

***NOTE:** In the case of non-members, this agenda is for information only

DEREHAM TOWN COUNCIL

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22nd January 2026

To All Members of the Social and Welfare Committee

Councillors H Clarke, C Coleman, S Green, A Keats, H King, L King and R O'Callaghan.

Dear Councillor

You are hereby summoned to attend a meeting of the **Social & Welfare Committee** which will be held at the **Memorial Hall**, Dereham on **Tuesday 27th January 2026** upon the rising of the Markets & Buildings Committee Meeting to consider the items on the agenda below. All councillors are welcome to attend the above meeting even if they are not a member of the particular committee.

Yours faithfully

A N Needham

Mr A N Needham
Town Clerk

Members requiring further information, or with specific questions, are asked to raise these with the appropriate officer at least two working days before the meeting. If the information requested is available, this will be provided and reported to Council.

AGENDA

1. To receive apologies for absence.
2. **Declaration of Interest.**
In accordance with the Localism Act 2011, Members are asked at this stage to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests or Other Registerable Interests; as defined by the Code of Conduct adopted by the Council. Councillors shall declare such interest as soon as it becomes apparent, disclosing the nature and extent of those interests. Failure to disclose any Disclosable Pecuniary interests or to knowingly give false or misleading information is a criminal offence under section 34 of the Localism Act 2011.
3. To consider and make recommendations relating to burial responsibilities.
4. To Consider and make recommendations relating to grave depths.
5. To consider and make recommendations relating to setting out ashes plots at New Cemetery.
6. To consider and make recommendations regarding the time between a burial and the erection of a headstone.

Dereham Town Council

Social and Welfare Committee

27th January 2026

Agenda Notes

1. To consider and make recommendations relating to burial responsibilities.

The Town Council used to dig all the graves. Following some reorganisation it became clear that it was more cost effective for the undertakes to arrange their own grave digging. This has been a much more efficient arrangement, but issues have arisen, these are:

- a) Some grave diggers do not leave the grave in a manner which is as decent as some would expect. Then, because the grave is in Dereham Town Council's cemetery, the Town Council will be deemed responsible (example below). An option might be that for a period after the burial, the undertakers must place a discrete notice on the grave stating their name and that they were responsible for arranging the burial. While bereaved families may feel that this is insensitive, it can be explained that it is to ensure that the undertakers ensure that the graves are left in a decent condition.



- b) When backfilling the grave, some grave diggers do not consolidate the soil adequately. This results in an excessive burden on the council in topping the graves up as they settle. Topping the grave is really a cost relating to burial rather than maintenance. If the Town Council tops the graves up then there is no incentive for the grave diggers to backfill in a way which reduces costs to the Council.

It is therefore suggested that the Council adopts a policy of making the undertakers responsible for topping the graves up for the first 12 months following a burial. If the Council receives reports of dropped graves within this period then the appropriate undertaker can be notified.

The Town Council will continue to seed graves in the spring and late summer.

2. To Consider and make recommendations relating to grave depths

The Council's rules have for, as long as anybody can remember, stated that a double grave must be dug to 6ft 6 inches. This was not an issue when the Council was digging graves, but with the undertakers arranging grave diggers, it has been a struggle to enforce the 6ft 6inch policy.

The guidance on grave depth is that 6ft is an absolute minimum based on an average coffin depth (There should be 6 inches between each coffin and a minimum of 2ft of soil covering the later coffin).

Looking at the coffin depths over the last 12 months, amending the Council's policy to a minimum of 6ft would not create an issue, provided that 6ft is an absolute minimum. But the Council should make it very clear to the undertakers that 6ft is an absolute minimum, if it is found that the grave diggers are digging at less than 6ft then some form of penalty will be introduced.

3. To consider and make recommendations relating to setting out ashes plots at New Cemetery.

The original setting out of the ashes plots used a system copied from a commercially available system, but manufactured locally as this was much cheaper. Once used, it became apparent that the cost of installing the concrete rails was high and a more cost effective method was available. This involved creating a concrete foundation along the length of the ashes area with a 'lip' to allow the paving slab to locate. This hasn't been ideal as the slabs need to be levelled from time to time.

An alternative suggestion is being proposed which will be visually different. It is being suggested that the Council commission the fabrication of a series of rails made of stainless steel angle sections, which would be fixed in the ground. The rails would be fabricated so that standard 600 x 900 slabs locate exactly within the rails. This would be much tidier and provide places for memorabilia either side of the memorial stone rather than in a central slab.

4. To consider and make recommendations regarding the time between a burial and the erection of a headstone.

The Council currently recommends that no headstone is erected for 6 months following a burial to allow time for the ground to settle. Partly related to the issues with backfilling graves, there has been much more settlement of graves over the winter period. It is therefore suggested that the Council either recommends that no headstone is erected for 12 months following a burial, or has a policy that it does not permit headstones to be erected for 12 months. People may be reluctant to wait 12 months, but it is in their best interests to do so. Example below of where the headstone was erected 6 months following a funeral with the grave sinking during the winter months.

