

Revenue Budget Summary - Cemeteries

Budget Description	Budget Holder	2024/25 Gross Budget	2024/25 Net Budget
Cemeteries	Steve Cooper (Works and Environment Manager)	£135,600	£67,050

Purpose of the Budget:

The purpose of the Cemeteries Budget is to fund the operational resources including staffing, machinery and equipment required to run and maintain Stephenson Way Cemetery and West Cemetery, to provide burial services at those cemeteries, and to undertake grounds maintenance and burial services at St Andrews Church in Aycliffe Village.

Scope of Activity and Nature of the Service:

The Cemeteries Budget provides the resources to undertake repairs and maintenance to the cemetery buildings, the upkeep of the cemetery grounds, the maintenance and replacement of cemetery equipment such as the grave shoring machinery, as well as the running costs of the cemetery buildings. The budget also provides for all staffing costs associated with the above, as well as the burials service. The provision of cemeteries is a statutory service area.

Contribution to Council Aims:

The provision of cemeteries contributes to the following Council Strategic Aim:-
Aim 2: "To manage the Council's finances and assets in a responsible manner"

Performance Measures and Indicators:

The provision of cemeteries is a statutory function and also contributes towards the Strategic Aim highlighted above including the following targets:

- Continuing investigations into a possible woodland burial site at West Cemetery
- Develop an Action Plan for making further improvements to the drainage at the two cemeteries.

Key Budget Changes for 2024/25:

The Cemeteries Budget has decreased by £4,250 per year to a net running cost of £67,050, largely as a result of an increase in interment fees, reduction in utilities costs and a reduction in income from St Andrew's Church.

Importance of Service to the Community:

Cemeteries provision is a statutory service and is clearly also an essential service to the community. In 2023/24 there were a total of 55 interments and 36 purchases of plots across the three cemeteries at West Cemetery, Stephenson Way and St Andrews at Aycliffe Village. The 2024 'Your Parish, Your Choice, Your Voice' Satisfaction Survey provided some very positive feedback on public satisfaction with the cemeteries, with the service having very high levels of satisfaction for all cemeteries with regards to maintenance, tidiness, peacefulness and value for money. Any comments given were primarily focused on drainage issues. The Council is aware that standing water is a problem at the cemeteries due to prolonged periods of wet weather and the nature of the land and are implementing works to address this issue.

External Funding and Fees and Charges:

The Council charges fees for the various services provided at the cemeteries including burials, cremations, exclusive rights, plaques, inscriptions, tree planting, exhumation, register searches etc.

Income from the above currently totals around £50,000 a year (£50,350 2023/24). Cemeteries charges are reviewed annually by the Council's Charges Working Group and have been increased by 15% for 2024/25.

The Council also leases part of the building at Stephenson Way Cemetery to a funeral director at a lease rental of £6,900 per year.