

# Review of Cemetery cost drivers

## Background

Cemetery maintenance costs are rising and there seems to be a general slowing of new internments as more people turn to the crematorium. This means that over time the cemetery maintenance is going to become more of a burden to Wickham Market residents.

Consequently, this brief explores the principal cost drivers for maintenance and suggests actions that could bring these costs down to a more manageable level together with improving the overall look of the area. This is likely to require some up front investment in work to achieve the savings.

## Current costs

<i>Activity</i>	<i>Frequency per year</i>	<i>Unit cost</i>	<i>Total cost</i>
Paddock Grass cutting	3	28	63
Ditch maintenance - To clear leaf fall/brambles to ensure pipe under Road B1438 is clear to allow water to flow, Mini digger use to dredge area.	1		420
Remove excess clay soil from Compound when full. Mini to load on to Tippers to remove.	1		420
Aucuba bed and shrub maintenance in Cemetery main driveway.	Monthly		840
Pruning Lime trees in the avenue Driveway maintenance to maintain size and shape.	13	48	630
Grass cutting entire cemetery and extension /removal of grass.	17	336	5,712

## Cost drivers

The key cost driver is labour hours, so anything that can be done to reduce time will save money. Activities that are labour intensive with suggested options for reduction identified with the help of Paul Tynan from ESSL include:

Strimming is very labour intensive and there are a number of areas where this could be reduced.

• Under some of the trees	Crown lift some trees to c2.5m to allow mower to pass underneath
• Around misaligned tributes and memorials along graves.	Where practical align memorials (e.g. stone vases) with the headstone row, allowing a 62" mulching mower deck to pass between headstones
• Around kerbs	Some uninscribed grave length kerbs could be removed if this is allowed.
• Around fallen, flat or leaning stones	Reset the stones so that the mower can cut closer
• Around graves that still have earth mounds	In keeping with cemetery regulations, flatten these after 6 months which will allow mower access.
• Around tributes left along the length of the grave	In keeping with cemetery regulations, move these to the headstone line after 6 months which will allow mower access.
In addition to strimming, picking up artificial floral tributes before mowing is labour intensive.	Move forward with a ban on artificial tributes as soon as sensitively possible.
Other mowing obstacles such as tree stumps, random stones, logs, random clumps of spring bulbs	Tree stumps – remove/grind out Stones – remove/realign Logs – remove Spring Bulbs – relocate
Improve speed of mowing	Instigate a major exercise of grave levelling across the whole cemetery cutting out mounds and filling dips and holes and reseeding as required. This will need additional topsoil. Once finished this will create an even grass cut which will look much tidier and be much quicker to maintain.
Lime trees and Aucuba beds	This is a significant labour intensive costs with no simple obvious reduction option. However Paul will consider this to see what may be possible.

## Conclusion. This brief seeks:

1. Agreement to investigate in more detail the actions most likely to reduce costs and also the cost of carrying out these actions.
2. Agreement in principal to invest money in the cemetery upfront to reduce the regular funding deficits.