplation and a valuable resource for researching family histories.

Achieving Green Flag status for Dunstable Cemetery for the first time in 2017 and retaining it since, has helped keep the Town Council focused on the continuous development and improvement of this important and prestigious open space. This new management plan (and the subsequent first revision) seeks to build our achievements and developments to date and will guide our decision making over the next few years.

I feel very privileged to Chair the Committee responsible for looking after this wonderful space and the bereavement services that the Council offers to local people. I am sure that you will find our management plan comprehensive, and we particularly look forward to working with our partners, and the Green Flag judges, to ensure the continued improvement of Dunstable Cemetery for future generations to enjoy.

Cllr Lisa Bird

**Chair of Grounds and Environmental Service Committee
Dunstable Town Council**

Please note that since May 2024 Cllr Richard Attwell has been the Chair of the Grounds and Environmental Services Committee.

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Appendices Contents These form part of a separate document and are available to the Green Flag assessors on request. Copies will also be made available at the site visit.

Appendix 1	Customer satisfaction survey 2024/25
Appendix 2	Summary of maintenance operations
Appendix 3	Health and Safety Documents (including H&S Policy, list of grounds RA's, typical RA – grave digging, site specific RA)
Appendix 4	Environment and Sustainability Policy
Appendix 5	Vehicle Management Policy and Replacement Programme
Appendix 6	Marketing and Promotion Plan
Appendix 7	Biodiversity Policy and Action Plan

1 Section 1 - Introduction

1.1 This management plan has been prepared to aid the efficient and effective management of Dunstable Cemetery over the plan period 2023 to 2028 and further build on the ICCM Charter for the Bereaved (Silver) status secured and ongoing since 2015. In particular the plan can serve to:

- Aid consultation, achieve consensus and encourage involvement.
- Assist with developing continuity and improve capacity planning by optimising use of resources.
- Help prepare for change and aid future consultation.
- Provide accurate recorded information about the cemetery.
- Provide a framework for decision-making.
- Assist in setting and maintaining standards.
- Assist in setting and measuring performance.
- Assist with wider strategic planning linked to the development and improvement of cemetery and burial provision.
- Set out a detailed six-year action plan.
- Help promote the cemetery, raise its profile and increase pride in Dunstable.
- Assist in securing new internal and external funding.

1.2 This management plan is a working document, which will be subject to review and revision every two years to coincide with Green Flag full assessment timescales.



2 Section 2 - Dunstable Town Council

2.1 The Council

Dunstable Town Council was established in 1985 and in 2025 will be celebrating its 40th Anniversary. Since its creation, the Council has developed into one of the largest town councils in the country. The Council holds Investors in People status to silver standard in recognition of it being a well-managed organisation. The Council also holds the 'General Power of Competence' allowing it to promote or improve the economic, social or the environmental well-being of Dunstable.

The Council comprises 18 voluntary representatives elected democratically (typically) every four years. For Town Council purposes, Dunstable is divided into 5 political wards.

The Council's headquarters are in the historic Grove House adjacent to the Grove House Gardens in the centre of the town.

2.2 The Town Council's Vision and Corporate Plan 2024 - 2027

The Town Council has agreed the following vision, mission statement and values statement.

The Council's Vision: **To Help Make Dunstable a Better Place**

The Council's Mission Statement: **Dunstable Town Council will do all it can to create a lively and vibrant town, promoting civic pride and improving the quality of life for all those who live, work and visit Dunstable.**

The Council's Values: The Council will at all times:

- **Be an advocate and campaigning voice for the people of Dunstable.**
- **Work to the highest standards of integrity and openness and deliver services to the best of our abilities.**
- **Work in partnership with other organisations to improve services and deliver value for money for the Dunstable council taxpayer.**

2.3 To promote civic pride and make Dunstable a lively and vibrant place and improve the quality of life for its residents, the Council delivers a range of different services in line with various powers that have been created by Government legislation.

2.4 The Council has adopted the following 6 Corporate Priorities which are.

1. Continue to improve the organisational management, efficiency and environmental sustainability of the Town Council.
2. Preserve and enhance the history and identity of the town, creating a sense of pride in Dunstable.
3. Further improve and develop the provision of green and open space in the town.
4. Continue to improve services targeted to all community sectors in the town.

5. Contribute to the regeneration of the town centre and development of neighbourhoods in the town.
6. Represent residents, businesses and community groups of Dunstable on key strategic issues facing the town.

2.5 Political Structure

The Council is the body that makes decisions, and this is achieved through Committees and Sub-Committees that have delegated authority in line with the Council's Constitution, Standing Orders and Delegation of Authority to Members and Officers.

The Town Mayor who typically serves one year of office chairs the Council. The Council has three main Committees that govern the strategic direction of the Council. All meetings are open to the public. The responsibilities of the three main Committees are shown in the table below.

Finance and General Purposes Committee	Grounds and Environmental Services Committee	Community Services Committee
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mayoral and Councillor Activities and Civic Events • Council Finances • Council audit (internal and external) • Personnel, Jobs and Recruitment • Internal IT • Grove House Administration • Town Twinning • Compliance <p>Sub-Committees – Personnel Sub, Appeals and Appointments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dunstable Cemetery • Allotments • Parks and Recreation Grounds • Hire of Sports Pitches • Play Areas • Town Centre Maintenance • Priory and Grove House Gardens • Floral Displays • Dunstable in Bloom • Town Ranger Scheme • Bennett's Splash and Splashside Café • Grove Skate Park <p>Sub-Committee – Plans Sub</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management of Priory House • Management of Grove Corner • Town Centre • Christmas Lights • Council Events Programme • Young People's Summer Activities • Older Peoples Day Care Service • Community Grant Scheme • Community Development Projects • Dunstable Markets • Ashton Square Toilets <p>Dunstable Joint Committee</p>

2.6 Partnerships

Dunstable Town Council has a number of regional partners with whom it seeks to undertake partnership working to deliver local and regional agendas as well as its own vision and corporate aims and objectives. These partners include:

- Central Bedfordshire Council
- Community Safety Partnership
- The Bedfordshire Local Resilience Forum
- Bedfordshire Constabulary
- Primary Care Trust

In addition, the Council has and continues to develop partnerships with a range of groups and organisations. Those most closely associated with the management, maintenance and development of Dunstable Cemetery are included within the stakeholder list in section 6.3 of this plan.



3 Section 3 - The Wider Green Space Context

3.1 National Context

There has been a great deal of study, research and debate in recent years about the importance of parks and green spaces as a critical element in creating sustainable communities. Many of our nation's urban burial grounds were originally envisaged as public open spaces and were designed to be attractive places to visit in their own right. Today many are neglected with little to attract anyone apart from those visiting specific burial plots. As a result of a lack of planning and ambition the potential health and environmental benefits of cemeteries are not being realised.

The 2001 Report on Cemeteries by the Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs Committee highlighted the importance of planning effectively for burial requirements to ensure that local, accessible burial space is provided, and primary local authorities should address this need in their Development Plans.

Through Government consultation it has been recognised that existing burial legislation needs further reform and associated planning legislation needs to be strengthened. Furthermore, there is clear evidence of how burial grounds are a significant feature of local communities that should, as far as possible, be provided and run locally.

3.2 Regional Context

Dunstable falls within the scope of the Milton Keynes South Midlands Growth Area. The Luton and South Bedfordshire Integrated Development Programme gives an ambition for Luton and South Beds (including Dunstable) to be recognised as a 'Green Growth Area' and a truly sustainable community. The aims include the provision of quality affordable housing with greener spaces and due consideration for the environment.

3.3 Local Context

Dunstable is one of a number of towns and parishes located within the Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) area. As the primary authority CBC has developed a Recreation and Open Space Strategy for Central Bedfordshire (including Dunstable). Stakeholder consultation has already taken place with the town and parish sector and Dunstable Town Council has been identified as an important partner and stakeholder in the delivery of the strategy objectives for increasing the quantity and quality of green space including Cemeteries and Churchyards in the area.

The Town Council's Corporate Plan 2024 to 2027 sets out a clear vision and a plan for the town including a specific priority relating to green space provision and a key action to secure Green Flag status for Dunstable Cemetery. In addition, the plan identifies a number of specific actions related to Dunstable Cemetery including the provision of new burial land.

4 **Section 4 - The Historical Context**

4.1 Dunstable

Dunstable is the oldest charter town in the county of Bedfordshire and is currently home to approximately 36,000 residents. The earliest recorded residents of Dunstable lived on the Downs, the northernmost point of the Chilterns. Dunstable has a long civic tradition with its first charter, granting independent market rights, being granted in 1131.

Until the mid-nineteenth century Dunstable was a very small agricultural market town built almost exclusively around the crossroads of the Roman Watling Street and the even earlier Icknield Way. Change came in the mid-nineteenth century as the expanding hat and bonnet trade attracted workers and later the railway attracted major industry. Further industrial expansion and associated housing saw the town grow significantly during the 1930's. After World War II the 'Plan for Dunstable' was largely responsible for the civic, shopping and entertainment expansion away from the High Street. By the mid 1980's economic recession had decimated Dunstable's main industries and further regeneration of 'brownfield sites' including mixed uses and housing was necessary.

Dunstable is fiercely proud of its rich heritage yet, whilst it may be steeped in history, it is very much a town in the present always striving towards a brighter future.

4.2 Development of Dunstable Cemetery



Situated close to the centre of Dunstable, on West Street, the cemetery first opened as a burial facility for the people of Dunstable and the surrounding areas in 1861. It has grown in size over the past 150 years and now covers 14.5 acres (6 hectares).

The older parts of the cemetery are Victorian by design and there are many memorial stones which are typical of the Victorian style. Noticeably, there are large parts of the older burial sections which contain no memorials as it was often the case that only those with money could afford to erect memorials to loved ones.

The cemetery is split into various burial sections determined by faith, so the Church of England areas are consecrated, and the non-consecrated areas are used by all other faiths. There are separate Roman Catholic areas as well as areas set aside for child burials and ashes in Garden of Rest plots. The majority of new burials now take place in a lawn burial area created in 2007, which is not consecrated and is set aside for all faiths.

The chapel and office buildings close to the entrance to the cemetery and the very distinctive crescent entrance were constructed during the 1860's. Two chapels were built: one for conformists (CofE) and the other for non-conformists (other faiths).

Today only one chapel is in use and available for all faiths. The other chapel was refurbished in 2009 to create a mezzanine office, reception area and mess room for grounds staff.



The cemetery originally had a lodge house located near the entrance fronting onto West Street and would have been the home of the Cemetery Superintendent. The lodge was demolished many years ago but is shown in the photograph adjacent.

The first burial, which took place on 22 October 1861, was that of a child, 4-year-old James Turney, the son of Thomas Turney, a groom from West Street. The original burial areas hold some 14,000 burials which took place during the period 1861 to 1989. The original cemetery has been subsequently extended by making use of most of the adjacent Catchacre allotment site. This area is now all but closed to new grave spaces and further extension land to the east, which was secured and laid out in 2007, is now in full use.

The cemetery is home to 48 war graves from the First and Second World War conflicts and there are also a number of notable memorials to local dignitaries, business leaders and others responsible for influencing the growth and development of the town. A great deal of research has been undertaken in recent years by a dedicated team of volunteers from the University of the Third Age (U3A). They have recorded and photographed many thousands of inscriptions and memorial stones. This work is mentioned more fully later in this plan.

The cemetery has a good collection of notable trees and among these are the Drovers Pines. These are large mature pine trees that were planted as way-markers by herdsmen driving cattle and other animals to and from the London cattle markets. A road situated close to the cemetery, is today, known as Drovers Way.

5 Section 5 - Site Description

5.1 Location

Grid Reference TL012213
What3words: listed.kite.ankle

Dunstable Cemetery is situated just outside the centre of Dunstable on West Street (B489) which itself marks the route of the ancient Icknield Way. The cemetery is bordered by West Street to the north, Cemetery Lane and Catchacre allotments to the south, the private Victoria Allotments to the east and a mix of newer and established housing to the west. The plans overleaf show the location of the cemetery in context of the rest of the town and also provide a more detailed layout of the grave sections and key features.

5.2 Access

The cemetery benefits from excellent access arrangements by foot, by cycle, by public transport and by car. In particular a shared pedestrian and cycle way route runs along Cemetery Lane to the south with footpath access through the cemetery to West Street. The plan overleaf shows the main vehicle access point and car park from West Street. Parking at the cemetery is free at all times and drivers are allowed to gain access to all parts of the cemetery from dawn until dusk each day via a height restriction barrier.

Dunstable now also benefits from a guided bus way linking the town with Luton and Houghton Regis and there is good connectivity to the West Street area.

5.3 Ownership

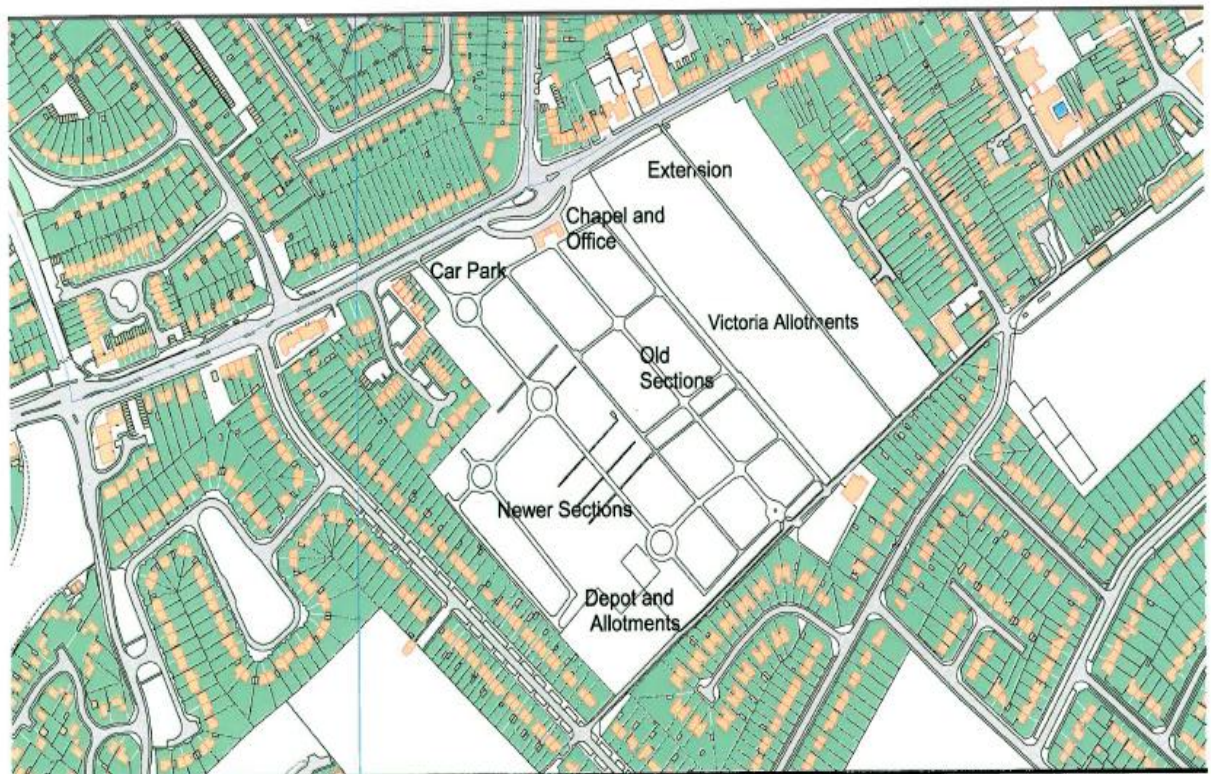
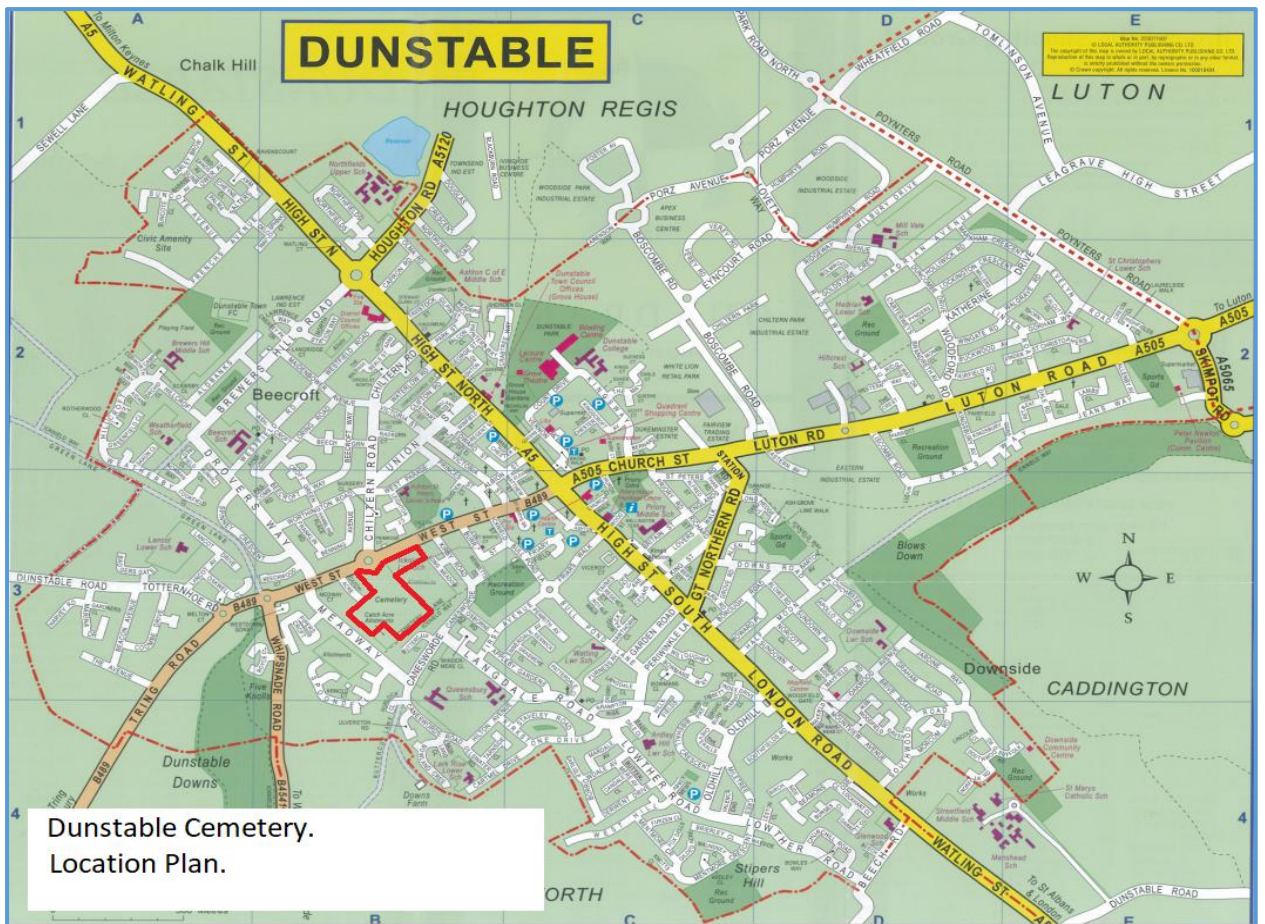
The Town Council is the freehold owner of Dunstable Cemetery

5.4 Detailed Description of the Cemetery

Dunstable Cemetery is 6 ha (14.5 acres). The Cemetery's main features are:

- 43 Sectioned burial areas.
- Floral displays
- Mature trees and abundant wildlife.
- Chapel and office complex
- Extensive network of paths, access points and parking.
- Signage
- Heritage features and war graves
- Depot compound
- Memorial areas

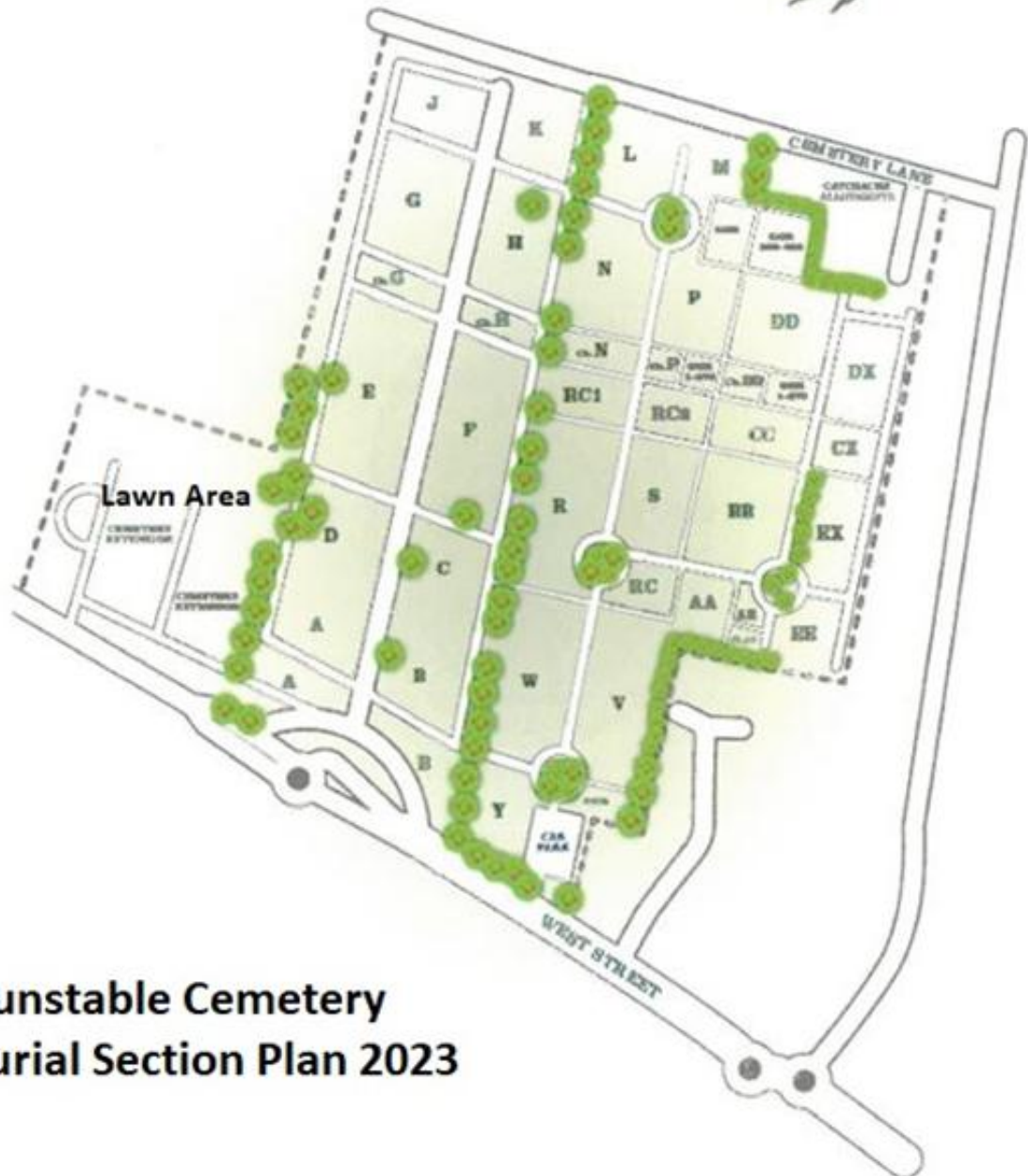
The plans show a number of these features within the cemetery and information about each of these is detailed more fully in the next section of the management plan.



Dunstable Cemetery
Key Features Plan

January 2017

Cemetery Plan

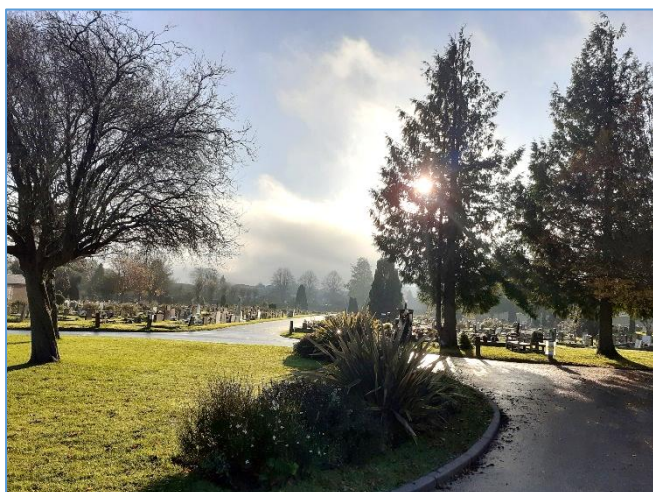


**Dunstable Cemetery
Burial Section Plan 2023**

5.4.1 Sectioned Burial Areas

The cemetery is divided into 43 separate alphanumeric sections. Most sections are divided along faith grounds and 20 of the areas have been consecrated by the Church of England. The most recently set out burial spaces in the Lawn Area have not been consecrated.

The earliest Victorian sections are characterised by old hand carved and hand cut memorial stones, larger expanses of grass and mature trees and shrubs which together create a strong sense of character and history for this part of the cemetery. Whilst grass areas between memorials are close mown on a regular basis a number of the memorials are overgrown with brambles, ivy and self-set trees. This adds to the sense of older character in these areas as well as providing wildlife habitat and cover. The future clearing of these graves to reveal headstones and inscriptions therefore needs to be achieved in a balanced manner to ensure that habitat is not removed or destroyed.



The newer burial areas to the west of the cemetery are characterised by a wide range of more modern predominantly granite memorials which are clustered close together. There are fewer expanses of large grass areas in these sections with grass strips maintained between graves and rows as close mown grass. Mature trees have been established along avenues and boundary margins.

A notable feature of the newer sections are the large memorials erected by local travelling families. Dunstable Cemetery is popular with the travelling community.

5.4.2 Floral Displays and Ornamental Planting

Colourful floral displays, using annual spring and summer bedding plants and some herbaceous plants, are predominately located at the main entrances to the cemetery. Formal floral display beds are provided on the roundabout at the car park entrance. Containerised free standing summer floral displays are located in front of the chapel complex either side of the archway and in 2016, when the cemetery extension came into use, new railing baskets were provided



fronting onto West Street. These additional displays, along with the traditional bedding planted in the centre of the kerb plaque memorial area, were well received by the public and visitors and remain popular.

New ornamental planting in other areas of the cemetery were added in 2017 and 2020. The planting mix includes evergreen and drought tolerant plants along with some colour.



5.4.3 Mature Trees and Abundant Wildlife



Dunstable Cemetery has a strong and important tree scape with a wide mix of trees. The trees make an important contribution to the character of the cemetery as well as providing important wildlife habitats.

In 2013 the Council mapped and surveyed all the trees in the cemetery including some of the smaller self-set grave located trees. Analysis of the survey reveals that there are some 460 trees in Dunstable Cemetery. The tree mix is predominantly Holly, Yew, Lime, Horse Chestnut and Lawson's and False

Cypress. However, other species include Ash, Austrian and Black Pine, Cherry, Alder, Hornbeam, Maple and Western Red Cedar.

The survey and subsequent annual re inspections have provided the Council with important risk management data and the means by which to schedule year on year tree works to maintain the tree stock in a healthy and safe condition.

A bird survey, undertaken by the RSPB, at Dunstable Cemetery revealed that the predominant bird species were Wood Pigeon, Blackbird, Swift, Greenfinch and Starling. However other species were recorded in lower numbers including Robin, Chaffinch, Chiffchaff, Carrion Crow, Coal Tit, Wren, Song Thrush, Collared Dove, Kestrel, Dunnock, Magpie, Blue Tit and Great Spotted Woodpecker. More recent sightings include larger numbers of woodpeckers and Red Kites as well as winter visitors such as Fieldfares and Redwings.



The survey noted a lack of Tit species possibly due to a lack of nesting sites and the action plan now includes a proposal to introduce more nesting boxes into mature trees.

Other wildlife which has been spotted in the cemetery include mammals such as field mice, voles, foxes, muntjac deer, black squirrels and shrews. There is also an active badger set located immediately adjacent to the Lawn Section boundary fence inside the Victoria Allotments site.

Grassland plant species are known to include Harebells and Horseshoe Vetch and a more recent survey undertaken in May 2019 has identified a further 67 plant species in the area.

5.4.4 Chapel and Office Complex

Two chapels were constructed during the 1860's and today only one chapel is in use and available for all faiths and families to hire. The other chapel was refurbished in 2009 to create a mezzanine office, reception area and mess room for grounds staff. DDA compliant toilets we also installed.

Further improvements to the chapel were carried out in 2015 with the removal of the false ceiling to expose an ornate roof structure. Works also included the installation of an induction loop and a better-quality sound system alongside new altar and lectern frontal cloths, an improved wheeled coffin bearer and artificial flower displays.

In 2022, major stonework repairs and stone cleaning were completed to all external areas of the building. This included replacing damaged and weather worn stone blocks and carved features.



Photo Credit – Justyna Tarnacka

The chapel and office are open from 8.00am to 4.00pm each weekday and a Book of Remembrance, viewed via a chapel side window, is turned seven days per week. The viewing window was replaced in 2021 to create a better viewing experience.

The cemetery office houses all burial records and associated documents in fire-proof cabinets and all burial records are now fully digitized.

The refurbishment of the chapel complex has allowed the Council to establish a permanent cemetery management and administration presence on site. Subsequently the Council has been able to improve customer relations and internal management arrangements.

5.4.5 Extensive Network of Paths, Access Points, Parking and Site Security

The various burial sections are well served by a good network of paths and roadways. The older parts of the cemetery have fewer wide paths and roadways than the newer extension areas, but most are passable with a vehicle. Some of the connecting pathways are in need of repair or removal during the life of this plan and some good progress has been made with this.

Some £100,000 has been spent over the last 14 years resurfacing roadways and pathways to ensure that they remain safe and fit for purpose. Further works have been identified and are included in the Action Plan.



The cemetery has open pedestrian access all year round from West Street and Cemetery Lane.

The main vehicle access to the cemetery from West Street leads to a 19-space car park including a single disabled bay.

Entry to the cemetery roadways is controlled by a height restriction barrier to deter vans and large vehicles from entering. This also provides a degree of control of stonemasons who have to register that they are on site prior to carrying out work and can only gain access once they have done so.

Funeral corteges normally access the cemetery via one of the two main entrances if they are driving straight to graveside. Those using the chapel prior to burial, access the cemetery via the crescent and archway.

The Council has installed wooden bollards to prevent visitors from parking on grass verges. A small informal parking area which can accommodate 5 to 6 cars is also located at the far end of the cemetery near the depot.

Public transport access to the cemetery is mainly via local buses (40A, 61 and 61A) which all run through Dunstable and surrounding villages and stop directly outside the Cemetery. Bus links to Luton are via the Dunstable Guided Busway to Dunstable town centre and connecting buses.

The Council employs a local security company for general security patrols and locking and unlocking the main vehicle gates at evenings and weekends. Dog control enforcement is policed largely by Council staff, but Central Bedfordshire Council Street Wardens can be called on to deal with persistent offenders and problems.

5.4.6 Signage



Three information boards are located at key entrances to the cemetery. Each includes a section plan of the burial grounds, key information about cemetery services and the Town Council and acceptable behaviour information. Burials and interments for the week ahead are also posted in these notice boards. Dog control signage has also been erected to assist with ensuring that dog walkers abide by the requirement to keep dogs on a lead.

A finger post sign at the main entrance directs people to the main office and door signs are located on the main building. Speed restriction signs are in place along the main routes to encourage people to drive at no more than 5mph. There is a brown direction

sign on the highway. Future works will include burial section markers for all areas and a new information board and cemetery sign in the cemetery extension.

5.4.7 Heritage Features and War Graves

The cemetery has a wealth of heritage features including memorials to notable persons as well as Commonwealth War Graves from the two World War conflicts. The installation of interpretation panels to support the work of the Town Guides and to celebrate the lives of notable dignitaries and local people buried in the cemetery has been completed and there



are 5 panels available for visitors to view. The action plan includes the installation of information boards detailing information about war graves.

5.4.8 Depot Compound

A depot compound is located, along with secure storage containers, at the southern end of the cemetery adjacent to Catchacre Allotments. The fenced compound is used to store waste chalk from grave excavations (prior to disposal), recycled leaf waste and excavator equipment. The storage containers are used to store a wide range of grounds maintenance equipment, and one container has been modified and bunded for red diesel fuel storage. The action plan contains an aspiration to redesign this area, make it even more secure and separate it from the shared-use carpark at the allotments. This will also present an opportunity to screen the containers and compound area so that they do not blight the occupied burial land adjacent.

6 **Section 6 - Community**

6.1 Current Users

Latest information on the Cemetery users and visitors and their behavioural patterns is based on informal observations and a recent satisfaction survey undertaken in January 2025. The survey was created using MS Forms and was posted on the Councils Facebook page and other social media. A total of 49 consultation responses were received during the two-week survey period.

Whilst this is statistically a small sample it is possible to confirm that the cemetery is being used by a wide variety of people including bereaved families, local residents, those participating in volunteer workdays and those just passing through using the footpath network as a short cut. Typically, the following has been ascertained about current patterns of use.

- Just over half of the survey respondents visit the cemetery on a monthly basis with 24% visiting daily.
- Just under half of the respondents visit between 12 noon and 5pm and a third visit in the morning.
- The vast majority of people visit either by car or on foot.
- The most popular reason for visiting is to visit a relative's or friend's grave (54%) followed by those visiting for walking, exercise and fresh air. Dog walking is popular at 12%.
- The vast majority of respondents visit from the local area including Dunstable, Houghton Regis and Luton.
- 92% of respondents are aged 45+. This is not unusual for a cemetery.
- The thing that people most valued is a well-maintained cemetery (58%) followed by the provision of floral displays (21%)
- Some of the suggested improvements included improving the car park entrance from the main road and more parking, improved waste bins, more information about the Friends group (albeit 63% of respondents were aware of the group) and tackling noise and anti-social behaviour. Some of these suggestions are included in the Action Plan.
- Two people came forward to join the Friends group as a result of the survey.

A copy of the latest survey is provided at Appendix 1.

6.2 Current Uses

The cemetery caters for a range of uses and the description of the cemetery grounds and its key features in Section 5 of this plan provides a good indication of usage. Usage can be summarised as follows:

- Funerals and interment of cremated remains.
- Visiting the graves and memorials of loved ones.
- Researching family history.
- Informal recreation such as walking, light exercise and dog walking.
- Passing through as a shortcut.

- Somewhere to sit and meet
- A place for quiet contemplation and to observe nature.

6.3 Stakeholders and Partners

Dunstable Town Council is working with a number of groups and organisations across a range of activities and issues associated with the cemetery. A full list of the stakeholders is given below:

- Bereaved persons and families
- Friends of Dunstable Cemetery
- Church of the Later Day Saints
- All local residents and visitors to the town
- Family historians
- Dunstable Town Council and Central Bedfordshire Council elected members.
- Funeral Directors
- Clergy
- Stonemasons
- Town Guides
- Dunstable and District Local History Society
- Bedfordshire Constabulary and the local Community Policing Team
- Dunstable in Bloom
- Visitors to the cemetery
- Specialist and external contractors and suppliers.

6.4 Friends of Dunstable Cemetery

A Friends of Dunstable Cemetery group was established in January 2018 and currently has 15 members.



The Friends meet about twice per month, all year round, to undertake activities including litter picking, grave tidying, planting and weeding. This was somewhat disrupted in 2020, due to the Covid 19 Pandemic restrictions, but full group activity has resumed.

The Friends have held very successful 'Headlines Behind the Headstones' events to encourage more people to join. The events included a talk about the cemetery's history and the stories behind a number of the notable graves and their occupants. One of the Friends also gave a talk about her experiences of taking part in the group and working in the cemetery.

Friend group plans for the future include more working days to manage overgrown headstones, wildflower and shrub planting, raising awareness generally and raising funds to repair damaged historic memorials.



6.5 Other Community Groups and Engagement Opportunities

The Council is working with a number of volunteers and groups including the Town Guides, Dunstable History Society, the U3A and Dunstable in Bloom on a range of activities and initiatives. They collectively support the Friends works days to clear overgrown memorials, litter pick and sweep as well as providing guided tours, historical interpretation of notable graves and memorial recording.

In addition, the Dunstable in Bloom group enter Dunstable Cemetery for Anglia in Bloom accreditation each year and in 2022 the Britain in Bloom judges visited the cemetery as part of a town wide tour. The group and the Town Council have worked in partnership on an In Bloom campaign for 14 years and have already had considerable success in achieving 12 Gold and two Silver-Gilt medals for the town. The Cemetery has been awarded Gold status in its own right four years running and in both 2017 and 2019 won the Best Cemetery in the Anglia region.

The Council recognises that it is important to develop a range of community engagement and participation opportunities for Dunstable Cemetery. Whilst good progress has been made to date with the Friends group it is felt that the following activities should be given further consideration in subsequent years.

- Organise at least one Cemetery Open Day each year to tell people more about Dunstable Cemetery, how it operates and what it can offer to the community.
- Continue to develop a strong programme of workday activities to help manage overgrown areas and or create wildlife opportunities.

- Continue to encourage the Town Guides with their cemetery tours of notable graves and develop interpretation panels to support this activity.

6.6 ICCM Charter for the Bereaved Status

In 2015 Dunstable Cemetery secured and has subsequently retained, year on year, the ICCM Charter for the Bereaved accreditation at a Silver status level. Securing and retaining this status plays an important role in ensuring that the Council continues to deliver and develop high quality services for all cemetery users and visitors. Retaining the status is included within the Council's current Corporate Plan and is a key indicator of ongoing high performance and commitment to delivering quality services to local people.

In brief the Charter:

- seeks to generate interest in and educate people about bereavement. It also helps to influence the expansion of services and clarify the various roles and responsibilities of those involved.
- is a commitment to improving the service by confronting rather than disguising or ignoring death.
- is intended to define the rights of every individual who experiences bereavement. In achieving this aim, it also sets standards of service related to burial, cremation and funerals. It is a written statement of what can be expected and enables people to judge the quality of the service received.
- seeks to increase the range of choice and options available to the bereaved.
- seeks to enable the bereaved to arrange a meaningful funeral service with a content that meets with their own specific needs and requirements.



A number of the actions and objectives set out in the action plan in section 9 will assist in ensuring that the Council continues to retain silver status and begin to move towards a gold standard.

7 Section 7 - Management and Maintenance

7.1 Management Arrangements

The cemetery is owned and directly managed by Dunstable Town Council.

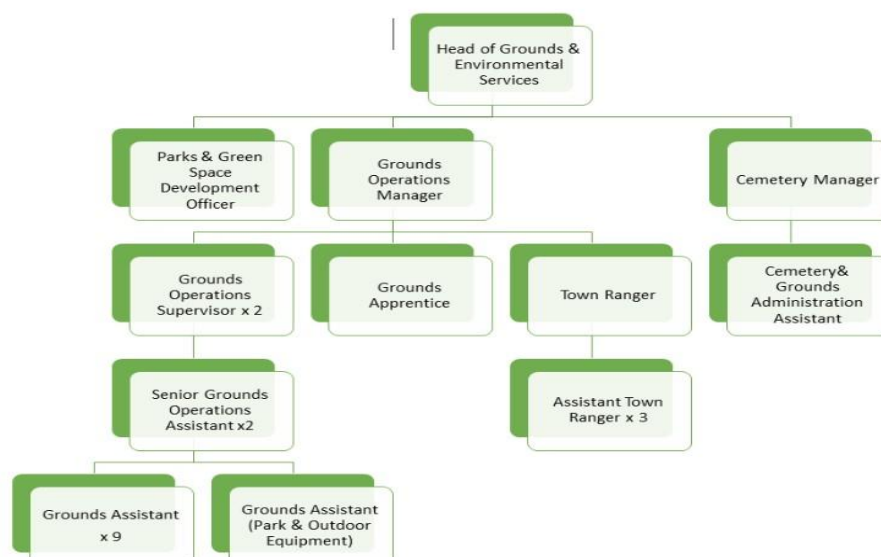
The Council is split into three distinct service areas each led by a Service Head.

- Grounds and Environmental Services
- Community Services
- Corporate Services

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive and the three Heads of Service form the Senior Management Team, and the management structure reflects the committee structure.



The day to day running of the cemetery is led by the Cemetery Manager and operational management of the Grounds Service is led by the Grounds Operations Manager who has responsibility for two service teams each headed by a works supervisor.



Whilst for supervisory purposes there are two grounds teams shown above the reality is that all grounds staff are available to work in the cemetery as the need or work programme requires. The teams do not work in isolation.

Community Services is responsible for a range of services including events management, older people's services, younger people's services and town centre management. These services play an active role in the management and use of the cemetery and there is significant cross organisational working between services and teams to ensure that appropriate and high-quality services are delivered to the residents of Dunstable.

The Town Council also works very closely with the Police, Central Bedfordshire Council and other agencies to address issues associated with safety, antisocial behaviour and security.

In February 2013 the Town Council secured Investors in People status at the standard entry level and has subsequently improved to Silver status. A Council staff working group developed a Values and Behaviours Statement which underpins the Council's core values and staff focus groups have recently been introduced.

7.2 Maintenance Arrangements

With the exception of tree management all grounds maintenance, grave digging and cleansing activity is undertaken by the in-house maintenance teams. Tree inspections are undertaken by a specialist survey company and tree works are carried out by professional arboriculture contractors.

In addition, the Council has retained the services of a Property Management and Building Consultancy to assist with management and maintenance of all the Council's buildings. The Council also employs specialist contractors for major refurbishment and renewal works.

The grounds teams are responsible for delivering day-to-day maintenance of the cemetery including grass cutting, grave digging, floral display planting, watering and weeding, shrub border maintenance and pruning, minor tree works, litter collection and bin emptying, sweeping and cleaning and maintenance and minor improvement works.

The Council also has a Town Ranger service to provide a quick response reactive service to local residents to deal with graffiti, fly tipping, cleaning and general vegetation management around the town and within the wider public realm.

The Town Ranger service provides the Council with a quick response mechanism for both its own land and the wider public realm, and the service has proved invaluable in dealing with issues as they have arisen in the cemetery.

A summary of the maintenance operations for Dunstable Cemetery is available at Appendix 2.

Over the last few years, the Council has made significant improvements in its management of Health and Safety issues and responsibilities. The Council has secured the services of a Human Resources and Health and Safety consultancy to provide robust support and advice on a range of topics and matters. Key officers of the Council meet on a regular basis as part of a Council management team where safety matters are discussed.

A copy of the Council's Health and Safety Policy Statement, a list of work-related risk assessments, a typical grounds risk assessment (grave excavations) and a site-specific risk assessment for the cemetery are available at Appendix 3.

7.3 Environmentally Sustainable Management

In 2016 the Council approved and adopted an Environmental and Sustainability Policy. A copy of the policy is provided at Appendix 4. The Council recognises the importance of ensuring that the methods used in maintaining the cemetery are environmentally sound.

In order to secure long term sustainable credentials for all grounds maintenance operations the Council will continue to challenge the current arrangements for pesticide use, waste disposal, peat usage, water usage and conservation of resources. The current management and maintenance activities at the cemetery, which already support sustainable principles are detailed below.

Pesticide Usage

Pesticides and herbicides are no longer used in Dunstable Cemetery. The primary method of weed control is by hand and is achieved through good husbandry and regular sweeping and cleaning. The Council also uses hot water pressure treatments to control weed on hard surfaces.

Use of Horticultural Peat

The Council has significantly reduced the use of peat within the last few years. The Council's current bedding plant supplier is required to grow all bedding plants in a peat free compost. These are then planted in beds and borders which have been extensively improved and enriched with additional manure and leaf mould to help retain moisture.

The Council also hires in pre grown floral displays in planters and baskets each summer and these are provided in a 50% peat reduced compost.

The only other peat related product used within the Cemetery (and town wide within the grounds service) is pot grown shrubs and trees for replacement and new planting. Where possible, the Council will procure plants grown in peat free composts.

Water Saving Techniques

Watering of floral displays is undertaken on an as required basis to maintain plants in a good condition. Unnecessary watering is avoided at all times. Where watering is required, this is carried out early in the morning to reduce loss of water through evaporation.

Composts incorporate water retaining gels and crystals to assist in reducing the need for watering. Free standing floral displays contain reservoirs to retain water. Water is made available to the public for tending graves via a water trough system which ensures that no tap is able to be left running.

Waste and Recycling

Green waste arising from grounds maintenance operations is disposed of via a commercial off-site composting facility. Woody grounds waste arising from pruning and minor tree works are chipped and stored for use on pathways and borders both in the cemetery and at other locations around the town. General waste is collected by a commercial waste contractor and is sorted for recycling at a mechanical separation plant. At the time of revising this report the Council is tendering its waste collection and disposal contracts to include a much wider waste stream.

Vehicle Management

The Council has adopted a vehicle management policy and replacement programme which is provided in Appendix 5.

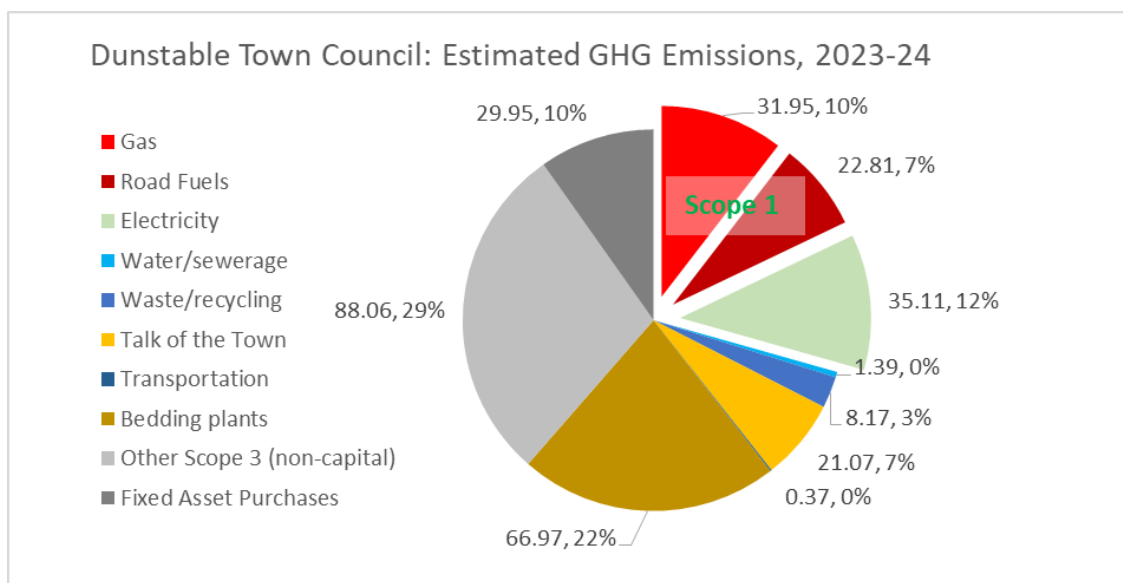
The policy seeks to ensure a responsible approach to procuring and maintaining the Council's vehicles and plant and requires that the procurement of new vehicles takes account of the opportunities to use eco-friendly fuels and other green technologies including construction and disposal. In addition, the Council will maintain a responsible vehicle fleet age profile of 4 to 10 years and has developed a replacement vehicle programme for its fleet.

In November 2020 the Council purchased its first fully electric grounds maintenance vehicle replacing an ageing diesel vehicle. The Council will continue to look at electric vehicle replacements in the future.

Carbon Neutral by 2030

One of the Council's ambitions set out in the Corporate Plan 2024 to 2027 is to work towards making the organisation carbon neutral by 2030.

In 2022 the Council commissioned and received a baseline assessment of the Council's carbon output based on Scope 1 and 2 emissions. In 2024 the report and baseline were updated for the two financial years ending on 31 March 2024 with the estimated carbon footprint extended to provide an estimate for all Scope 3 emissions.



Total emissions (all Scopes) are estimated to have reached just over 300 tCO₂e for the organisation. Indirect Scope 3 emissions represent the majority of those attributable to the Council, although they are much harder to control and subject to a higher degree of uncertainty.

There has been some progress made since the previous foot printing exercise. On a like for like basis, Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions from energy have fallen by approximately 10% over the two years.

Bedding plants have been identified as one of the biggest Scope 3 emissions. However, a number of assumptions have been made about the production of these plants as this requires further scrutiny to establish the true percentage contribution to greenhouse gas emissions. This issue has therefore been added to the Action Plan for further investigation.

The latest report notes that the Council is unlikely to be able to achieve Carbon Neutral status given the diverse nature of its activities and the constraints placed on it through the management of older protected buildings. The Council will therefore review this target during 2025 to reflect a more realistic goal.

Procurement of Goods and Services

The Council's Procurement Policy includes a specific objective to support the delivery of the Council's Environment and Sustainability Policy and specifically support the Council's aim of achieving carbon neutral status by 2030.

One of the key procurement principles contained in the policy includes a recognition of the importance of sustainability and the Council will take into account the environmental, social and economic impacts of its purchasing decisions.

Furthermore, the Council will encourage the purchase of locally sourced products and, where possible, ensure that products and materials originate from sustainable sources and accredited sustainable companies.

Biodiversity and Conservation

In June 2024 the Council adopted a Biodiversity Policy and Action Plan in accordance with the latest biodiversity duty and Government guidance. A copy of the Policy and Action Plan is available at Appendix 7

The Council recognises the valuable opportunity that the cemetery provides for increasing and improving biodiversity and conservation within its green spaces generally and as such will seek advice from Wildlife Trust partners to:

- Develop aims and objectives for tree management and succession tree planting.
- Produce a prescription for designated wildlife areas.
- Develop a programme of introducing bird and bat boxes and wildlife shelters for small mammals.

7.4 Antisocial Behaviour Issues

Dunstable Cemetery is not immune to antisocial behaviour. Whilst such behaviour does exist it is not the case that it is out of control and in most cases, it is considered to be low level activity. As previously stated, the Council works in close partnership with other agencies to monitor and tackle such behaviour. The type of antisocial behaviour occurring occasionally in the Cemetery includes the following:

- Noise nuisance for local residents caused by those celebrating the anniversary of loved ones.
- Barbequing and drinking on such occasions.
- Dog walkers walking dogs off the lead.
- Minor vehicle infringements and irresponsible parking.
- Occasional theft of ornaments from graves.

It has in the past been necessary to employ security patrol contractors to deter such activity especially in the summer months and the Council is in a position to do this at short notice as and when required. Other interventions include encouraging the CBC street warden service to attend regularly to deal with inappropriate behaviour from dog walkers. The use and installation of CCTV is under active consideration and is included as an objective within the Action Plan.

8 Section 8 – Marketing

- 8.1 The marketing and promotion of Dunstable Cemetery and related bereavement services needs to be undertaken in a sensitive manner at all times. Current marketing and access to information includes dedicated pages on the Council's web site www.dunstable.gov.uk , occasional articles in the Council's Talk of the Town magazine and two information leaflets sent out with general cemetery related correspondence.

It is evident that there is more that can be done to market and promote the service and Dunstable Cemetery in general.

- 8.2 The following marketing vision and objectives have been identified for Dunstable Cemetery and a marketing and promotion plan has been developed as part of this Management Plan and in conjunction with the Council's Corporate Marketing and Communications Officer.

- To promote a positive image of Dunstable Cemetery
- To engage the local community to view the cemetery as a place worth visiting.
- To share and celebrate the history and heritage of Dunstable Cemetery
- To share and promote the wide range of burial and memorial opportunities available.

A copy of the plan for 2023 is available at Appendix 6.

- 8.3 Dunstable Cemetery's place in the market and catchment area is relatively clear. The Cemetery serves the people of Dunstable and surrounding villages and adjacent towns. Whilst the nearby town of Houghton Regis also has a small cemetery there is no capacity and space available for full body burials at present.

Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) continue to encourage burial provision at a local parish and town council level. However, they have built and opened a new Crematorium in the centre of the region near Flitwick. There are already existing crematoriums and cemeteries in Bedford and Luton as well as two similar sized cemeteries in Leighton Linlade.

More recently the Council has been working with CBC and consultants to review options for future burial land on the periphery of Dunstable and this process remains ongoing with a Tier 3 Groundwater Risk Assessment having been submitted to the Environment Agency.

9 **Section 9 - The Six-Year Action Plan**

Aims and Objectives

In order to achieve the Town Council's vision, set out in the Corporate Plan, the Council has set the following key priority for green open space in Dunstable:

'To improve further and develop the provision of green and open space in the town'.

In particular the Council's Corporate Plan further recognises the need to ensure that the management of parks, cemeteries and open spaces within Dunstable is improved and new services are developed. More specifically the Council has identified a desire to maintain Green Flag status for Dunstable Cemetery as a means to deliver both wider and specific objectives.























The Council recognises and appreciates the need to build on or work towards achieving the following criteria within Dunstable Cemetery if it is to succeed in delivering its own vision and objectives:








- A welcoming place
- A healthy, safe and secure place
- A well maintained and clean place
- A sustainable place
- A place of conservation and heritage
- A place where the community can be involved.
- A well marketed place
- A well-managed place

Some progress has already been made towards achieving these criteria but there is still plenty more that can be done to consolidate the good work done thus far. This revised and updated action plan for Dunstable Cemetery is therefore set out to clearly identify how further progress can be made over the remaining plan period.

A Welcoming Place

In order to ensure that the Cemetery is a welcoming place, which people wish to visit, the action plan seeks to improve, develop and enhance those aspects of the cemetery, which currently contribute to this objective. These are outlined below:


Objectives and Actions	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	Notes, Partners and Funding
First Impressions							
Improve two access to main car park							
Annually clean all signage and information boards.							As part of the Town Ranger spring clean activity using existing revenue funding.
Provide attractive and colourful floral displays at key access points and intersections within the cemetery.							Floral displays will continue to be provide at the main vehicle entrance, on cemetery railing fronting West St and outside the chapel and office complex. Existing revenue funding.
Install Dunstable Cemetery sign and information board in current cemetery extension.							
Access to Information							
Provide up to date cemetery information on all notice boards.							Cemetery staff refresh notice boards on a weekly basis.
Install grave section markers.							Completed in January 2025.
















Objectives and Actions	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	Notes, Partners and Funding
Something for Everyone							
Review satisfaction surveys to inform future plans.							HoS/Cemetery Manager to review customer satisfaction surveys every second year to inform future plans and refresh.
Safe and Secure							
Reorganise and improve the depot facility to include improved and separated parking for Catchacre allotments.							
Non-Discriminatory Access							
Resurface footpaths and relay paving to ensure that they remain easily accessible to all sections of the community.							£15K spent during 2023/24.

A Healthy, Safe and Secure Place

It is important that people feel safe and secure in the cemetery and this action plan reflects that need. It is important that acts of inappropriate behaviour are addressed quickly so that they do not become the norm.























In addition, it is important that all facilities and equipment are maintained in a safe condition and that all working practices have been adequately risk assessed to safeguard both employees and the general public. The cemetery also represents an opportunity for visitors to pursue a healthy lifestyle through walking and as an area for quite reflective contemplation in an attractive environment. This can contribute to helping people achieve a balanced stress-free lifestyle. With these thoughts in mind the following actions are included within the Action Plan:

Objectives and Actions	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	Notes, Partners and Funding
Personal Safety							
Undertake memorial stability testing on a 5- year cycle in accordance with guidance and best practice.							Last testing completed October 2022. Next scheduled for 2027 and earmarked reserve established for future funding.
Consider options for installing CCTV and lighting at key locations.							Remains an option for consideration (including deployable) should there be a significant escalation in ASB incidents.
Deal quickly with vandalism and littering in line with the principles of the 'broken window' syndrome.							Use in-house grounds staff and Town Ranger to provide a quick response. Existing revenue funding.
Work closely with enforcement and community agencies to tackle antisocial behaviour and noise issues.							Police and CBC Community Safety and Enforcement teams.

Objectives and Actions	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	Notes, Partners and Funding
Managing Risk							
Complete an annual review of all grounds and site related risk assessments.							Annually and last completed during January 2025
Ensure existing dog control orders are enforced.							Cemetery and grounds staff will approach the public on an advisory basis. The CBC Street Warden Service is available on request for persistent offences.
Consider options for improving access to the main car park by creating a wider entrance from the main road.							Subject to available funding
Install a height restriction barrier at the entrance to the cemetery extension.							
Health and Wellbeing							
Add an additional page to the Council's website to explain the healthy benefits of visiting Dunstable Cemetery and also promote on social media.							In house with Marketing and Communications Officer. Rescheduled to 2025 in line with new website development.































A Well Maintained and Clean Place































Dunstable Town Council is committed to providing clean, safe and green public open spaces in line with successive Government agendas for Green Space. The Council recognises that a well-maintained and clean cemetery makes a positive contribution to achieving many of the ambitions, objectives and actions associated with achieving a Green Flag. As one of the Council's highest profile sites the cemetery is maintained to very high standards. Maintenance regimes for grounds and cleansing already reflect this need and the actions outlined below are designed to support the continuation of high standards and where possible enhance them.

Objectives and Actions	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	Notes, Partners and Funding
Litter and Waste Management							
Procure new waste collection and waste containment arrangements.							Procurement ongoing in January 2025
Mechanical sweeping of footpaths and roadways as scheduled routine activity.							In-house grounds team utilising Town Ranger equipment. Existing revenue funding.
Grounds Maintenance and Best Horticultural Practice							
Maintain existing high standards of maintenance by establishing a comprehensive work programme for the cemetery.							Head of Service and Grounds Operations Manager in partnership with working Supervisors are establishing a detailed programme. Review bi-annually.
Maintain a skilled and well-trained workforce.							Use annual performance appraisals to identify skills gaps and develop a comprehensive training programme.
Manage the tree stock in a planned and proactive manner to ensure that trees remain in a good, safe condition.							By annual survey (independent specialist) informing annual work programme. Reserve funds allocated.

A Sustainable Place

In order to establish strong sustainability working in the Cemetery, the Council will continue to manage the site pesticide and herbicide free, increase recycling, work towards being peat free and conserve resources. The Council has recently undertaken a comprehensive carbon baseline and is developing a Council wide improvement programme including some of the actions detailed below. The Council has also adopted a Biodiversity Policy.

Objectives and Actions	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	Notes, Partners and Funding
Pesticides							
Manage all weeds by mechanical means including hand weeding, regular sweeping and hot water / steam treatments.							Cemetery grounds and Town Ranger Service.
Peat Reduction							
All bedding plants to be grown in peat free compost.							A specific requirement in tender and procurement processes.
Ensure containerised displays are provided using peat free or peat reduced compost.							Work with future suppliers to establish options.
Where possible procure and specify all replacement trees and shrubs grown in peat free compost.							Work with future suppliers to establish options.
Water Saving							
Undertake watering of floral displays on an as required basis, early in the morning and make use of container reservoirs.							Cemetery grounds staff.

Objectives and Actions	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	Notes, Partners and Funding
Waste and Recycling							
Maintain dipping troughs in good condition to avoid leaks and overflows.							Cemetery grounds staff.
Procure new waste disposal arrangements							As part of a wider Council procurement of waste services in 2025.
Compost all leaf litter from Autumn collections for reuse on beds and borders.							Ongoing using cemetery compound bays.
Vehicle and Equipment Replacement							
Replace equipment with rechargeable battery-operated models where appropriate.							Existing revenue and reserves.
Carbon Reduction							
Replace vans/pickups with Electric vehicles where appropriate in line with Vehicle Policy.							Utilising allocated reserves and Replacement Vehicle Plan
Continue to select energy efficient products when adding/replacing equipment.							Existing revenue and reserves.



Objectives and Actions	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	Notes, Partners and Funding
Carbon Reduction (Cont)							
Consider options to fix photovoltaic cells to the office and chapel complex roof or install ground source heat pump							
Consider options to move to room thermostats for various rooms in the office complex and investigate timers to avoid unnecessary heating.							

A Place of Conservation and Heritage

Dunstable Cemetery has a strong heritage identity within the community and is the final resting place of many local prominent figures responsible for the town's development. The natural treescape also provides an important reminder of the past and remains an important feature of the older parts of the cemetery.



The cemetery provides an important urban habitat for birds and other wildlife. The creation of a more biodiverse landscape, building on existing wildlife features, plays a major role in the development of the cemetery as a natural green space resource. The Council recognises the important and valuable contribution that the cemetery can make to conserving and improving biodiversity within the town and this is taken into account within the Action Plan.







Objectives and Actions	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	Notes, Partners and Funding
The Treescape							
Plant new, replacement and complementary trees where appropriate to support maintenance of the tree stock and provide succession planting.							Existing revenue and allocated reserve funding. DTC 40 th anniversary funding and commemorative tree planting.
Install more bird and bat boxes and small mammal shelters to encourage a greater diversity of wildlife.							Additional boxes were added in 2024
Biodiverse Habitats							
Create further meadow grassland areas through the establishment of new differential mowing regimes.							Cemetery grounds staff. Additional areas added in 2024.
Seek advice and guidance on the management of the badger sett located close to the cemetery extension.							With specialist advisors and in accordance with legislation.

Objectives and Actions	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	Notes, Partners and Funding
Heritage							
Establish means to undertake regular ecological surveys of flora and fauna.							With local Wildlife Trust.
Install a new lectern providing information about the 48 War Graves located in the cemetery.							With the local history society.

A Place Where the Community can be Involved































The Council recognises the importance and benefits of working in partnership with all sections of the community and engaging with hard-to-reach groups. In addition, the Council wishes to encourage a wide variety of individuals and organisations to use the cemetery as a place for health and wellbeing. It is anticipated that both use, and partnership working will take many forms. The community will be encouraged to visit the cemetery for special activities, participate in hands on management and maintenance, inform decision making and enjoy the area for what it is; a special place to visit, relax in or pass through.

Objectives and Actions	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	Notes, Partners and Funding
Knowledge of Users and Patterns of use.							
Undertake annual user satisfaction surveys.							
Encourage and Enable Community Involvement and Use							
Work with existing volunteers to create and manage wildlife areas and undertake grave clearance and general tidying.							Ongoing with Friends of Dunstable Cemetery and other outside organisations.
Encourage the Town Guides to offer at least two guided tours of the cemetery per year.							Town Guides.
Encourage and support the continuation of the 'Friends of Dunstable Cemetery' group. Promote the Friends Group							Established in January 2018.
Hold one open/community/information day per year.							This is on hold due to staff resource issues and other priorities.

Objectives and Actions	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	Notes, Partners and Funding
Sharing Information							
Use the Cemetery for In Bloom activity including bulb planting, tree planting and voluntary maintenance.							Site used for Anglia in Bloom judge's visits and also entered into virtual category for Cemeteries. Gold and Silver Gilt awards achieved in previous years.

A Well Marketed Place




























With the cemetery making a major contribution to the overall income generated by the Council it is important that local people continue to choose Dunstable Cemetery as their first choice to bury and commemorate loved ones. It is therefore important that the Council continues to offer and develop a range of appropriate services that are well marketed and furthermore that the Council's reputation for providing first class services is maintained. It is therefore essential that good robust marketing and promotion of services is established, and that users and visitors have access to good quality information. The following marketing and promotional objectives and actions are included within this Action Plan.




Objectives and Actions	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	Notes, Partners and Funding
Sharing Information							
Keep web pages refreshed to also include a copy of this Management Plan.							New DTC website in 2025 with update and fully refreshed pages for the Cemetery.
Regularly report information to Elected Members.							HoS/Cemetery Manager to include updates in grounds information reports to GES Committee on 5 occasions per year.
Make regular use of information boards in the cemetery to post information.							Cemetery Manager refreshes weekly.
Regularly update Green Flag website specific pages with news and events.							Cemetery Manager.
Promoting Events							
Publicise all community related events and activities through a range of media in line with the Cemetery Marketing Strategy.							In-house team using newspapers, town and cemetery notice board posters, Talk of the Town Council magazine articles, social media posts, website and radio/TV promotion.

Objectives and Actions	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	Notes, Partners and Funding
Promoting Events (Cont.)							
Retain Green Flag accreditation.							Annual entry with bi-annual full assessment.
Enter the cemetery into the regional Anglia in Bloom awards to secure Best Open Space accreditation.							
Maximising Income Generation							
Develop a new cemetery brochure / leaflet detailing the range of burial and memorialisation services available.							Draft completed and will be issued alongside new DTC website launch
Undertake a marketing campaign specifically relating to new sanctum and plaque memorials in the cemetery extension.							In house with support from the Councils retained publishers / graphics team. Existing revenue funding. Advertorials included in Council Magazine and in a local community magazine 'The Vine' in 2024
Consider options for franchising the selling of plants and cut flowers within the cemetery.							

A Well Managed Place

Dunstable Town Council is committed to managing Dunstable Cemetery to the standards set out in 'Raising the Standard' – The Green Flag Award Guidance Manual. The Council recognises the need to have a clear and unambiguous site-specific management plan in place which is well communicated and shared with partners and stakeholders. In seeking to manage the cemetery to these standards, the following objectives and actions are contained within the Action Plan.

Objectives and Actions	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	Notes, Partners and Funding
Decision Making							
Maintain a 'golden thread' of communication between management, employees and elected members to ensure that timely and appropriate decisions are made about future developments.							Achieved via Grounds and Environmental Services Committee, weekly Senior Management Team meetings, monthly grounds operations meetings, 6 monthly staff performance reviews, job chats, staff newsletter and All Staff Meetings.
Retain Investors in People accreditation.							Retained in 2023. Reassessment in 2025 and 2027
Maintain regular contact with all local funeral directors, stonemasons and clergy.							Cemetery Manager. Meeting planned with FD's and Clegy for managing large funerals,
Financial Management							
Monitor annual revenue and allocated reserve expenditure on a quarterly basis.							Head of Service, Cemetery Manager, Operations Manager and Finance team.
Retain close working links with CBC Planning/Leisure to identify Section 106/CIL funding opportunities.							Head of Service.

Objectives and Actions	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	Notes, Partners and Funding
Managing Risk							
Maintain and update a Corporate Risk Log for the organisation.							Senior Management Team update annually each June and Elected Members sign off at Full Council along with Annual Report.
Performance and Efficiency							
Collect and analyse Corporate PI data and develop service specific performance indicators.							Chief Executive and Head of Service.
Maintain BACAS database as burial record.							Includes work on mapping graves linked to BACAS

The Four-Year Finance Plan

In agreeing the budget for 2025/26 the Council has also set an indicative budget for a further three years to 2028/29. The budget for 2025/26 and the indicative budget for the following 3 years is summarised below. The budget for the last two years of this plan will be added as part of the two-year plan refresh process.

The four-year finance summary detailed in the tables below will be subject to growth and savings changes each year as the annual budget is set.

Revenue Expenditure

Description	Status	£ 2025/26	£ 2026/27	£ 2027/28	£ 2028/29
Officer Salaries	Secured	96,865	99,771	102,764	105,847
Grounds Salaries / Overtime (apportioned 4/17ths)	Secured	221,260	227,898	234,735	241,777
Repairs and Maintenance	Secured	8,240	8,487	8,742	9,004
Tools and Equipment	Secured	7,210	7,426	7,649	7,879
Building Maintenance Contracts and Cleaning	Secured	9,489	9,774	10,067	10,369
Vehicle Maintenance / Fuel (apportioned cost 1/3)	Secured	13,415	13,964	14,537	15,136
Floral Displays (apportioned cost)	Secured	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000
Waste Disposal	Secured	8,686	9,134	9,408	9,691
Security	Secured	3,550	3,657	3,766	3,879
Rates	Secured	9,100	9,282	9,468	9,657
Utilities	Secured	11,200	11,200	11,200	11,200
IT Licences and Support	Secured	5,520	5,520	5,520	5,520
Tree Maintenance	Secured	1,650	1,700	1,750	1,800
Stationery	Secured	600	600	600	600
Book of Remembrance	Secured	400	400	400	400
Kerb Block Plaques and Sanctums	Secured	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500
Green Flag Application	Secured	400	400	400	400
New Cemetery Development	Secured	0	100,000	120,000	150,000

Revenue Income

Description	Status	£ 2025/26	£ 2026/27	£ 2027/28	£ 2028/29
Interment Fees and Charges	Unsecured	175,000	180,250	185,658	191,227
Memorial Fees & Charges	Unsecured	54,450	56,084	57,766	59,499
Kerb Block Plaques and Sanctums	Unsecured	3,500	3,500	3,500	3,500
Book of Remembrance Fees	Unsecured	600	600	600	600

Allocated Capital Reserves

The following table shows the financial resources that will be set aside each year as allocated capital reserves available specifically to the Cemetery Service and also to the wider Grounds and Environmental Services Department. They are separated into various reserve categories but have not been allocated for specific projects or activities at this stage. The Grounds and Environmental Services Committee makes decisions on specific spending allocations based on officer recommendations.

Allocated Capital Reserve	Status	£ Balance at 31 Dec 2024	£ 2025/26 Contribution	£ 2026/27 Contribution	£ 2027/28 Contribution	£ 2028/29 Contribution
Cemetery Buildings	Secured	17,281	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000
Memorial Safety	Secured	3,075	1,655	1,738	1,825	1,916
Vehicle and Equipment	Secured	2,680	60,000	60,000	50,000	55,000
Open Spaces	Secured	5,829	30,000	30,000	30,000	30,000
Tree Management	Secured	16,468	15,000	15,000	15,000	15,000

10 Section 10 - Monitoring and Review

10.1 To ensure that this management plan remains current and relevant and achieves its objectives the following monitoring and review arrangements will be implemented.

10.2 Annually

- Retain Green Flag status year on year once secured.
- Include the cemetery within the In Bloom portfolio and competition to achieve continuous accreditation and maintain the high profile of Dunstable Cemetery.
- Keep accurate written and photographic records of all events, projects and initiatives associated with the cemetery.
- Bi-annually review and refresh the action plan in line with Green Flag judging visits.
- Report progress on the action plan to the Grounds and Environmental Services Committee.
- Update and review all relevant risk assessments.
- Monitor and record customer and stakeholder satisfaction levels.
- Monitor revenue and capital allocated expenditure and income.
- Monitor key performance indicators.

10.3 Every Six Years

- Fully review and redraft the management plan to ensure that it remains in line with current corporate and wider regional and national objectives.

10.4 Evidence

The following evidence of monitoring and review is provided for information.

10.4.1 In Bloom

Dunstable Cemetery has achieved numerous Silver Gilt and Gold Medals since 2010. The cemetery makes an important contribution to the success of the wider In Bloom campaign and competition.

10.4.2 Photographic Records

A photographic record is maintained by the Town Council covering activities that take place in the cemetery each year. Some of these are included within this management plan and can be made available to the judges on request.

10.4.3 Reporting to Committee

A regular information report is presented to each Grounds and Environmental Service Committee on five occasions per year. In addition, this management

plan and in particular the detailed action plan was approved by Elected Members in January 2023

10.4.4 Update and Review Risk Assessments

This is an ongoing process managed through a Council wide Management Team with support from a Health and Safety consultancy company who have been retained by the Council for a period of 5 years.

10.4.5 Monitor and Record Customer Satisfaction Levels

Future surveys will be undertaken using Survey Monkey and social media.

10.4.6 Budget Monitoring

This is ongoing throughout the year on a monthly basis as part of one-to-one sessions with managers and supervisory staff. A quarterly financial monitoring report is presented to the Finance and General Purposes Committee as part of the Council's overall budget monitoring arrangements.

10.4.7 Performance Indicators

The current Corporate Plan 2024 - 2027 includes the following Dunstable Cemetery related performance indicators:

CPPI 20 - By annual survey, percentage of residents satisfied overall with green and open spaces in Dunstable. This will include Dunstable Cemetery.

CPPI 21 - To maintain at least 4 Green Flag recognised green and open spaces.

CPPI 23 – To maintain, as a minimum, ICCM Charter for the Bereaved silver standard at Dunstable Cemetery.

CPPI 24 - Number of volunteers working directly with the Council to enhance the town's green spaces including Dunstable Cemetery.

Performance against these indicators is published each year in the Council's Annual Report.

11 Section 11 – Appendices

The appendices to this plan are contained in a separate document which is available to the Green Flag assessors on request.

Appendices Contents

Appendix 1	Customer satisfaction survey 2024/25
Appendix 2	Summary of maintenance operations
Appendix 3	Health and Safety Documents (including H&S Policy, list of grounds RA's, typical RA – grave digging, site specific RA)
Appendix 4	Environment and Sustainability Policy
Appendix 5	Vehicle Management Policy
Appendix 6	Marketing and Promotion Plan
Appendix 7	Biodiversity Policy and Action Plan