

REPORT TO CABINET

Open		Would any decisions proposed :			
Any especially affected Wards	Operational	Be entirely within Cabinet's powers to decide		YES	
		Need to be recommendations to Council		YES	
		Is it a Key Decision		YES	
Lead Member: Cllr Paul Bland E-mail:		Other Cabinet Members consulted: Cllr Simon Ring			
		Other Members consulted:			
Lead Officer: Chris Black/Martin Chisholm E-mail: Direct Dial:		Other Officers consulted:			
Financial Implications YES	Policy/ Personnel Implications NO	Statutory Implications NO	Equality Impact Assessment YES If YES: Pre-screening/ Full Assessment	Risk Management Implications NO	Environmental Considerations YES
If not for publication, the paragraph(s) of Schedule 12A of the 1972 Local Government Act considered to justify that is (are) paragraph(s)					

Date of meeting: 16th September 2025

TITLE: KING'S LYNN CEMETERY PROVISION

Summary

The Gayton Road Cemetery is the only operational burial site in King's Lynn, offering over 5,000 plots with inclusive provisions for various faith groups; however, its long-term viability is under threat due to environmental constraints, particularly a high water table that has rendered more than half of the plots non-compliant as defined by the Ground Water Regulations enforced by the Environment Agency (EA). With only 55 compliant single-depth plots remaining and an annual burial rate of around 30 new graves required, capacity is rapidly diminishing.

Reviews in 2009 and 2018 highlighted this issue, prompting further action in 2019. In 2024 efforts were renewed to identify alternative sites within the King's Lynn boundary due to the growing urgency of securing future burial provision, the feasibility study conducted an externally appointed contractor could not identify a suitable site within the Kings Lynn boundary.

Recommendation

Cabinet Resolves:

- 1) Close Gayton Road Cemetery to new full body burials from 1 April 2026, unless operational circumstances require this date to be brought forward.

- 2) To review any future sites which may be suitable within the King's Lynn boundary, as the opportunities present.

Recommendations to Full Council:

Reason for Decision

The above set of actions ensures that the Council can fulfil commitments for burials in Gayton Road Cemetery, and will provide the ability to consider any suitable site that becomes available in the future.

1 Background

Our only operational cemetery in King's Lynn is on Gayton Road. There is provision for c. 5400 burial plots and all sections of the community are catered for with areas dedicated for various faith groups. We reviewed capacity at this site in 2009 and 2018 and as we conduct in the region of 60 burials a year the capacity has continued to dwindle.

This is due in part to a reduction in the number of available graves due to the identification of a high water table meaning that parts of the cemetery are unsuitable for burial.

Total Number of Graves:	5418
Total Number of Reserved (pre-paid) Graves:	258
Total Number of Graves in area of cemetery identified by Environment Agency (EA) & Cemetery Development Services (CDS) as in breach of Ground Water Regulations (GWR):	3113
Total Number of Reserved Graves in area identified by EA & CDS as in breach of GWR:	104
Total Number of Graves with one burial and rights for second burial in area identified by EA & CDS as in breach of GWR :	780*
Number of unpurchased / available graves in area identified by EA & CDS as compliant:	55 single depth** / 0 double depth

**in these instances, we manage each request to open a grave on a case by case basis working with guidance and agreements from EA that the grave must be dry / no standing water and that the defined depth for a grave can be achieved and that at least 1m of soil will cover the coffin – to date we have fulfilled all requests.*

***BCKLWN have always provided grave spaces for 2 burials – therefore the figure of 55 single grave spaces could effectively reduced to 27 grave spaces.*

A renewed focus on future provision meant that this matter was brought to Management Team in November 2019 and a number of steps were agreed upon. Specialists were retained to carry out additional investigative works at the site and some tentative site visits were undertaken with little success in identifying a suitable alternative location.

We again retained specialists to carry out a feasibility study in 2024, their scope was to identify potential sites within the King's Lynn boundary.

2 Options Considered

A) Extending Gayton Road Cemetery

- 2009 - planning permission was granted for the change of use of allotment area to facilitate an extension to the cemetery, providing in the region of an extra 800 spaces. The land was cleared, levelled and fenced off, thus activating the planning permission.
- 2018 – decision to progress the design of the old allotment area in readiness for future use. To ensure compliance with Environment Agency statutory guidance for managing ground water pollution, a full survey of the site was commissioned, and undertaken by specialist contractors. It was identified during the course of these that the old allotment area was not suitable due to poor ground conditions and confirmation from the Environmental Agency (EA) that they would not support the extension of the existing cemetery. Ground water regulations also applied to the existing cemetery.
- *Due to the above EA constraints this option had to be rejected.*

B) Providing an alternative site

- **A new “flagship” cemetery:**
 - Local to the Kings Lynn area.
 - Would meet residents' expectations of a new facility.
 - Full infrastructure, including
 - Car Parking
 - Utilities
 - Ceremony Hall
 - Visitors Toilets
 - Staff welfare facilities
 - Inclusion of:
 - Woodland Burial (Colney Wood style)
 - Traditional Lawn Cemetery (Gayton Road style)
 - Gardens of Remembrance for cremated remains.
 - Professional design concept & initial feasibility studies.
 - Commission expert in this field (ie Cemetery Development Services)
- **A new “basic” cemetery:**
 - Local to the Kings Lynn area.
 - Would meet the minimum expected requirement of a cemetery.
 - Functional infrastructure, including
 - Car Parking
 - Utilities
 - Limited paths and roadways

- Inclusion of:
 - Traditional Lawn Cemetery (Gayton Road style)
 - Cremated remains area.
- A feasibility study was commissioned to identify if there were potential sites in the Kings Lynn boundary. The desktop study, which does not look at detail such as ground water conditions, found just one site within the Kings Lynn boundary, and that was the area detailed above as an extension area for the current cemetery, a full site study would have discounted this site as an option. The desktop study identified potential sites within a radius of up to 5 miles from the centre of Kings Lynn, however it is likely many of these would be discounted either due to planned developments, highway concerns or topographical issues. Further studies would be required including cost analysis and groundwater risk assessments.

C) Utilise existing facilities:

- Parish and churches in the district have some limited capacity.
 - This is usually reserved for parishioners or members of the church.
- Borough Council has capacity at Hunstanton for c.350 burials.
 - A large facility within the Borough but might not appeal to King's Lynn residents.

3 Policy Implications

None

4 Financial Implications

The closure of Gayton Road will have a negative impact on revenue income, along with continued revenue costs, whatever option is chosen, as the authority will remain responsible for ongoing maintenance. There will also be a significant capital, and additional revenue costs, should a new cemetery be considered.

5 Personnel Implications

There will be no change to our public open space staff who provide maintenance for these areas, however, should a new cemetery be considered this will have additional resourcing implications.

6 Environmental Considerations

Any new cemetery will have to meet any planning regulations, the Environment Agency permitting rules and the Council's own sustainability priorities.

7 Statutory Considerations

None

8 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

(Pre screening report template attached)

9 Risk Management Implications

Leaving Gayton Road operational indefinitely is not an option as the site will be at full capacity with 12 months, when considering existing commitments for pre-sold graves.

Utilising Hunstanton Cemetery could give 10 years worth of capacity, however, it is unlikely that many King's Lynn residents will want to be buried in Hunstanton due to distance.

10 Declarations of Interest / Dispensations Granted

None

11 Background Papers

(Definition : Unpublished work relied on to a material extent in preparing the report that disclose facts or matters on which the report or an important part of the report is based. A copy of all background papers must be supplied to Democratic Services with the report for publishing with the agenda)

A presentation provided by specialist, attached.

Stage 1 - Pre-Screening Equality Impact Assessment

For equalities profile information please visit [Norfolk Insight - Demographics and Statistics - Data Observatory](#)

Name of policy/service/function	Cemeteries				
Is this a new or existing policy/service/function? (<i>tick as appropriate</i>)	New		Existing	x	
Brief summary/description of the main aims of the policy/service/function being screened. Please state if this policy/service is rigidly constrained by statutory obligations, and identify relevant legislation.	To explore the options open to the Council with regard to dwindling burial spaces in King's Lynn and consideration of any future cemetery. Cemetery provision is not a statutory function.				
Who has been consulted as part of the development of the policy/service/function? – new only (<i>identify stakeholders consulted with</i>)	Portfolio Holder, previous Cabinet briefing in September 2024				
Question	Answer				
<p>1. Is there any reason to believe that the policy/service/function could have a specific impact on people from one or more of the following groups, for example, because they have particular needs, experiences, issues or priorities or in terms of ability to access the service?</p> <p>Please tick the relevant box for each group.</p> <p>NB. Equality neutral means no negative impact on any group.</p> <p><i>If potential adverse impacts are identified, then a full Equality Impact Assessment (Stage 2) will be required.</i></p> <p><i>*For more information on health inequalities please visit The King's Fund</i></p>		Positive	Negative	Neutral	Unsure
	Age			x	
	Disability			x	
	Sex			x	
	Gender Re-assignment			x	
	Marriage/civil partnership			x	
	Pregnancy & maternity			x	
	Race			x	
	Religion or belief		x		
	Sexual orientation			x	
	Armed forces community			x	
	Care leavers			x	
	Health inequalities*			x	
Other (eg low income, caring responsibilities)			x		
<p>Please provide a brief explanation of the answers above:</p> <p>As some belief groups have a preference to burial.</p>					

Question	Answer	Comments	
2. Is the proposed policy/service likely to affect relations between certain equality communities or to damage relations between the equality communities and the Council, for example because it is seen as favouring a particular community or denying opportunities to another?	No		
3. Could this policy/service be perceived as impacting on communities differently?	No		
4. Are any impacts identified above minor and if so, can these be eliminated or reduced by minor actions? If yes, please agree actions with a member of the Corporate Equalities Working Group and list agreed actions in the comments section	No	Actions:	
		Actions agreed by EWG member:	
<p>If 'yes' to questions 2 - 4 a full impact assessment will be required unless comments are provided to explain why this is not felt necessary:</p> <p>Decision agreed by EWG member:</p>			
5. Is the policy/service specifically designed to tackle evidence of disadvantage or potential discrimination?	No	Please provide brief summary:	
Assessment completed by: Name	Martin Chisholm		
Job title	Assistant Director Operations and Commercial		
Date completed	19/08/2025		
Reviewed by EWG member	Amy Pearce	Date	19/08/2025

✓ Please tick to confirm completed EIA Pre-screening Form has been shared with Corporate Policy (corporate.policy@west-norfolk.gov.uk)