

COMMITTEE REPORT

Subject:	<i>Revised Cemetery Regulations 2026 – Approval Following Public Consultation</i>
Committee:	<i>The Environment Committee</i>
Item Number:	<i>10</i>
Date:	<i>13 April 2026</i>
Author:	<i>Marc Read, Head of Environment & Deputy CEO</i>
Report status:	<i>Decision</i>
Confidential / Exempt:	<i>No</i>

1. Report Summary

- 1.1 This report seeks approval of the revised Cemetery Regulations for Salisbury City Council's cemeteries (The Avenue, London Road, Devizes Road), updated following extensive public consultation conducted January – February 2026.
- 1.2 The report outlines the consultation findings from the 47 respondents, key themes, and resulting recommended amendments to the draft August 2025 regulations.
- 1.3 The consultation demonstrates broad support for clarity, safety, and fairness within the regulations, but raised strong concerns about maintenance standards, spoil placement, inconsistent enforcement, communication, and the need for an appeals process.
- 1.4 The updated regulations incorporate these findings and strengthen the policy in several core areas, including maintenance responsibilities, spoil management, communication, flexibility around tributes, and introduction of designated cemetery operatives.
- 1.5 Approval is sought to formally adopt the updated 2026 Cemetery Regulations and implement associated operational improvements.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee:

- 2.1 Approves the revised 2026 Cemetery Regulations as set out in Appendix A.
- 2.2 Approves a phased, compassionate enforcement approach for non-compliant items, prioritising safety-related issues.

- 2.3 Approves the establishment of a formal Appeals & Review Procedure (Appendix B), addressing the recurring public request for clearer escalation routes.
- 2.4 Notes that improvements to maintenance standards will be achieved through revised contract management, tighter performance standards, and more frequent monitoring rather than additional staffing.
- 2.5 Approves the implementation of enhanced communication measures (signage, noticeboards, QR codes, online updates), reflecting strong public feedback.

3. Background

- 3.1 Draft regulations (August 2025) were produced to modernise and standardise cemetery management across Salisbury's three cemeteries.
- 3.2 The Environment Committee authorised a public consultation in late 2025.
- 3.3 The consultation ran January – February 2026 and received responses from grave owners, visitors, funeral directors, and the general public.
- 3.4 The consultation revealed widespread frustration with maintenance standards and inconsistent practice, alongside requests for clearer communication, better spoil handling, and a compassionate enforcement approach.

4. Proposal

- 4.1 The proposal is to adopt the revised 2026 Cemetery Regulations incorporating consultation-led amendments.
- 4.2 Key amendments address:
 - spoil handling practices
 - clarity around tributes and prohibited items
 - flexibility for cultural/religious practices
 - transparent and compassionate enforcement
 - improved communication
 - clearer maintenance expectations and contractor standards.
- 4.3 It is hoped that these amendments will increase transparency, reduce complaints, and improve public confidence while maintaining safety, dignity, and fairness.
- 4.4 Action is required now to ensure consistent application of the regulations and support operational efficiency.

5. Financial Position

- 5.1 No new staffing is proposed.
- 5.2 Improvements will be achieved via enhanced contractor monitoring and performance management within existing budgets.
- 5.3 Costs relate only to replacement signage, noticeboard updates, and QR code installation (low to moderate).

6. Legal and Governance Considerations

- 6.1 Regulations are issued under the Council's General Powers of Management as statutory burial authority.
- 6.2 Consultation requirements have been met.
- 6.3 Committee has delegated authority to approve the regulations.

7. Consultation and Engagement

7.1 Full public consultation undertaken Jan–Feb 2026.

7.2 Key themes:

- maintenance concerns (strongest theme)
- issues with spoil
- desire for clearer signage
- split views on tributes
- support for clear memorial rules
- request for appeals process.

7.3 No further consultation required.

8. Implementation and Next Steps

8.1 Subject to the Committee's decision, the next steps will be as follows:

- Publish regulations: Spring 2026
- Update signage & digital access: Summer 2026
- Implement phased enforcement: Autumn 2026
- Introduce appeals process: upon adoption
- Review contract performance standards: immediate
- 12-month review of regulations: 2027.

9. Implications

Implication Area	Impact	Comments / Mitigation
Financial	Low	The revised regulations introduce no new staffing costs. Improvements will be delivered through strengthened contractor performance management and existing budgets. Minor costs relate to updated signage, noticeboards, and QR code installation. (Maintenance concerns were the strongest theme raised by the public.)
Legal	Low	Regulations continue to be issued under the Council's statutory General Powers of Management as burial authority. No new legal duties. The consultation requirement has been met.
Risk	Medium	Clearer rules, improved spoil management, and phased enforcement reduce reputational and operational risks. Strong maintenance concerns indicate current risk levels. The introduction of an appeals process reduces challenge risk.
Personnel	None	No new staffing posts created. Improvements achieved through revised contract management and closer monitoring. Workload impacts minimal as processes are clarified rather than expanded.
Environmental Impact	Low	Clearer rules on tributes, spoil handling, and maintenance improve the appearance and environmental condition of

		cemeteries. Better waste control (e.g., removal of glass, plastics) enhances safety and biodiversity outcomes.
Equalities Impact Statement	Low	Clarified pathways, signage and communication improve accessibility for all users. Flexibility for cultural and religious practices addresses equity concerns raised in consultation (45–50% asked for more flexibility)
Community / Public Impact	High	Regulations respond directly to major public concerns: maintenance quality, spoil, inconsistent enforcement, communication gaps, clarity of rules. A compassionate enforcement model and a formal appeals process increase fairness and trust.
Procurement / Contractual	Medium	Contractor performance requirements will be strengthened, including reinstatement standards, grass cutting expectations, and spoil handling. Regular monitoring will be built into contract management. No procurement changes required immediately.
Property / Asset	Low	Cemeteries remain Council assets. Improved maintenance and clearer standards protect the long-term condition of memorial areas, paths, and landscaped spaces.
Data Protection	Low	Minimal personal data involved. Appeals process may require limited contact information for grave owners. Existing SCC data controls will apply.

10. Appendices / Background Papers

10.1 Appendix A – Revised Regulations (2026)

10.3 Appendix B – Consultation Summary

Salisbury City Council Cemetery Regulations

These Cemetery Regulations are in place to ensure a respectful, safe, and well-maintained environment across all Council-managed cemeteries: The Avenue, London Road, and Devizes Road in Salisbury, Wiltshire.

We kindly ask that all visitors and grave owners follow these guidelines out of consideration for others and the dignity of the space.

Terminology

- **"The Council"**: Salisbury City Council.
- **"The Cemetery"**: Refers to The Avenue, London Road, or Devizes Road Cemeteries.
- **"Cemetery Office"**: The administrative office overseeing all cemeteries.
- **"Memorial"**: Any headstone, kerb* (London Road & Devizes Road only*), monument, cross, or flat stone placed on a grave.

1. Visiting the Cemetery

- Open from sunrise to sunset (dusk).
- Vehicles are not allowed after dusk unless specifically authorised by the Council.
- Speed limit: 5mph.
- No bicycles, skateboards, or similar may be ridden in the cemetery.
- Children under 12 must be accompanied by a responsible adult.
- Dogs must be on a lead at all times and any fouling must be cleaned up.
- **Clear signage will be installed at all cemetery entrances to remind visitors that dogs must be kept on a lead at all times.**

Please remember: cemeteries are places of reflection, not recreation.

Contact:

Cemetery Office, Salisbury Crematorium
Barrington Road, Salisbury, SP1 3JB

 01722 333632

 crematorium@salisburycitycouncil.gov.uk

 www.salisburycitycouncil.gov.uk

2. Grave Spaces

Type of Grave	Size	Notes
Adult Grave	2.7m x 1.5m (8'9" x 5'0")	Up to 3 full burials, followed by up to 6 cremated remains interments.
Child's Grave	1.2m x 0.9m (4'0" x 3'0")	For children under 12.
Cremated Remains Plot	London & Devizes Road: 0.61m x 0.61m (24" x 24") The Avenue: 0.46m x 0.46m (18" x 18")	Small Headstone & Flat Stones Flat memorials only.

~~The Council may temporarily place soil (spoil) on adjacent graves when preparing a burial plot. Spoil will be removed immediately after the service, and the area will be restored.~~

Temporary spoil will not be placed on another grave unless this is unavoidable due to space restrictions. Where this is unavoidable, protective sheeting must be used, and all spoil must be removed the same day or as soon as practicable thereafter.

3. Funerals & Grave Maintenance

- After the burial, the grave will be backfilled and floral tributes placed neatly on top.
- Once the initial tributes have deteriorated or been removed, new tributes must be placed within the footprint of the headstone base only.
- Newly filled graves will be inspected periodically and reinstated promptly if settlement occurs.
- The Council will level and reseed the grave as necessary for up to one year after the burial.
- After that, the upkeep becomes the grave owner's responsibility.

Please note that it is not possible for grass cuttings to be cleared from memorials as part of routine maintenance.

4. Flowers, Wreaths & Other Items

We understand that leaving tributes is an important part of remembering loved ones. To ensure safety and respect for all visitors and maintenance staff:

✔ Allowed (within headstone base area):

- Fresh or artificial flowers (not in glass containers)
- Modest personal mementoes that are weather-safe and non-hazardous

✘ Not Allowed:

- Glass containers, oil burners, solar lights, spikes, wind chimes, flags. These items are not permitted for the following reasons:

Safety hazards: Glass can shatter during grass cutting or high winds, creating sharp fragments that put visitors, staff, and wildlife at risk. Spikes, metal stakes, and solar lights can also injure maintenance staff or damage machinery.

Maintenance obstruction: Items that protrude from the ground or move in the wind make grass cutting and strimming difficult and increase the likelihood of accidental damage.

Windblown debris: Wind chimes and flags can break free in bad weather and become litter or hazards.

Night-time hazards: Solar lights and oil burners can attract vandals or be dislodged and pose trip hazards.

Visual clutter: These items contribute to a cluttered appearance of the cemetery.

- Planting of any trees, shrubs, or flowers. These items are not permitted for the following reasons:

Roots cause damage: Plants can disturb adjacent graves, topple memorials, and interfere with mowing equipment.

Creates uneven risks: Some graves become overgrown or difficult to maintain, which creates unfairness between grave spaces.

Habitat for pests: Shrubs and dense planting attract insects, rodents, or burrowing animals.

Long-term upkeep unclear: Plants require ongoing care, but the Council cannot maintain thousands of individual plantings.

Obscures access: Overgrown plants can encroach onto neighbouring graves, causing distress to other families.

- Artificial turf, fencing, kerbs, or gravel. These items are not permitted for the following reasons:

Trip and machinery hazards: Kerbs, gravel, and artificial turf all interfere with grass-cutting machinery and can cause injuries or damage.

Drainage issues: Artificial turf and gravel can prevent natural soil drainage, causing sinking or pooling.

Creates inconsistency: Items that change the ground surface create an uneven environment that feels unfair to other grave owners.

Obstructs access: Fencing and kerbs make it harder for staff to safely access graves for maintenance or nearby burials.

Complicates reinstatement: Anything covering the soil makes future ground levelling much more difficult.

- Benches (these are not permitted anywhere in the cemetery without permission) These items are not permitted for the following reasons:

Obstruction risks: Privately installed benches often block paths or access to neighbouring graves.

Safety & stability: Benches not installed to a standard may tip, rot, or become unsafe, exposing the Council to risk.

Maintenance difficulties: Benches impede mowing and grounds work, slowing maintenance and increasing the risk of damage.

Visual inconsistency: Without a standard design, benches can create visual clutter and reduce the sense of dignity within the cemetery.

Fairness: Council-installed benches ensure equal access to seating, avoiding the perception that some graves receive preferential treatment.

~~Prohibited items will be removed without notice for safety reasons.~~

Unsafe items may be removed immediately. For other non-compliant items, the Council will use a phased and compassionate enforcement process, placing a notice on the grave and/or emailing the grave owner if details held, allowing 28 days for the owner to respond or remove the item.

All tributes are the responsibility of the grave owner(s). Please dispose of waste using the bins provided.

5. Memorials

Only those who have purchased the Exclusive Right of Burial may install a permanent memorial.

Temporary Markers

- A wooden cross may be placed temporarily until a permanent memorial is installed.
- The temporary marker must be removed once the permanent memorial is in place.

Memorial Installation Guidelines

- Only one memorial per grave is allowed.
- Memorials must not be installed until at least 6 months after burial (preferably through a winter season), to allow soil to settle. **This waiting period is required to allow the soil to settle properly and ensure the stability and long-term safety of the memorial.**
- All memorials must be installed by a qualified stonemason registered with the National Association of Memorial Masons (NAMM) and must comply with their Code of Practice.
- Work may only be carried out between 8:30am and 4:30pm, Monday to Friday (excluding public holidays), or until sunset, whichever comes sooner.
- No work is permitted during funerals or without Council consent.

Memorial Size Limits: Please note the Avenue Cemetery is a Lawn Cemetery

Area	Maximum Height	Maximum Width	Maximum Length
Full Grave	Headstone: 0.91m (3'0")	0.75m (2'6")	
	Kerb: London Road & Devizes Road <u>Only</u> *	0.75m (2'6")	2.04m (6'7")
Children's Section	0.7m (2'3")	0.61m (2'0")	0.75m (2'6")

Area	Maximum Height	Maximum Width	Maximum Length
Cremated Remains	London Road & Devizes Road <u>Only</u> *: Small Headstone*: 0.7m (2'3")	0.61m (2'0")	
	Flat Stones*:	0.61m (2'0")	0.61m (2'0")
	The Avenue (Flat Stone <u>Only</u>):	0.46m (1'6")	0.46m (1'6")

- Memorials must include a stainless steel ground anchor system in line with NAMM/BRAMM standards.
- The grave number must be engraved clearly on the reverse lower left corner of the memorial.

Maintenance & Safety

- Memorial upkeep is the responsibility of the grave owner not the Council.
- It is recommended that owners take out memorial insurance.
- The Council conducts routine safety inspections:
 - Unsafe memorials may be supported, laid flat, or removed.
 - If no contact can be made with the grave owner, the Council reserves the right to act.

The Council is not responsible for any damage or loss to memorials. Unauthorised memorials may be removed and costs recovered from the grave owner.

Where a memorial is found to be unsafe, the Council will attempt to contact the grave owner before significant remedial action is taken, except in cases of urgent danger.

6. Council Rights

Salisbury City Council reserves the right to:

- Update or revise any regulation at any time
- Address situations not specifically covered in this document
- Remove or manage any item, memorial, or structure deemed unsafe, inappropriate, or obstructive
- Temporarily remove fixed memorials to facilitate nearby burials

These regulations are issued under the Council's General Powers of Management as the statutory burial authority.

7. Cultural & Religious Practices

The Council will consider requests for cultural or religious practices on a case-by-case basis, provided they do not create safety risks, obstruct access, or impact maintenance.

8. Communication & Signage

- New signage will be installed where rules are commonly misunderstood (e.g., dogs on leads, cycling restrictions).
- Noticeboards will be updated more frequently with burial information, maps, and regulations.
- QR codes will be placed at entrances linking to the regulations and updates.
- Email update lists will be created for grave owners who wish to receive changes or announcements.

8. Enforcement Procedure

Enforcement will be proportionate, transparent, and phased.

- Immediate removal for genuinely unsafe items only.
- For all other issues, a 28-day notice will be issued.
- Owners may request more time in compassionate circumstances.
- Appeals are available via the new Appeals & Review Procedure.

9. Appeals & Review Process

- Grave owners may appeal decisions relating to item removals, memorial safety actions, or interpretation of the regulations.
- The Council will respond within 20 working days.
- A second-stage review may be undertaken by a senior manager not involved in the initial decision.
- Compassionate circumstances will be considered.

10. Accessibility & Site Improvements

- Paths will be maintained to ensure safe access where reasonably possible.
- Benches may only be installed by the Council in approved locations.

Cemetery Regulations Public Survey - Summary Report (Jan - Feb 2026)

Overview

We had 47 responses to the consultation. Those that responded to the survey shows broad support for the aims of the new regulations with clarity, safety and fairness. While also highlighting strong concerns about maintenance standards, inconsistent enforcement, and communication. Views on tributes and memorial items are highly polarised.

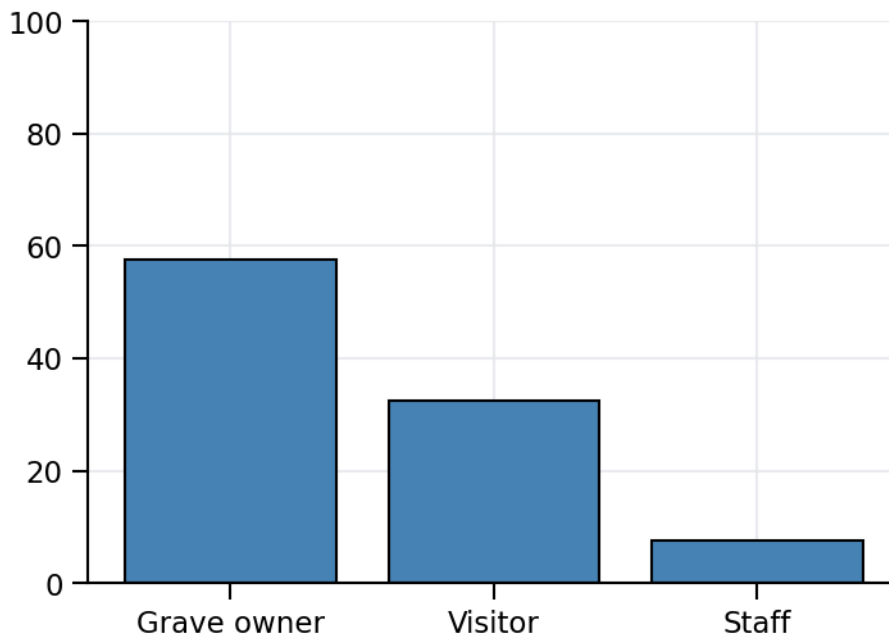
A major recurring theme is dissatisfaction with the upkeep of the sites.

Quantitative Results (Questions in Order)

Q1 – Which of the following best describes you?

- Grave owner / family member: ~55 - 60%
- Member of the public / visitor: ~30 - 35%
- Council staff: ~5 - 10%

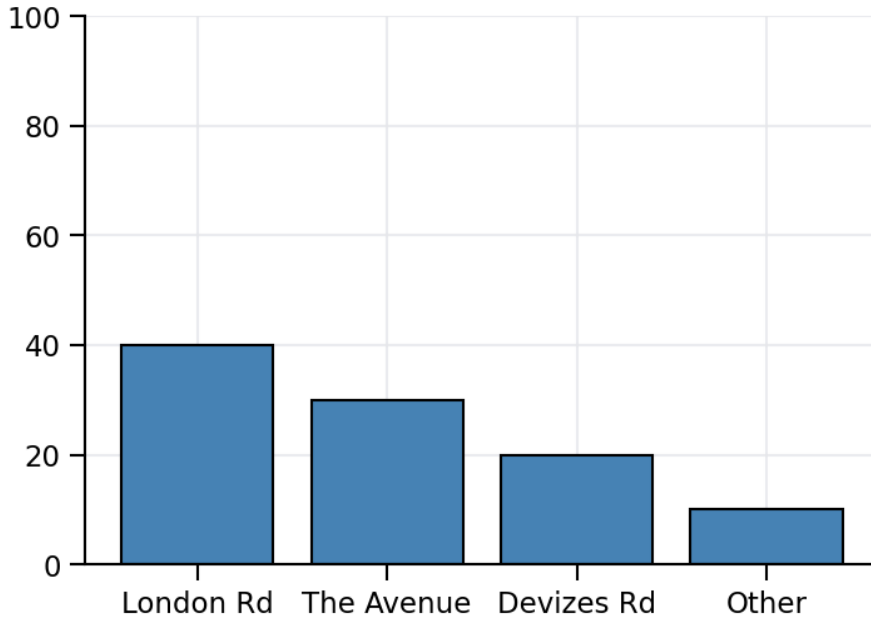
Q1



Q2 – Which cemetery do you mainly visit or work in?

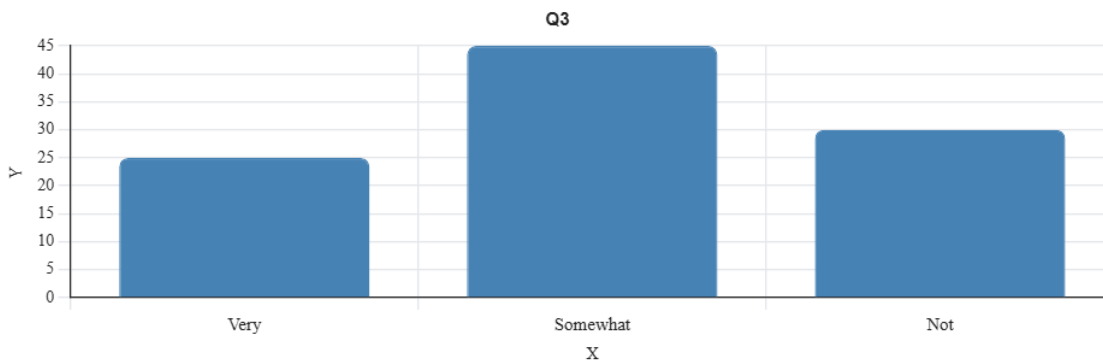
- London Road: ~40%
- The Avenue: ~30%
- Devizes Road: ~20%
- More than one / None: remainder

Q2



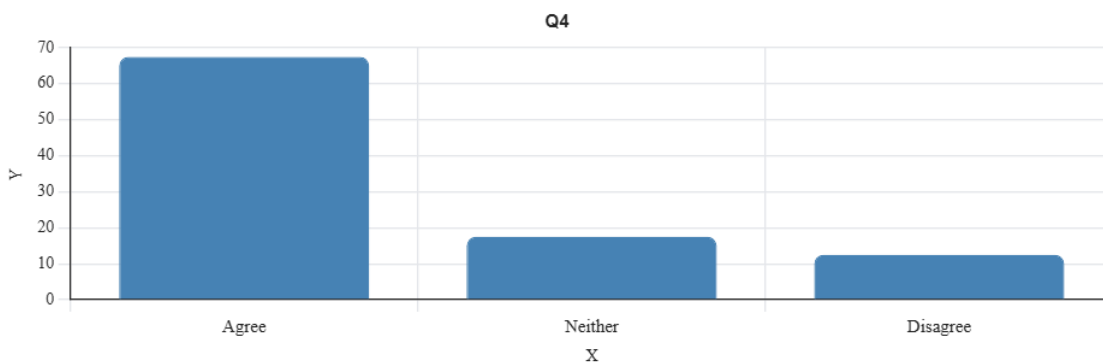
Q3 – How familiar are you with the current cemetery regulations?

- Very familiar: ~25%
- Somewhat familiar: ~45%
- Not familiar: ~30%



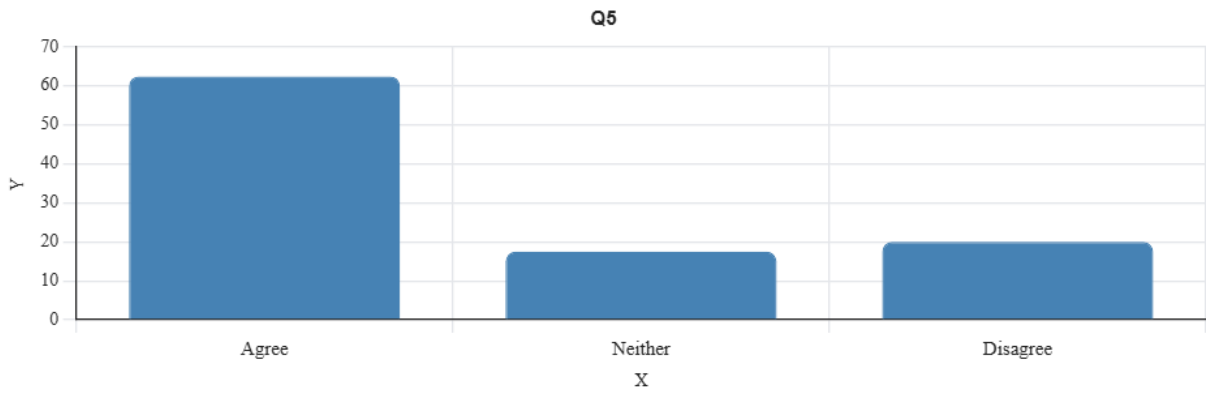
Q4 – The draft regulations clearly explain their purpose and scope

- Agree/Strongly agree: ~65 - 70%
- Neither: ~15 - 20%
- Disagree: ~10 - 15%



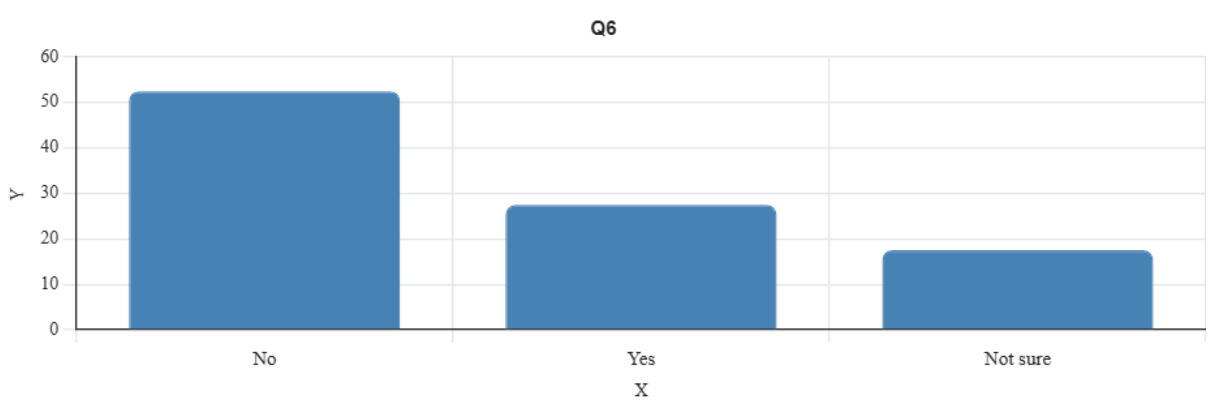
Q5 – Overall, do the regulations strike a fair balance between respect, safety, and accessibility?

- Agree/Strongly agree: ~60 - 65%
- Neither: ~15 - 20%
- Disagree: ~20%



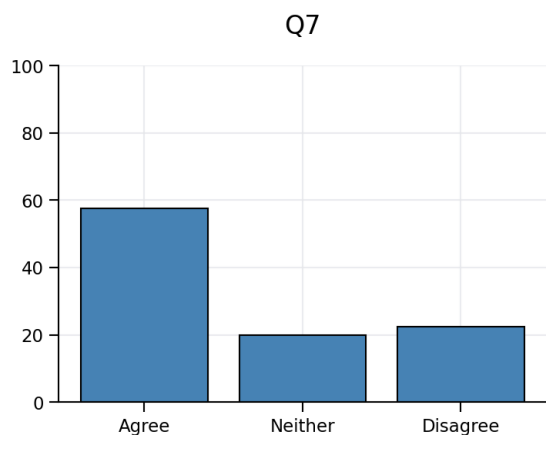
Q6 – Are any sections unclear or confusing?

- No: ~50 - 55%
- Yes: ~25 - 30%
- Not sure: ~15 - 20%



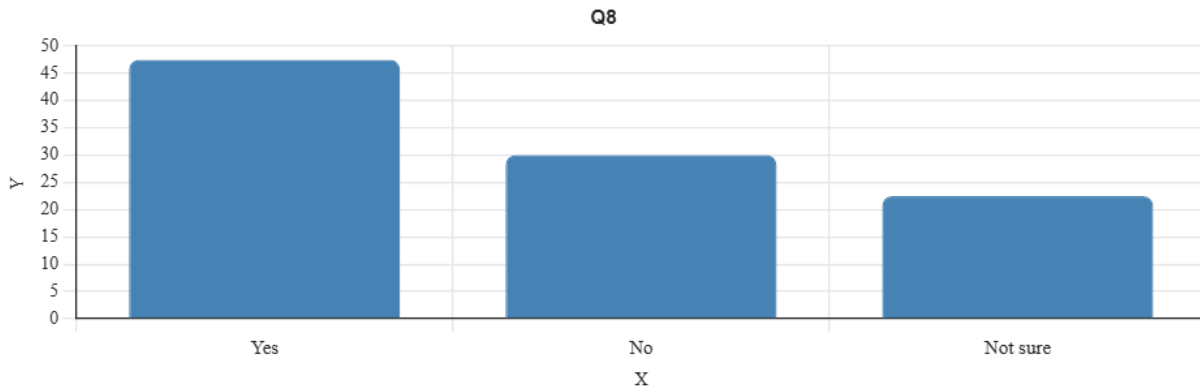
Q7 – Burial space sizes and limits are appropriate and clearly explained

- Agree: ~55 - 60%
- Neither: ~20%
- Disagree: ~20 - 25%



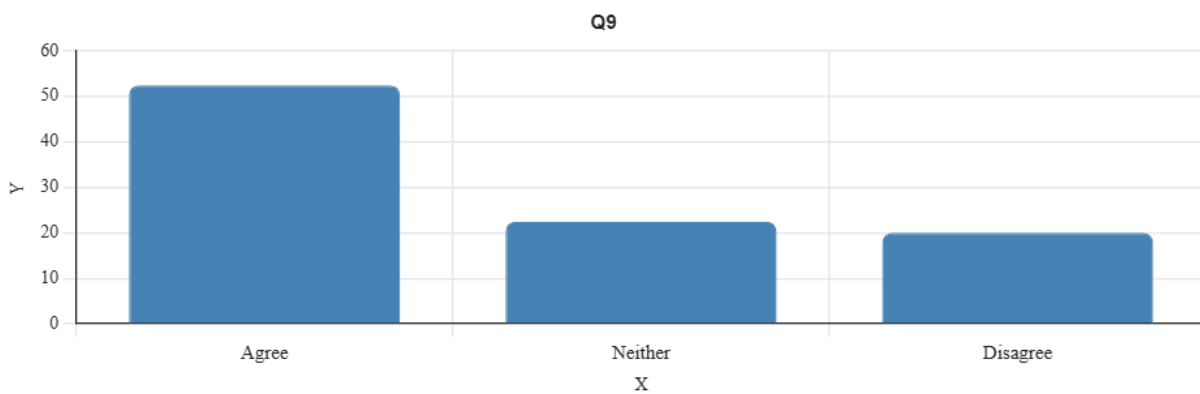
Q8 – Should the regulations include more flexibility for cultural or religious practices?

- Yes: ~45 - 50%
- No: ~30%
- Not sure: ~20 - 25%



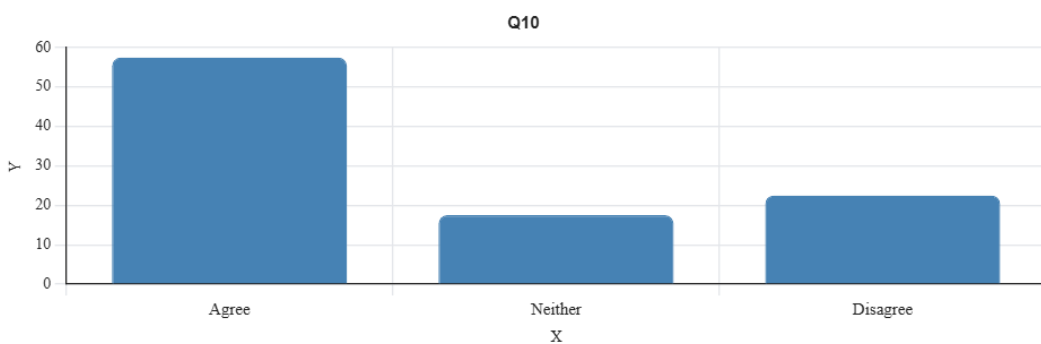
Q9 – Information about temporary soil (“spoil”) is clear and acceptable

- Agree: ~50 - 55%
- Neither: ~20 - 25%
- Disagree: ~20%



Q10 – The list of allowed and prohibited items is reasonable

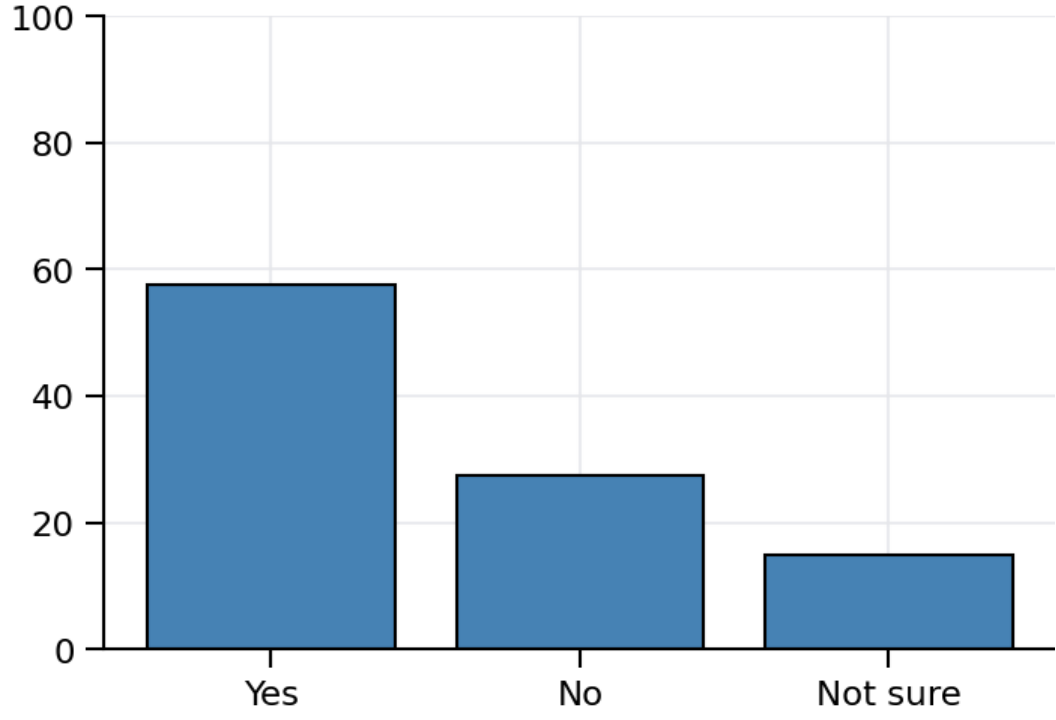
- Agree: ~55 - 60%
- Neither: ~15 - 20%
- Disagree: ~20 - 25%



Q11 – Should the Council provide clearer explanations for why certain items are not allowed?

- Yes: ~55 - 60%
- No: ~25 - 30%
- Not sure: ~15%

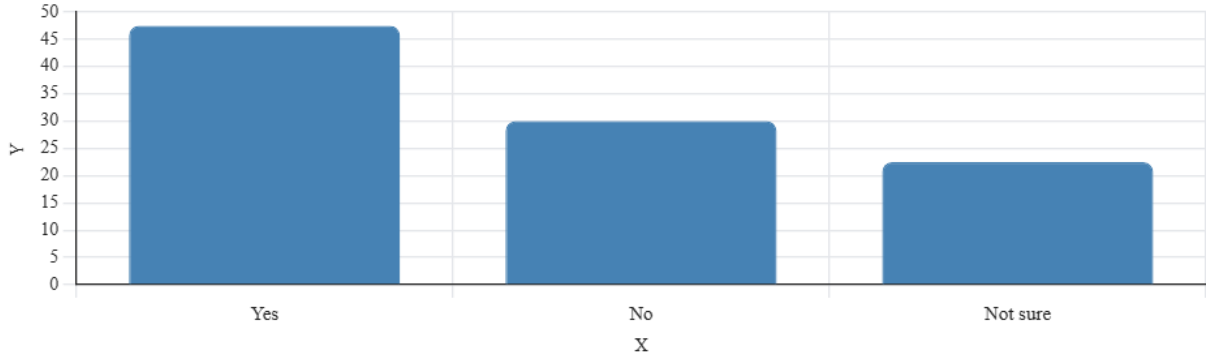
Q11



Q12 – Support for designated memorial/tribute areas for non-compliant items

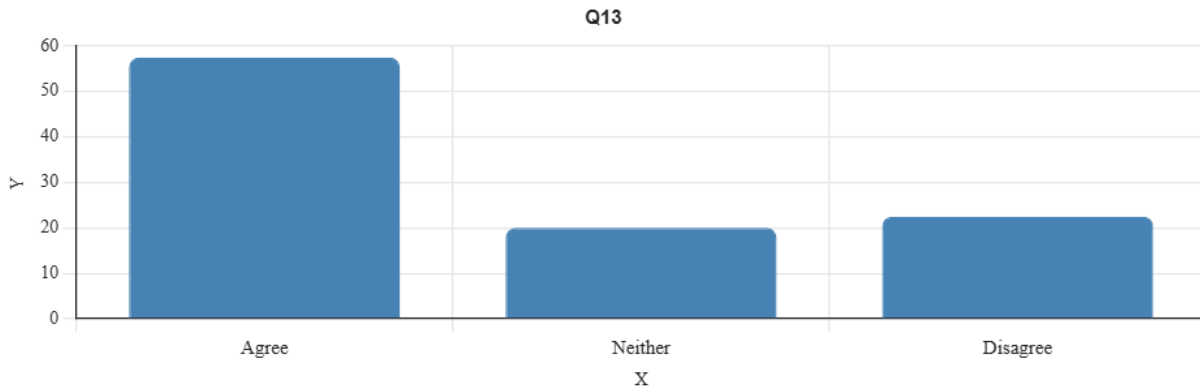
- Yes: ~45 - 50%
- No: ~30%
- Not sure: ~20-25%

Q12



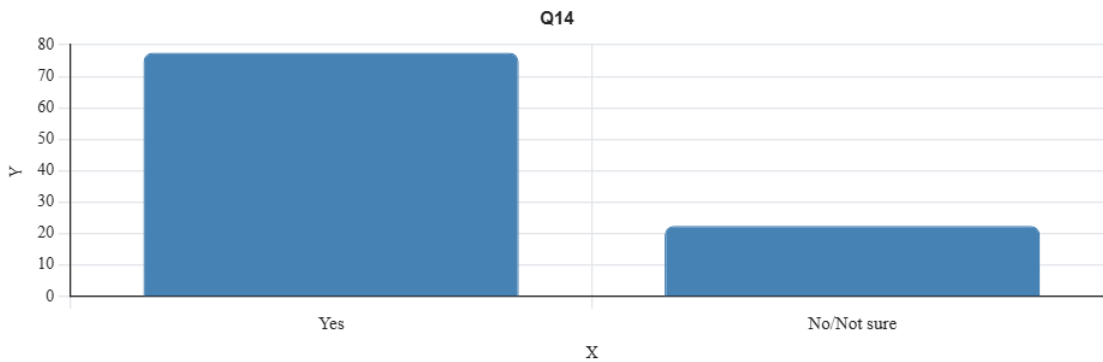
Q13 – Memorial size limits are reasonable

- Agree: ~55 - 60%
- Neither: ~20%
- Disagree: ~20 - 25%



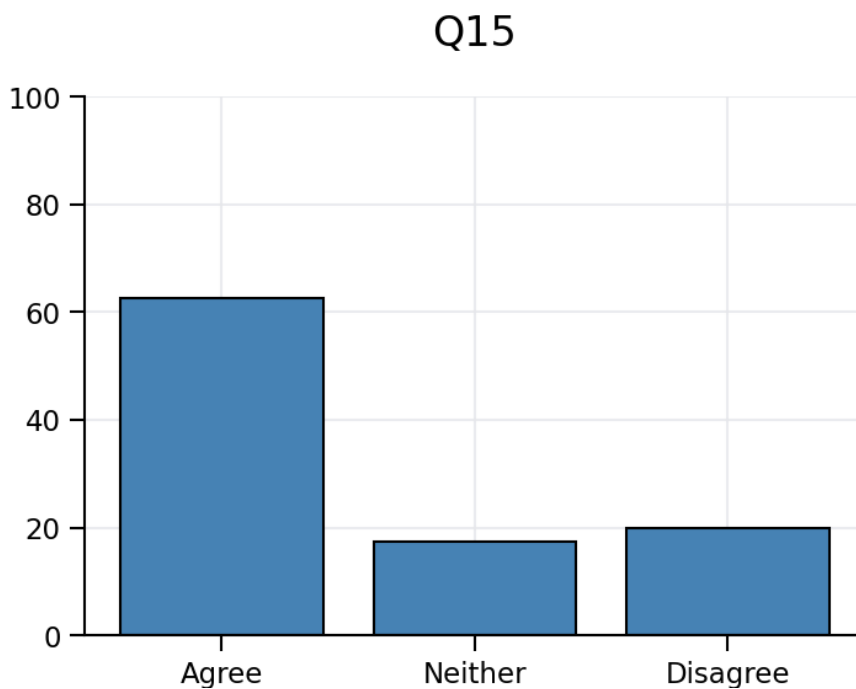
Q14 – Understanding of the 6-month wait before installing a permanent memorial

- Yes: **~75 - 80%**
- No / Not sure: **~20 - 25%**



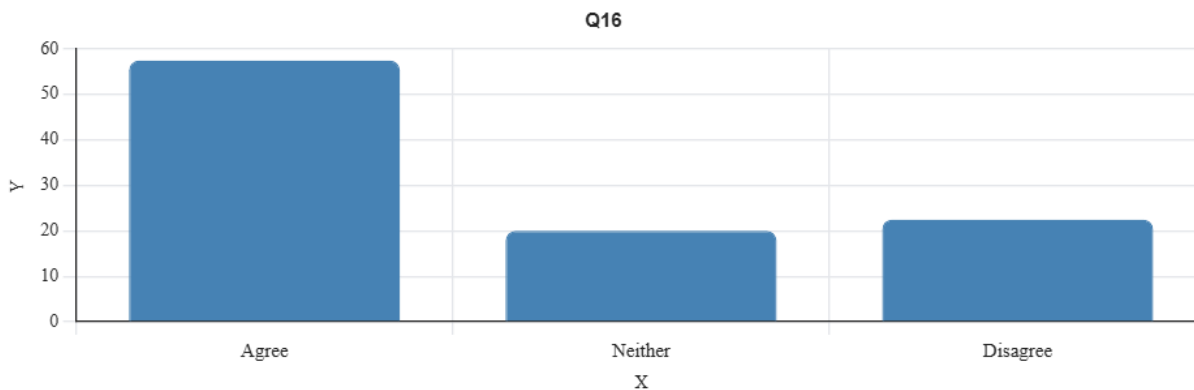
Q15 – Rules on memorial installation, safety, and maintenance are clear and fair

- Agree: **~60 - 65%**
- Neither: **~15 - 20%**
- Disagree: **~20%**



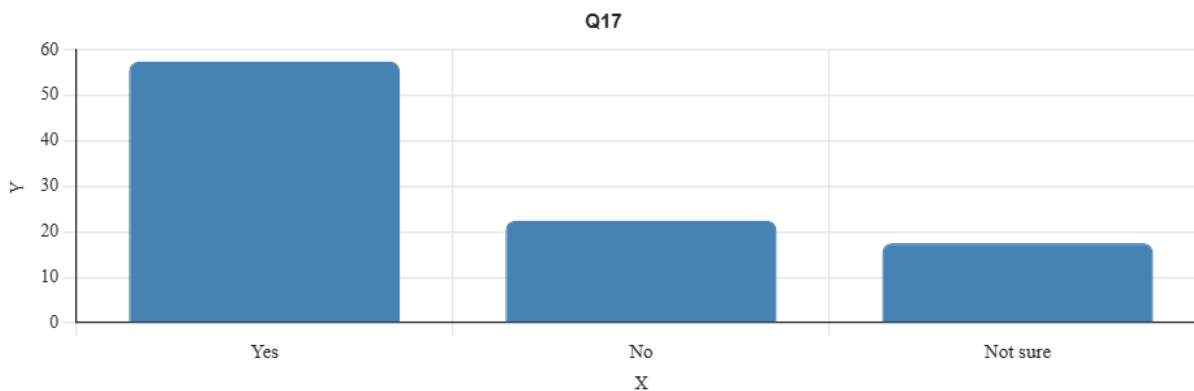
Q16 – Council’s rights to update regulations and remove unsafe/inappropriate items are proportionate

- Agree: ~55 - 60%
- Neither: ~20%
- Disagree: ~20 - 25%



Q17 – Desire for a clearer appeals/complaints process

- Yes: ~55 - 60%
- No: ~20-25%
- Not sure: ~15 - 20%



Q18 – Preferred method for receiving updates

Most common:

- Email/mailling list
- Council website
- Cemetery noticeboards

Others:

- Funeral directors
- Local press
- QR codes at entrances

Q19 – Suggestions for improving communication/enforcement

Themes:

- Better signage (especially dogs on leads)
- Clearer explanations of rules
- More consistent enforcement
- Direct contact with grave owners before action

Q20 – Additional comments

Themes:

- Strong concerns about maintenance quality
- Distress over spoil placement and poor reinstatement
- Divided views on tributes (freedom vs tidiness)
- Requests for more benches, better paths, and improved respect from contractors

General Feedback Themes

1. Grounds maintenance and contractor performance (strongest theme)

Many respondents expressed distress about:

- Grass cuttings left on graves
- Poor reinstatement after burials
- Sinking graves and displaced markers
- Spoil placed on or near other graves
- Poor path/road conditions
- Lack of respect from contractors

Examples:

- “Your current contractor lacks respect!!”
- “Recent graves are a health and safety risk... sinkage is astounding.”
- “The cemetery isn’t respected very well by the staff who upkeep it.”

2. Inconsistent enforcement of existing rules

- Many prohibited items are already present and not addressed.
- Sudden enforcement could cause distress.

3. Strongly divided views on tributes

Two opposing views:

- **Freedom to personalise graves**
- **Desire for tidiness and uniformity**

4. Communication and signage

- Need for clearer signage (especially dogs on leads)

- Better noticeboards
- Email lists and QR codes requested

5. Appeals and fairness

- Many want a transparent, compassionate appeals process
- Some feel rules are “too draconian”
- Others want firm enforcement

Recommendations

1. Introduce three designated cemetery/crematorium grounds operatives

This directly addresses the strongest negative theme.

Benefits:

- Consistent, respectful maintenance
- Better reinstatement after burials
- On-site presence for public reassurance
- Improved monitoring and enforcement
- Reduced reliance on external contractors
- Increased public confidence

2. Phase in enforcement gradually

- Prioritise safety risks
- Use polite notices with timeframes
- Allow discretion for sensitive cases
- Provide clear explanations for each rule

3. Establish a clear appeals/complaints process

- Simple, published procedure
- Option for independent review
- Written explanations for decisions

4. Improve communication and signage

- Email lists for updates
- Clearer noticeboards
- QR codes linking to regulations
- Stronger signage for dogs, cycling, spoil, tributes

5. Review specific policy areas

- Strengthen spoil management rules
- If tribute areas are introduced, ensure they are optional and well-maintained