



# SHERFIELD ON LODDON PARISH COUNCIL

## MEMORIAL TESTING POLICY

### Introduction

Sherfield on Loddon Parish Council owns and manages the Parish council Burial Ground adjacent to St Leonards Church in Sherfield on Loddon which opened in 2014. It is estimated that there are approximately 30 memorials in the Burial Ground and 28 Niche Wall Plaques.

Burial authorities are expected to ensure that the memorials in their cemeteries are safe and do not pose a risk to anybody visiting or working in the site. Older memorials may be neglected and can become worn and damaged over time, thus presenting a danger. Relatively new memorials may be equally as dangerous, however, if they were poorly fixed and are now loose on their foundations.

Sherfield on Loddon Parish Council has adopted this policy for the Management of Memorials in its Burial Ground.

The intention of this policy is to set out how Sherfield on Loddon Parish Council as the Burial Authority will undertake the management of any significant risks from memorials, within its Burial Ground in a sensible and appropriate manner. However, since the general risk can be deemed low it is not the intention of this policy to cause any unnecessary concern, only to provide guidance to any questions that may arise by any concerned party and to provide assurance that memorials are properly managed.

Sherfield on Loddon Parish Council is duty bound under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations Act to assess reasonably foreseeable risks from its activities and to put in place control measures that will reduce the risks – so far as is reasonably practical.

It is Sherfield on Loddon Parish Council's intention to follow the latest guidance from the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM) on memorial safety and to take appropriate action to any memorial deemed unsafe within the Burial Ground. The first recommendation being that a "clear policy should be in place with set standards for management of memorial stability".

Memorials within the Burial Ground which are after testing found to be unsafe, dangerous or in poor condition will be cordoned off. Every effort will be made by the Parish Council to contact any concerned parties before any further action is taken. However, priority will always be given to making safe high-risk memorials.



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## **Responsibility for maintenance**

The public has the right to apply to erect a memorial under the Local Authorities Cemeteries Order 1977 (LACO) and will have to apply by person or via a contracted Memorial Mason to Sherfield on Loddon Parish Council

Whilst Sherfield on Loddon Parish Council has overall responsibility for the safety of the cemetery, including risks from unstable memorials, it does not own the memorials. The owner of the memorial will be the owner of the Exclusive Rights of Burial for the grave.

The owners of memorials are responsible for maintaining the memorial in a good condition. However, sometimes, there is no identifiable owner.

Memorial Stonemasons must ensure that memorials are erected safely and in accordance with current standards available within the industry and must be a registered member of BRAMM (British Register of Accredited Memorial Masons).

Stonemasons working in the Burial ground must hold public liability insurance, provide risk assessments and safe methods of working, and advise Sherfield on Loddon Parish Council when they will be working in the

In case of immediate danger, the Council is empowered under the provision of the Local Authorities Cemetery Order 1977 Article 6(1) to take immediate action to make safe dangerous memorials.

## **Memorial inspection procedure**

At least 28 days' notice will be given prior to the start of the memorial safety inspections. A public notice will be displayed at the Burial Ground and on the Parish Council noticeboards and website. Notices will detail the intent of the Parish Council and the dates of the inspection.

Sherfield on Loddon Parish Council will employ the services of a suitably qualified contractor to carry out a visual check and hand test on all memorials in the Burial Ground on a 5-year cycle. The visual check is looking to see if there are any signs of cracking, whether it is leaning and whether the joints are intact. The hand test involves standing to one side of the memorial and applying firm but steady pressure by hand. The hand test will be used to determine if or to what degree the memorial is unstable.

A record of all memorial inspections and the results of these inspections will be kept by the Council and will be available to view on request to the Clerk. Records will include information that will assist in locating memorials in future inspections, information on the visual and hand tests, an assessment of the priority and any action taken. Digital photos will be taken as a permanent record.



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## **Risk controls**

Different identified levels of risk will result in the following action:

- Low risk memorials

Re-test on a 5-year cycle unless there are any visual indications that the memorial has become unstable.

- Medium risk memorials

The memorial has failed the test but is not in immediate danger to the public but is not fully stable. A warning sign will be placed on the memorial and it may be staked and cordoned off until further action can be taken. It will be inspected yearly.

- High risk memorials

The memorial is dangerous and poses an immediate risk of falling. A warning sign will be placed on the memorial and it will be cordoned off, partly buried or laid flat until further action can be taken. Memorials will only be laid flat when action is necessary to prevent immediate risk to health and safety.

## **Responsibility for making safe memorials**

Sherfield on Loddon Parish Council has powers under the provisions of LACO 1977 Section 3 2(b) to make safe or remove any memorials found to be unsafe during a safety inspection.

Every reasonable effort will be made to contact the grave owners.

A letter will be issued to the last known address of the grave owner and a notice attached to the unsafe memorial.

28 days notification will be given for any intended action to any memorial, unless it is considered an immediate danger. If all attempts to contact the grave owner fail, then Sherfield on Loddon Parish Council has the right to remove or take steps as to make safe the hazard. This will also be the case of memorials where the grave owner has been contacted but were either unwilling or unable to repair by a registered stonemason.

All costs incurred by the Sherfield on Loddon Parish Council to make memorials safe will be the responsibility of the grave owner and must be paid in full before any further interments or work on the memorial is approved or carried out.

## **Repairing memorials**

The re-erection of dangerous memorials remains the responsibility of the grave owner.

All work to memorials must be approved by the Sherfield on Loddon Parish Council before they commence and must be in accordance with the Burial ground Rules and Regulations.



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All fixings must comply with the National Association of Memorial Masons (NAMM) Code of Working Practice and BS8415.

It is the responsibility of the grave owner to inform Sherfield on Loddon Parish Council that a repair has been completed to ensure the memorial is not accidentally laid down or sunk in to the ground after repairs has been completed.

Sherfield on Loddon Parish Council Rules and Regulations and the required forms for the Burial Ground can be found on the website [Sherfield-on-Loddon Parish Council - Burial Ground \(sherfieldonloddon-pc.gov.uk\)](http://sherfieldonloddon-pc.gov.uk)