

# **Cemeteries Strategy for the London Borough of Brent**

## **Table of Contents**

Executive Summary

Section 1: Introduction

Section 2: Current Provision

Section 3: Demand for Burial Space

Section 4: Income and Expenditure

Section 5: Key Issues and Areas for Development

Section 6: Vision and Objectives

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1: Legal Background and Statutory Powers

Appendix 2: Action Plan

Appendix 3: Consultation Report

## Executive Summary

Brent Council is a burial authority by virtue of the Local Government Act 1972 and is legally obliged to maintain its cemeteries 'in good order and repair'<sup>1</sup>. It is not legally obliged to provide new burial space but the sale of space generates income that funds the maintenance of cemeteries and provides a service to residents. If the council does not continue to provide new burial space to meet demand, maintenance costs will still have to be met, creating a budget shortfall.

The council owns and manages three cemeteries within the borough; Alperton, Paddington Old and Willesden New. It also jointly owns Carpenders Park Cemetery, located outside the borough within the area of Three Rivers District Council near Watford. Harrow Council owns approximately 25% of the burial land at Carpenders Park with Brent managing the whole cemetery as part of a joint delivery arrangement. The council is currently exploring options for the grounds maintenance and management of its cemeteries as part of its Managing the Public Realm project.

The three cemeteries in Brent are traditionally laid out with memorial stones while Carpenders Park is a lawn cemetery with graves grassed over apart from horizontal memorial plaques. New land for graves is available at Carpenders Park but not at any of the cemeteries located in the borough. These cemeteries can provide 'new' graves by using space within or above existing graves. This applies to both purchased and common graves and can be achieved without the disturbance of old burials. A number of planning designations apply to Paddington Cemetery as it includes a listed building, is on the register of historic parks and gardens and is a site of importance for Nature Conservation.

There is no crematorium within Brent, but there is a wide choice of crematoria available within reasonable travelling distance including at Golders Green, Hendon, Islington, Kensal Green, Mortlake, Ruislip and St Marylebone. Kensal Green Cemetery is a privately owned facility located just south of the borough and offers a choice of burial or cremation.

Approximately 1,500 Brent residents die each year and the majority of funerals are cremations which take place outside the borough. However a significant number of funerals are burials in Brent cemeteries. Demand for local burial space is relatively high with 25% of Brent residents who died in 2011 being buried in a Brent cemetery. Within Greater London burials represent an average of only 14% of all funerals.

Without a change in practice and at current levels of demand Brent will run out of burial space at some point between 2030 and 2041. The key challenge facing the council is how to manage its cemetery service in a sustainable manner to continue to provide local burial space to meet demand. A number of options are available to create new burial space, including at cemeteries that no longer have any virgin ground. Practices which could be adopted are outlined in the strategy along with options for improving service management and administration.

The four cemeteries represent 43 hectares of green space and play an important recreational role while contributing to increasing biodiversity.

---

<sup>1</sup> The Local Authorities' Cemeteries Order 1977 art.4(1)

Brent compares well with other London authorities in terms of expenditure, falling halfway in the hierarchy of expenditure and above average in the hierarchy of income. This is partly a reflection of a higher than average demand for burial and the availability of grave space through reclamation. Cemetery fees for residents and non residents are average for London. Future income from the sale of exclusive rights of burial in reclaimed grave space could play an important part in the provision of a cost effective service.

This strategy provides clear direction to enable the council to efficiently focus its resources to meet the needs of bereaved people and the wider community in an inclusive and cost-effective manner. The scope of the strategy primarily concerns the four cemeteries owned and managed by Brent Council. A two stage consultation process was undertaken to develop the strategy and a consultation report forms Appendix 3 of the strategy.

The vision of the strategy is **to meet the needs of bereaved people and the wider community within the borough by:**

- **Conducting the burial and commemoration of the dead of the diverse community in a secure, sustainable and well-maintained environment.**
- **Offering burial options at a choice of four cemeteries.**
- **Enabling local communities to access cemeteries as valuable historic green spaces which promote wellbeing, biodiversity, learning and recreation.**

This vision will be achieved through the delivery of three key objectives.

**1. Meet current and future needs in respect of local burial options, while providing accessible green space and encouraging biodiversity and sustainable environmental practices.**

- Providing burial vaults and/or mounding above old graves in Willesden and Paddington cemeteries.
- Reclaiming old graves to ensure a constant and reliable source of available graves at Alperton and Willesden cemeteries for a rolling period of five and ten years ahead.
- Reusing memorials from graves where the exclusive rights of burial have been reclaimed.
- Reviewing Emergency Planning arrangements for an unknown number of excess deaths, e.g. in a flu pandemic, including consultation with crematoria in neighbouring boroughs.
- Producing individual Management Plans for each cemetery to bring together relevant work plans within a comprehensive framework for the development of burial space, grounds maintenance, asset management, memorial management, heritage and tree management and increasing biodiversity.

**2. Deliver a value for money cemeteries service that is at least self-financing.**

- Introducing an online payment mechanism.
- Fully computerising cemetery records and administration to improve record management and make records publically available via the web site 'Deceased Online', providing better access to statutory records and data.
- Developing and maintaining good communication links with Funeral Directors, Officiants and Memorial Masons through holding regular funeral liaison meetings, producing update bulletins and clarifying contact arrangements for funerals.

**3. Provide a supportive and inclusive service that fully reflects the religious, ethnic and cultural diversity of the borough and supports the wellbeing of bereaved people.**

- Providing a range of burial options in each of the cemeteries that meet the needs of the diverse community
- Providing flexibility in the numbers and timings of funerals available, so ensuring that all religions and secular lifestyles can receive appropriate services at relevant times where practicable.
- Working with the Muslim community on future burial provision at Carpenders Park
- Establishing a Friends Group for each cemetery

A full action plan including target dates and lead officers is provided in Appendix 2

## Section 1: Introduction

Cemetery development in the UK took place principally from the 1820s onwards and cemeteries have operated in Brent for over a hundred and fifty years. As with all London boroughs, Brent was created after amalgamations of old parishes and boroughs and inherited a mixed portfolio of cemeteries that have developed in a patchwork fashion, reflecting growth and patterns of settlement.

Demand for burials declined nationally during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century as cremation grew in popularity. However, burial is still the funeral choice for a large number of residents and this will continue to be the case for the foreseeable future. The challenges facing the council in providing burial space and maintaining large areas of cemetery land are great, particularly in the current financial climate.

Brent Council is a burial authority under the Local Government Act 1972 and is legally obliged to maintain its cemeteries 'in good order and repair'<sup>2</sup>, but is not legally obliged to provide new burial space. However, the sale of new graves generates valuable income that funds the maintenance of the cemeteries. In order to meet the costs of maintaining the cemeteries new burial space needs to be provided that will meet local demand and generate income. Approximately 1,500 Brent residents die each year and 25% of funerals of Brent residents are burials that take place in Brent cemeteries.

Brent Council owns and manages three cemeteries located in the borough; Alperton, Paddington Old and Willesden New. It also jointly owns Carpenders Park Cemetery, located outside of the borough near Watford. Harrow Council owns approximately 25% of the burial land at Carpenders Park with Brent managing the whole cemetery as part of a joint delivery arrangement. The council also maintains Wembley Old Burial Ground at St. John's Church and Willesden Old Burial Ground at St. Mary's Church, along with the adjoining churchyards. There are currently no plans to build new cemeteries. Kensal Green Cemetery, one of London's most famous cemeteries, is privately owned and provides burials and cremations just south of the Brent boundary.

There is no crematorium in the borough and, given the practicalities of providing a borough owned facility in Brent; e.g. locating an appropriate site, identifying funding and obtaining planning permission; it appears unlikely that this position will change in the foreseeable future. For this reason crematorium provision is not considered as part of the strategy but the council will periodically review the position and explore options where relevant. Several crematoria are located close to the borough including at Kensal Green, Golders Green, Hendon, Islington, Mortlake, Ruislip and St. Marylebone. Cremated remains may be buried in all Brent cemeteries.

Without a change in practice Brent's cemeteries will run out of burial space at some point between 2030 and 2041, depending on how much demand transfers to Carpenders Park when space at Alperton and Willesden is exhausted. The key challenge facing the council is how to manage its cemetery service in a sustainable manner to provide local burial space to meet current and future demand. This

---

<sup>2</sup> The Local Authorities' Cemeteries Order 1977 art.4(1)

strategy aims to provide clear direction to enable the council to efficiently focus its resources to meet the needs of bereaved people and the wider community in an inclusive and cost-effective manner. The scope of the strategy concerns the four council owned and managed cemeteries.

## **Glossary of key terms used throughout the strategy**

### **Purchased grave (private)**

A purchased grave, also known as a **private** grave, is one in which someone has purchased the exclusive right of burial for a fixed period, currently fifty years with possible renewal for a further fifty years in Brent's case, and may decide who is buried in the grave for the duration of that period and erect memorials. This does not constitute ownership of the land itself.

### **Unpurchased grave (common)**

An unpurchased grave, also known as a **public** or **common** grave, is where the right of burial has not been bought. The council has control of the grave and can decide who is buried in it. Unpurchased graves first used prior to 1985 may have the rights purchased subsequently. No memorial rights exist so no memorial can be erected.

### **New Grave**

A new grave is one that is either dug in virgin land or created on land that has previously been used by

- **Mounding** up soil above old graves to create sufficient depth for new burials to take place without disturbing old burials
- Installing concrete **burial chambers** above old graves to create sufficient depth for new burials to take place without disturbing old burials

**Virgin Land** is land that has not previously been used for burial at all.

### **Reclaimed Grave**

In the past some graves were purchased to accommodate two or more burials but were subsequently not used to capacity. In these circumstances it is possible to reclaim **the exclusive rights of burial** and sell the remaining space. This process does not disturb any human remains already buried within the grave but does require that 75 years have elapsed since the rights were originally sold in perpetuity and that no renewal of rights has taken place.

### **Exclusive Rights of Burial**

Purchasing the exclusive rights of burial enables the buyer to decide who may be buried in the grave for a fixed number of years, renewable upon expiry. Graves with exclusive rights of burial may be **reopened** to accommodate further burials. No further burials or addition of memorials can be made without their written consent. It

does not grant them ownership of the land itself which is retained by the local authority. The Local Authorities' Cemeteries Order 1974 limited the periods for which rights may be granted to a maximum of 100 years with effect from that date onwards. Local authorities may extinguish exclusive rights after 100 years have elapsed since purchase.

### **Reopened Grave**

If the exclusive right of burial is owned in a purchased grave and there is sufficient space remaining, the grave may be reopened for the burial of other family members.

### **Reuse of Graves**

Unlike the reclaiming of graves the practice of reusing graves is not common. Two London boroughs have exhumed remains from old burials in unpurchased (common) graves and reburied them communally prior to reusing the grave space for new burials. The London Local Authorities Act also gives councils the powers to lift and deepen purchased graves to reuse burial space.

### **Lift and Deepen**

The "lift and deepen" system of grave reuse involves temporarily disturbing existing burials to provide depth for new burials. It can only be used where there has been no burial for 75 years and after exclusive rights of burial have been extinguished.

### **Lawn cemetery**

A lawn cemetery is one where horizontal memorial plaques are permitted with the remainder of the grave being grassed over. The plaques are currently restricted to solid bronze or bronze resin. Temporary grave markers and crosses are allowed for a 12-15 month period and removed when the grave is set to lawn

### **Woodland Burials**

Woodland burial offers a natural form of burial and provides environmental benefits. Graves are marked by the planting of a memorial tree and only bio-degradable coffins can be used.

### **Cremated Remains (ashes)**

Cremated remains are the portion of a body remaining after cremation and must be placed in a container prior to burial.

### **Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC)**

All three cemeteries located in Brent are designated as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs.) This is a non-statutory designation, which seeks to protect areas of high wildlife value at a local level.

## Section 2: Current Provision

### Cemeteries in Brent

Name and Location	Key Details
<b>Alperton Cemetery</b>  Clifford Road Alperton Wembley HA0 1AF	<p>Alperton Cemetery opened in 1917 and is a 4 hectare site where over 16,000 burials have taken place to date. It features a brick chapel with a slate roof and stained glass windows which can be used for funeral services.</p> <p>The cemetery includes a war grave section maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. There is also a designated baby section.</p> <p>There is no virgin land remaining for new graves at Alperton but burial space is available in graves where exclusive rights of burial have been reclaimed.</p>
<b>Carpenders Park Cemetery</b>  Oxhey Lane Watford WD19 5RL	<p>Carpenders Park opened in 1954. It is an 18 hectare site where over 10,000 burials have taken place to date. It is a lawn cemetery with no upright memorials; only plaques set into the ground. The Hartsbourne stream is a key wildlife feature of the cemetery.</p> <p>It has a designated Muslim burial area with separate Sunni and Shi'a sections. There are also designated Church of England, Roman Catholic and baby sections and an area for woodland burials. A section of the cemetery is owned by Harrow Council but is managed by Brent Council.</p> <p>Virgin land is available for new graves.</p>
<b>Paddington Old Cemetery</b>  Willesden Lane Kilburn London NW6 7SD	<p>Paddington Old opened in 1855 and was designed by Thomas Little. It is a 10 hectare site where over 172,000 burials have taken place to date.</p> <p>A number of planning designations apply to the cemetery which is listed in the National Register of Parks and Gardens and English Heritage Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest.</p> <p>The design of the two chapels and bell tower is in a 13<sup>th</sup> century Gothic style with the chapels linked by arches. The chapels are not currently in use.</p> <p>There is currently no space available for new burials at Paddington.</p>

<b>Willesden New</b> Franklyn Road Willesden London NW10 9TE	<p>Willesden New Cemetery was opened in 1891 and is an 11 hectare site where over 88,000 burials have taken place to date.</p> <p>The cemetery includes the Willesden Civilian war memorial, a tribute to local civilians who died in the second world war.</p> <p>There is no virgin land remaining for new graves at Willesden but burial space is available in graves where exclusive rights of burial have been reclaimed.</p>
--	--

Alpertown, Paddington Old and Willesden New are located in the borough while Carpenders Park Lawn Cemetery is outside the borough near Watford. The four cemeteries represent a total of 43 hectares of green open space with a further 3 to 4 hectares available for future use at Carpenders Park.

Virgin land for graves is available at the lawn cemetery at Carpenders Park but not at the cemeteries located in Brent, apart from very small pockets of space which can be made available through reconfiguring footpaths. These three cemeteries can only provide new graves by using space within or above existing graves. This applies whether the existing graves are purchased (private) or unpurchased (common) and can be achieved without the disturbance of old burials.

The two old burial grounds at St. Mary's Church, Willesden and St. John's Church, Wembley have not been used for burials since 1995 and 2002 respectively. The council maintains both disused burial grounds and the adjoining churchyards.

## Provision of Graves

There are essentially two types of grave:

- Purchased (private) grave, in which someone has purchased the exclusive right of burial for a fixed period and may decide who is buried in the grave. This does not constitute ownership of the land itself. Purchased graves account for an estimated 85% of graves in Brent cemeteries and are often reopened to allow for the burial of another family member.
- Unpurchased (common) grave, in which no one has purchased any exclusive rights and where the council may decide who is buried in the grave.

In the past, exclusive rights of burial were sold 'in perpetuity', i.e. forever, but legislation no longer permits this. Brent Council currently sells exclusive rights for a 50 year period, which may be renewed for up to a further 50 years. The exclusive rights of burial can be reclaimed by the council upon the eventual expiry of the rights.

The council also reclaims the rights of burial in grave spaces where 75 years have elapsed since the rights were originally sold "in perpetuity" and have not been renewed by family members. However, in all instances reclaimed space cannot be used for new burials until 75 years has elapsed since the last burial in the grave. There may also be reserved graves where exclusive rights have been bought and

have expired without the grave having been used. The council may extinguish these rights and use the space for new burials.

In some cases graves are dug for only one burial, e.g. at Carpenders Park to meet the needs of the Muslim community. Otherwise, graves are dug sufficiently deep to allow the burial of more than one person, usually family members. Some cemetery areas are consecrated by the Church of England while unconsecrated areas are allocated for Roman Catholic (consecration forms part of the funeral service) and Muslim burials. All others areas are available for use by all parts of the community.

## **Burial Space**

The 2001 Report on Cemeteries by the Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs Committee of the House of Commons states:

*“Although the desire to bury the dead is now, and has been for some time, a minority choice, we are firmly of the opinion that this preference should be respected. Local authorities will, we suggest, wish to ensure the widest possible access to the option of burial. This means that ways have to be found to ensure that local, accessible burial space is provided. Local authorities should address this need in their Development Plans”*

This need is addressed in Brent’s Local Development Framework as follows

*“Inappropriate development, which is considered to be any development harmful to the use or purpose as open space, will be opposed unless very special circumstances apply and where benefits far outweigh its loss. Development which is ancillary to the main use of the site as open space, or is an essential facility for outdoor sport and recreation, cemeteries, or other uses, which preserve open space is generally considered appropriate.”*

There is no virgin land for burials except at Carpenders Park. At the other cemeteries, the council uses its statutory powers to extinguish in perpetuity exclusive rights and reclaim the space remaining in old graves to provide burial options for a new generation of people. Where the exclusive right of burial is owned in a grave and there is sufficient space remaining, the grave may be reopened for the burial of other family members.

The London Local Authorities Act 2007 provided further statutory powers which enable authorities to ‘lift and deepen’ remains contained within reclaimed graves to make space for new burials. This involves the temporary disturbance of remains. These powers are yet to be exercised by any London boroughs but this is likely to change, particularly where space is an issue. Guidance is due to be issued by the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management.

## **Facilities at Cemeteries**

Funeral services may be held at the graveside at all four cemeteries and at the chapel in Alperton Cemetery. Services could be held in the chapel at Paddington Old

Cemetery if significant remedial work was undertaken. Car parking facilities, signage and noticeboards, seating areas, toilets and water taps and waste bins are provided in all cemeteries.

## **Green Space**

In the same way as the availability of a local burial option is an important consideration, cemeteries provide valuable green space that supplements the parks and open spaces within Brent. The House of Commons Select Committee Report (2001) recognized the wider implications of cemeteries beyond their principle use:

*“... The evidence we received for this inquiry shows clearly that the significance of cemeteries for local communities is far wider than this, embracing cultural, historical and environmental issues as well as educational and recreational uses.”*

Cemeteries encourage passive recreation such as walking or jogging, dog walking at Paddington Old Cemetery, enjoying open space, discovering more about the historic landscape and past generations and learning about the natural environment.

## **Memorials**

Where exclusive rights have been extinguished in a grave, the council may also dispose of a memorial or recycle the original stonework in an appropriate manner.

Memorials provide valuable documentary evidence for local historians and serve as a link to the borough's heritage. Opportunities exist for working with the council's Heritage service to promote memorials as a cultural and historical resource.

## **Biodiversity**

All three cemeteries in Brent and both burial grounds are recognised by the Greater London Authority (GLA) as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) while monuments and stonework are highly valuable habitats for lichen flora. Cemeteries need to be well maintained and a great deal of grounds maintenance work is undertaken. Whilst in the past herbicides were used to control the growth of grass and to kill grass around memorials, the council is committed to employing greener grounds maintenance practices in its cemeteries, including:

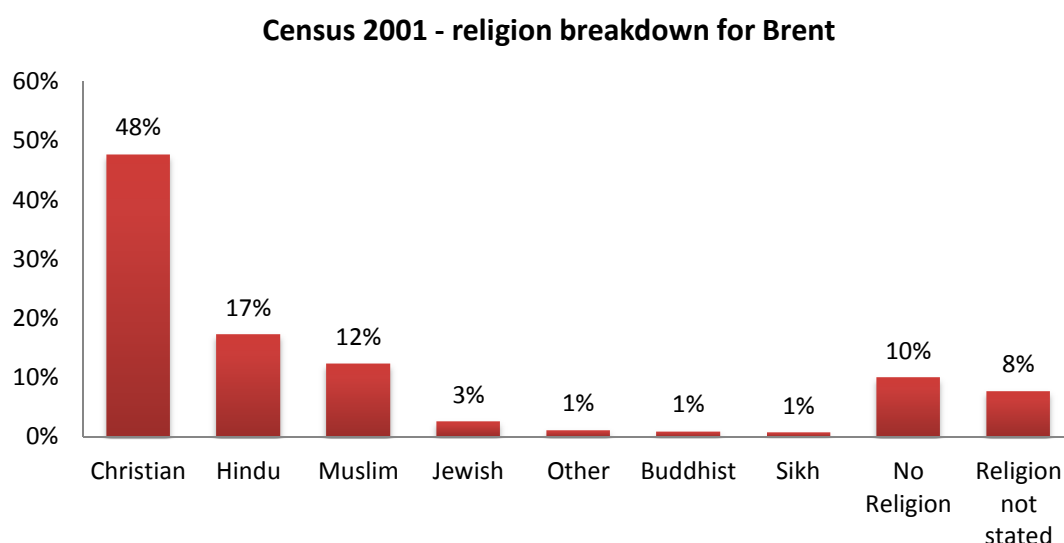
- Minimising the use of herbicides or pesticides
- Composting green waste
- Recycling topsoil excavated from graves
- Recycling old memorials
- Actively managing trees to encourage healthy growth
- Planting new trees to fit with landscape design while also encouraging wildlife
- Specifying areas as wildlife zones to foster the growth of native plants.

## Diversity Considerations

The council aims to meet the needs of Brent's diverse community by providing a service that respects religious and cultural requirements

- Specific areas are set aside at Carpenders Park Cemetery for Anglicans, Roman Catholics and Sunni and Shi'a Muslims.
- Requests for burial in land consecrated by the Church of England can be accommodated in specific areas in all cemeteries subject to space availability.
- Requests for burial in unconsecrated land not set apart for exclusive denominational use can also be accommodated.
- Provision of concrete burial vaults in Willesden and Paddington cemeteries, an option particularly preferred by the Black Caribbean community.

The decision to bury or cremate is a very personal one, often influenced by an individual's faith or ethnic origin. For example, Bangladeshi people tend to choose burial due to their generally Muslim faith; a large proportion of Indian residents are Hindus or Sikhs so cremation is the appropriate option. Most Roman Catholics prefer burial, though a 1963 Papal edict opened up the choice of cremation.



Burials between April 2011 and March 2012 were represented as follows:

Christian: 74% (Church of England: 54%; Roman Catholic 27%; Miscellaneous 19%),

Muslim: 24%

Other religions: 2%

The general preference of the Muslim community is for graves of single depth, though there are differences of approach between Sunni and Shi'a Muslims, and some people are now burying more than one family member in a grave.

### Section 3: Demand for Burial Space

There are thousands of funeral directors and burial sites in the UK and 263 operational crematoria. There is huge freedom of choice as to where people may be buried or cremated, including on private land, at sea, or abroad.

The starting point for quantifying demand is the annual number of deaths as provided by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). An average of 73%<sup>3</sup> of funerals in the UK are cremations while in Greater London, 86% are cremations, with burials representing 14%. There isn't a crematorium in Brent, but there are several crematoria near by including at Golders Green, Hendon, Islington, Kensal Green, Mortlake, Ruislip and St Marylebone. There are numerous cemeteries in London in which Brent residents might be buried, rather than in the borough. However, cemeteries and crematoria don't record the geographical origin of deceased people in a way that makes demographic and equalities data readily available.

The Registrar of Births and Deaths receives a notification of disposal following each funeral. However, even if this information were readily available, not all deaths registered are of residents and many non residents bury their dead in Brent cemeteries. It is therefore not possible to definitively quantify 'demand' for burial except by actual use of the service. For the purposes of this strategy, demand refers to actual use and projected future use. The table below shows demand by category of burial in Brent from 2009 to 2011, including non residents and pre purchased graves

<b>Category</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>Average</b>
New adult purchased graves	288	270	245	268
Reopened adult purchased graves	101	136	133	123
Children's purchased graves	5	9	16	10
Adult burials in unpurchased graves	4	5	2	4
Children's burials in unpurchased graves	37	48	36	41
Cremated remains burials	57	43	47	49
<b>Total of all categories</b>	<b>492</b>	<b>511</b>	<b>479</b>	<b>494</b>

Demand for burial as the choice of funeral in Brent is significantly higher than the London average. In 2011, there were 1,471 resident deaths in Brent<sup>4</sup> and 363 coffin burials of Brent residents took place in Brent cemeteries. Therefore, the burial rate in Brent cemeteries for Brent residents was 25%, i.e. 25% of Brent residents who died in 2011 were buried in Brent cemeteries. This compares with a London average of burials representing 14% of all funerals.

---

<sup>3</sup> Data published by the Cremation Society of Great Britain

<sup>4</sup> ONS provisional figure

Death rates and the number of deaths nationally have fallen for many years, largely due to increased life expectancy, and are now at their lowest recorded levels. Projections from the ONS<sup>5</sup> indicate that numbers of deaths will begin to increase in England from 2016, with an increase of 15% by 2035, rising to 28% above current levels by 2060. However, data from the GLA shows a different situation in Brent, with deaths predicted to rise more gradually due to the projected net migration out of the borough. If this migration doesn't materialise, a greater increase may be expected.

Demand for burial in Brent's cemeteries is not confined to residents. On average, 23% of burials are non-residents, the majority of which take place in Carpenters Park Cemetery. Brent's fees for non residents are average for London with non residents paying a 50% surcharge compared with residents. In addition to cultural preferences, demand from non-residents for burial in Brent is partly related to where the deceased lived and its proximity to Brent cemeteries relative to other cemeteries. Price will also be a relevant factor in some cases. If grave space availability in neighbouring boroughs declines, demand from non-residents for burial in Brent can be expected to increase.

The numbers of Brent residents being buried outside the borough is not specifically recorded at other cemeteries. Anecdotal evidence from funeral directors indicates that some people do not want to use a reclaimed grave and so go elsewhere, such as Kensal Green Cemetery. Further anecdotal evidence indicates that, where a family cannot have the funeral on their preferred day in a Brent cemetery they will arrange the burial in a cemetery outside the borough which can meet their requirements, even though this entails paying non-resident surcharges.

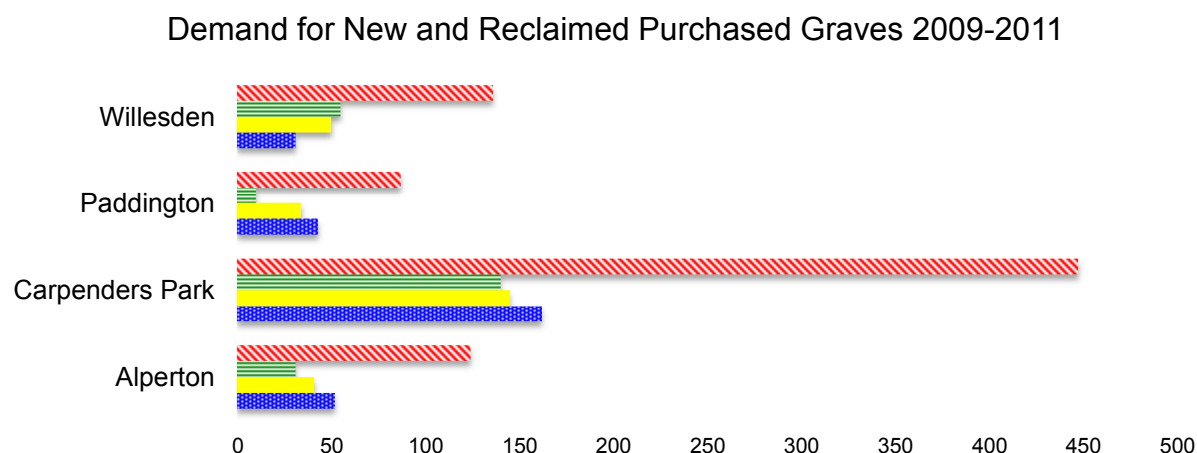
### **National and local context summarised**

- There has been a sustained decline in deaths since the mid 1970s.
- The number of deaths per annum has declined by 18% in Brent since 2001 and by 20% across London as a whole
- Deaths per annum in the UK are predicted to rise by 15% by 2035 but only by approximately 5% in Brent over the same period
- There was a rapid rise in the number of cremations following World War II but there has been a slowing in the rate of increase since the mid 1970s.
- There is continued demand for burial in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century with total burials representing 27% of all funerals in the UK
- Burials represent 14% of all funerals in London ,compared with 25% of Brent residents who died in 2011being buried in Brent cemeteries
- Cremations have declined by 15% in the last 10 years across London.
- Burials have declined by 28% in the last 10 years across London

---

<sup>5</sup> 2009

## Demand for burial in Brent – purchased graves by calendar year



	Alpertown	Carpenders Park	Paddington	Willesden	Annual Total
2011	31	140	10	55	236
2010	41	145	34	50	270
2009	52	162	43	31	288
Cemetery Totals	124	447	87	136	794

**Source: Data from Brent Cemeteries`**

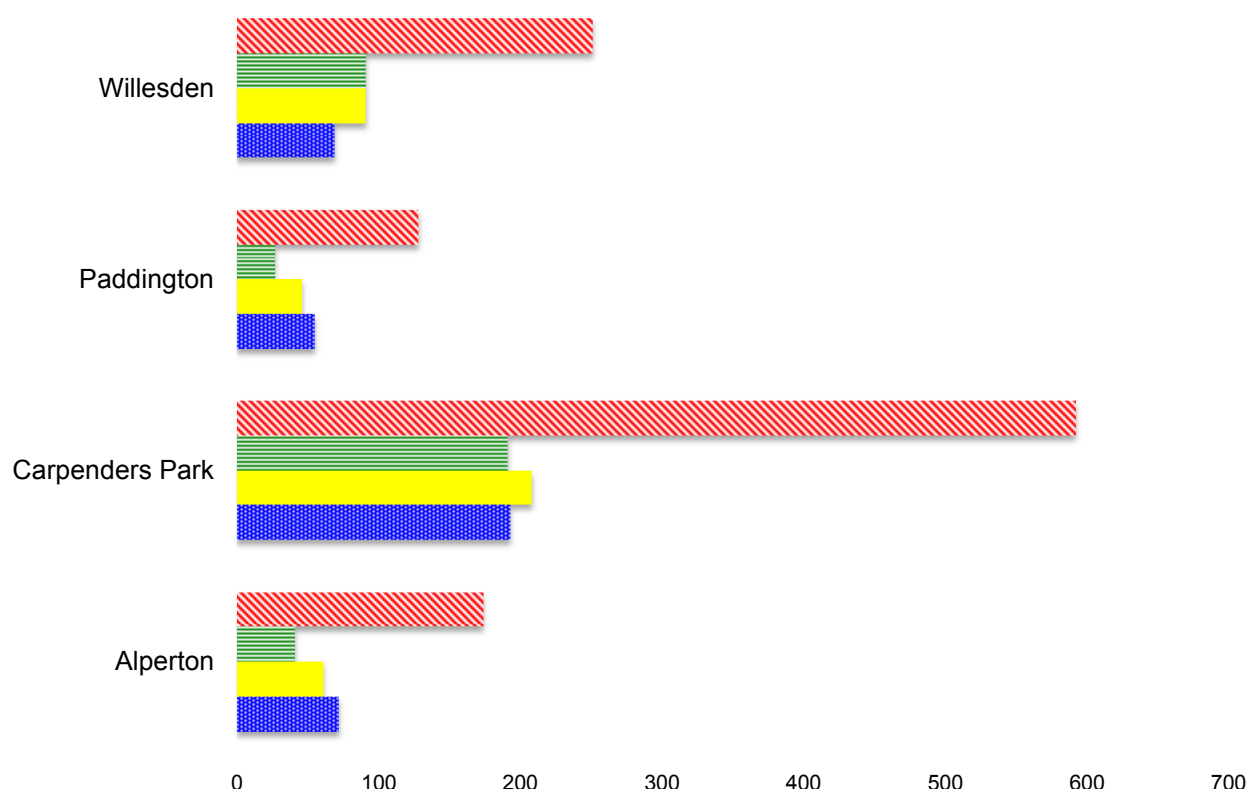
This graph illustrates:

- A variation in demand between the four cemeteries largely due to space availability
- The greatest demand is for new graves in new ground at Carpenders Park Cemetery.
- An overall decline in new and reclaimed grave sales of 18% in 2011 compared with 2009
- An increase in new and reclaimed grave sales at Willesden of 44%, largely due to space having been made available through grave reclamation.

## Demand for reopened purchased graves in Brent Cemeteries

A total of 351 reopened grave burials were purchased between 2009 and 2011 with a variation in demand across the four cemeteries. Carpenders Park and Willesden cemeteries accounted for 74% of the purchases.

## Demand for burial in Brent – purchased graves (new, reclaimed and reopened)



	Alpertown	Carpenders Park	Paddington	Willesden	Annual Total
2011	41	191	27	91	350
2010	61	208	46	91	406
2009	72	193	55	69	389
Totals	174	592	128	251	1145

**Source: Data from Brent Cemeteries**

This graph illustrates a variation in demand between the 4 different cemeteries for each of the three years, largely due to space availability. There are a number of factors that can influence demand for coffin burial and this decrease in overall demand reflects a decline in the number of deaths during this period. It may also reflect the perceptions of funeral directors regarding limited space availability and options for reclamation in Brent cemeteries.

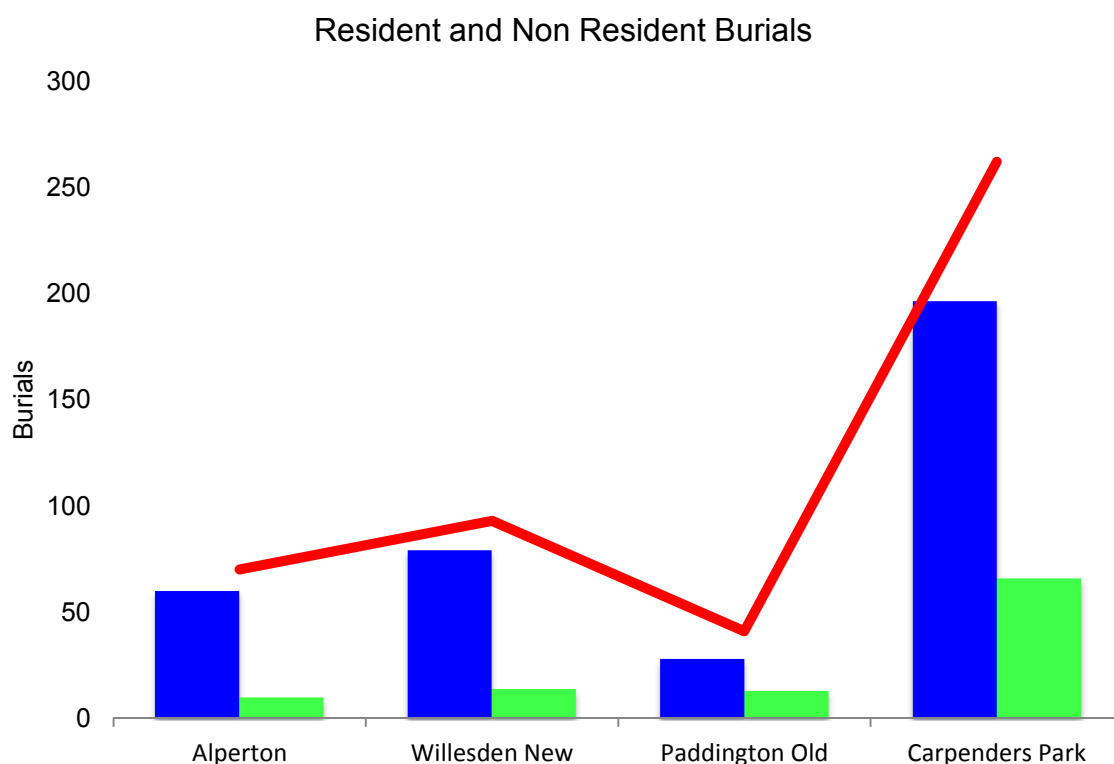
## Demand for the burial of cremated remains in Brent Cemeteries

Cremated remains may be buried in existing family graves or in specially designated plots: the latter are available only at Carpenders Park Cemetery. A total of 164 cremated remains were buried between 2009 and 2011. Carpenders Park accounted for 49% of the total with non residents representing 60% of burials.

There are above ground niches for cremated remains at Alpertown Cemetery, but to date they remain unused. There is also a columbarium for cremated remains within the chapel at Alpertown, but this is very little used.

## Demand for Burial in Brent – Coffins and Cremated Remains

The graph below illustrates demand for the burial of residents and non-residents in Brent Cemeteries during 2011:



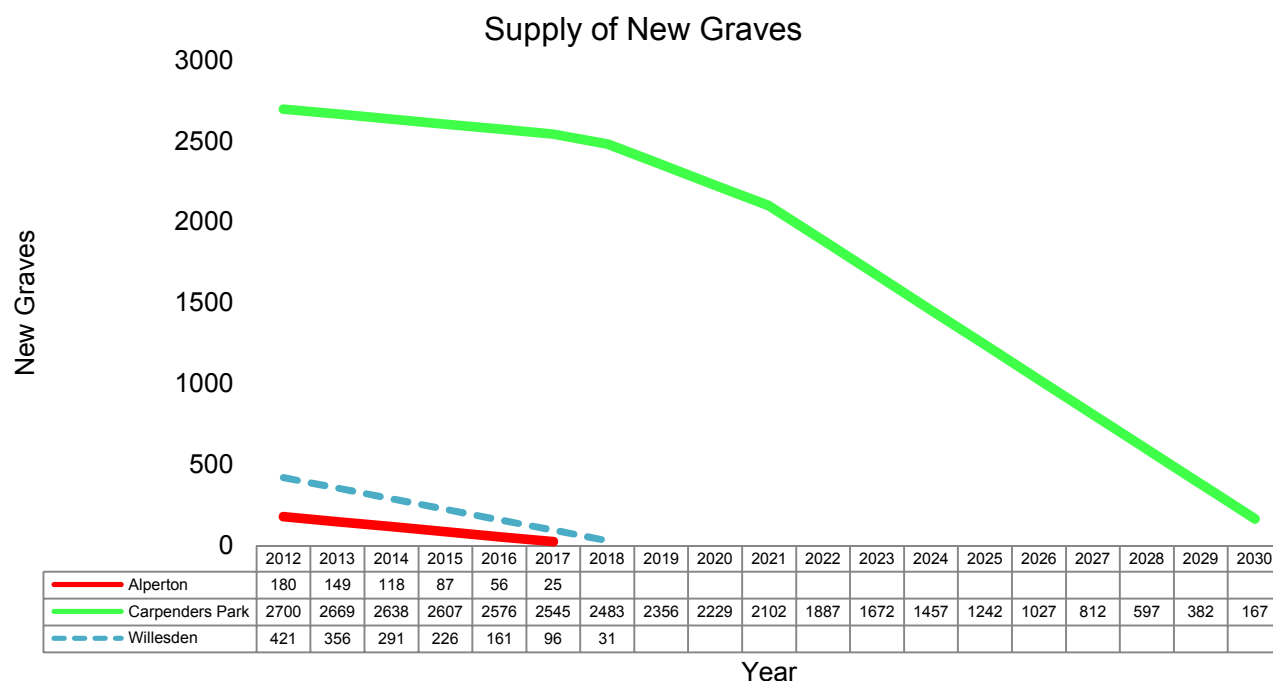
	Alperton	Willesden New	Paddington Old	Carpenders Park	Resident/ Non/Resident Totals
— Resident	54	92	27	215	388
— Non resident	12	12	9	58	91
— Cemetery Totals	66	104	36	273	479

The data includes the burial of cremated remains and coffins. This graph illustrates:

- A significant demand for burial in all Brent cemeteries from people living outside of the borough. Non resident burials represented 23% of all burials during 2011
- The highest demand for non-resident burial in actual numbers in 2011 was at Carpenders Park Cemetery, reflecting the geographical location and space availability.
- The highest demand for non resident burial in percentage terms during 2011 was at Paddington Old Cemetery, representing 33% of all burials.

## Demand for burial in Brent – available space versus demand

The graph below illustrates how long existing burial space at the three cemeteries with space will meet demand at current levels if no action is taken:



**Source: data from Brent Cemeteries**

This graph illustrates that, at the current rates of demand, if no action is taken then:

- Availability of existing reclaimed graves in Alperton Cemetery will be exhausted by 2018.
- Availability of existing reclaimed graves in Willesden New Cemetery will be exhausted by 2019.
- Availability of new graves in Carpenders Park Cemetery will potentially be exhausted by 2030.

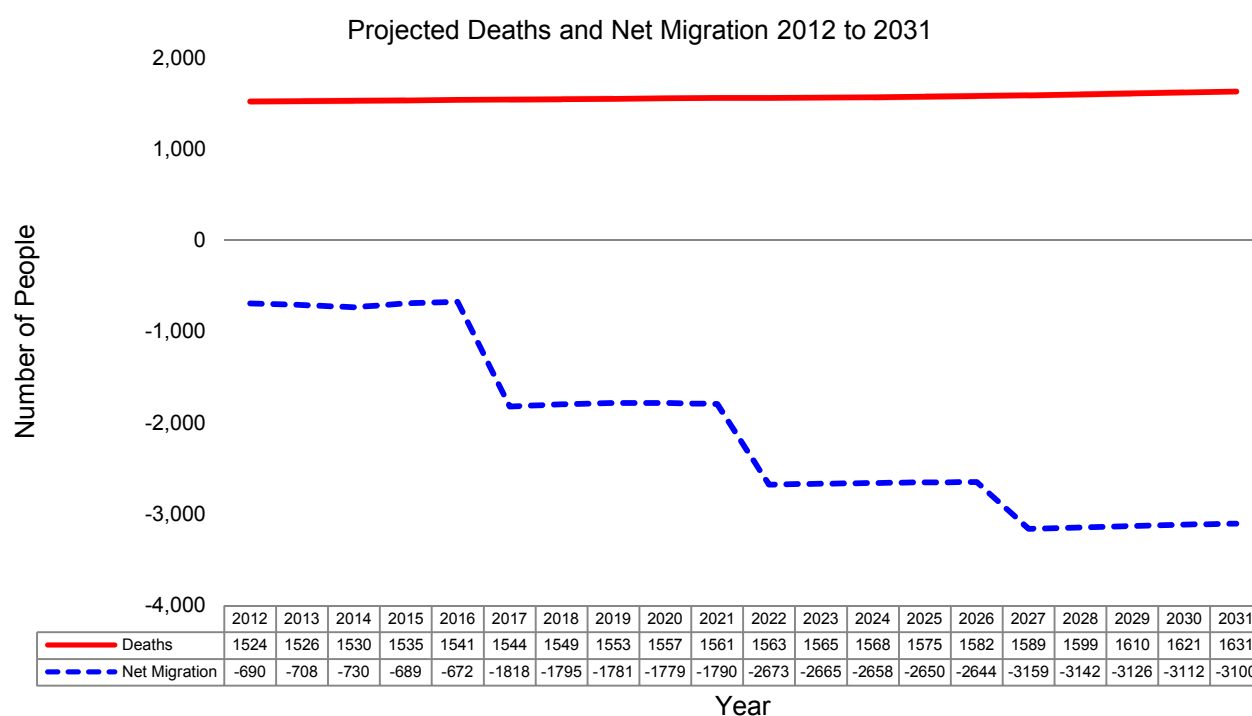
The projection for Carpenders Park Cemetery includes an area of approximately 1,800 graves that requires some preparation, including the installation of drainage, prior to use.

## Variations in the death rate

Figures produced by the ONS in October 2009 illustrate a decline in deaths across England from 1971 onwards and a continuing decline at the present time. However there is significant projected increase in deaths nationally from 2016 onwards.

## Projected deaths in Brent

The graph below illustrates GLA 2010 demographic projections for annual deaths in Brent and net migration:



**Source: Data from GLA 2010 Round of Demographic projections SHLAA**

This graph illustrates for the period 2012 to 2031:

- The GLA projects only a gradual increase in deaths of Brent residents
- The GLA projects significant net migration from the borough

Mortality rates are, understandably, highest amongst older people. For example, in 2009 in England and Wales the female death rate in the age band 40 to 45 years was only 1.7 per thousand. In contrast, the female death rate in the age band 70 to 74 years was 17.1 per thousand.

The lower rate of increase in deaths projected for Brent, compared with national projections, suggests that the net migration out of the borough will consist primarily of older people, who would otherwise die within the borough.

However, if the projected net migration is not realised, a higher number of deaths can be anticipated in Brent resulting in an increase in demand for burial space.

## **Projected deaths in Brent by ward**

- There is significant variation across individual wards.
- A downward trend in deaths is predicted in the majority of wards.
- Increased numbers of deaths are forecast in the Kenton, Queensbury, Stonebridge and Tokyngton wards.
- No projections are available for death by ethnic or religious group.

## **Projected Demand for Space**

- Brent experiences higher than the London average demand for new and reclaimed graves.
- The available data on which this finding is based does not make allowance for the impact of non resident burials.
- The available data can be used to inform the reclamation process to meet demand.

Demand for new graves at Carpenders Park Cemetery, excluding the Muslim section, is currently 31 per year. If this level of demand remains unchanged the remaining 2,700 graves can be expected to last for approximately 87 years. This statistic creates a misleading impression that there is no medium-term shortage of space at Carpenders Park and that there would be more than sufficient space to cater for excess deaths should this be necessary.

If no attempt is made to provide more burial space at Alperton, Paddington Old and Willesden cemeteries through a rolling programme of grave reclamation, mounding work or the installation of burial vaults, they will be unable to provide burial space within the next few years. If this is the case, it is likely that Carpenders Park will see a significant increase in demand. It is difficult to predict the likely level of increase as, for example, residents in the south of the borough may prefer to use Kensal Green Cemetery rather than a Brent cemetery located near to Watford.

However, should the combined demand for graves at Alperton and Willesden cemeteries have to be fully met at Carpenders Park Cemetery then the remaining 2,700 graves could be used up by as early as 2033. This excludes consideration of demand for Muslim burial.

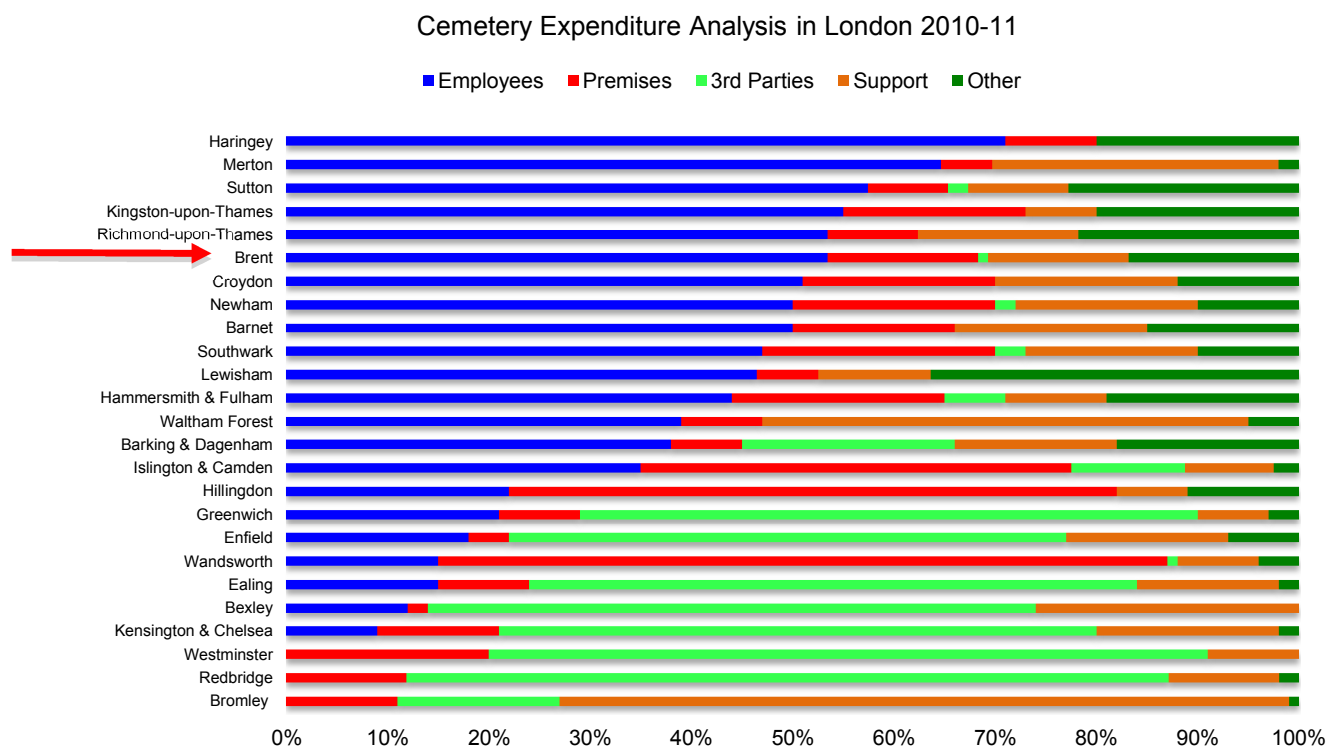
Capacity for burial within the existing Sunni Muslim section will, at current rates of demand, run out by 2021. If this annual demand of 88 graves per year is combined with the transferred demand from Alperton and Willesden it is conceivable that all grave space in Carpenders Park Cemetery could be used up by as early as 2030. This excludes the area set aside for Shi'a Muslim burial, which at a relatively low demand of 17 graves per year, is predicted to last until 2055.

However, if additional space is provided at Alperton and Willesden New Cemeteries via a range of methods, space at Carpenders Park is likely to be available until 2041.

## Section 4: Income and Expenditure

### Overview of Expenditure

The graph below illustrates the proportion of expenditure allocated to key elements of cemetery provision and is based on statistics which include all payment types:



**Source: Data Cipfa Cemeteries Actuals 2010-2011**

Brent's Cemeteries Service is delivered in-house and, as such, employee costs represent a significant proportion of total expenditure.

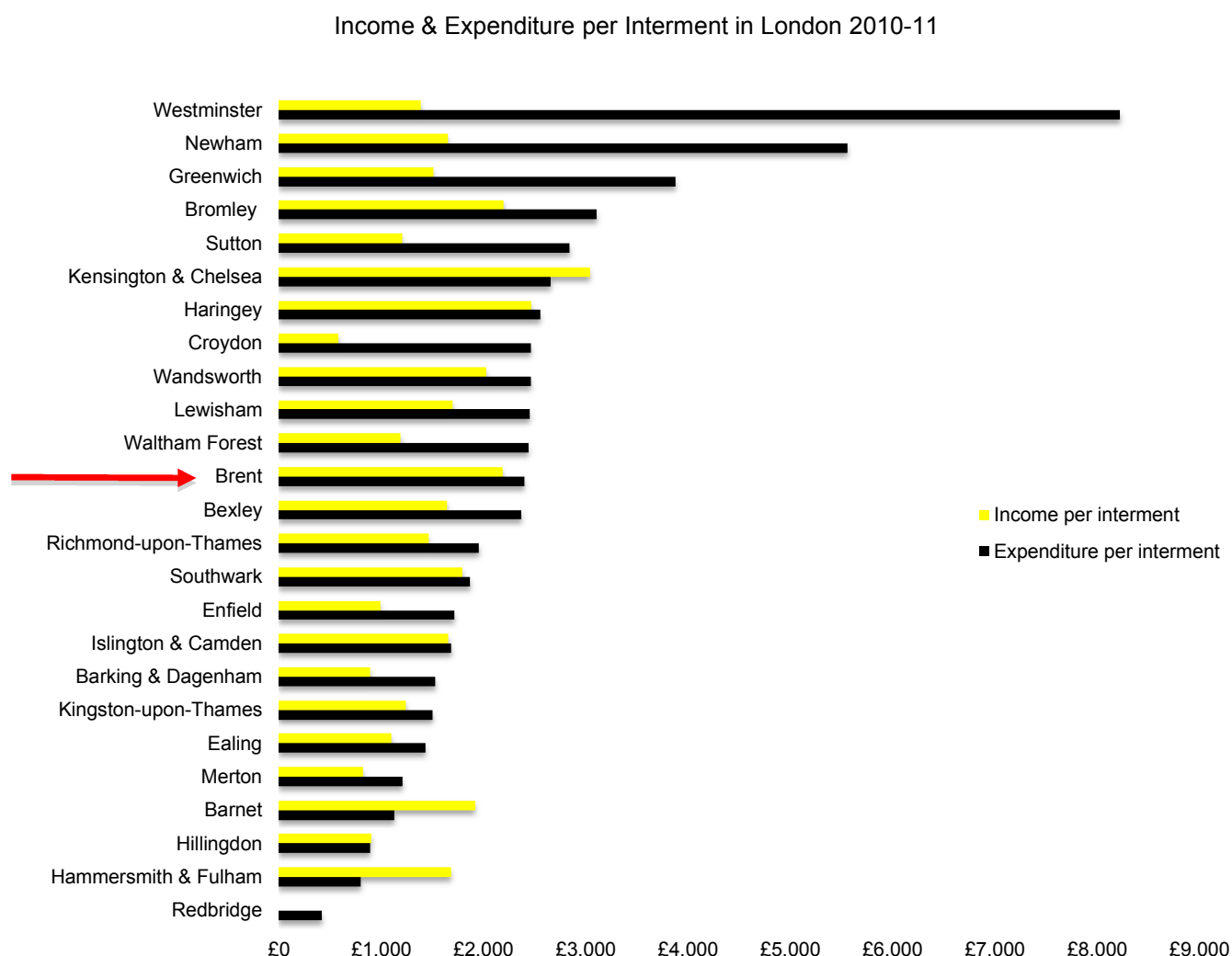
Other local authorities have outsourced their grounds maintenance and/or cemeteries management and therefore as a council their proportion of employee costs will be lower but their proportion of third party and support costs will be higher.

For example:

- Cardinal undertake the grounds maintenance and grave digging function at Ealing
- Continental Landscapes manages and maintains all of Westminster's cemeteries
- Westerleigh Group manages and operates the Cemeteries service at Redbridge as part of a long term lease arrangement with the council, including the employment of ex-council staff.

## Cemetery Income and Expenditure per Interment

The graph below illustrates income and expenditure per interment, arranged in order of expenditure:

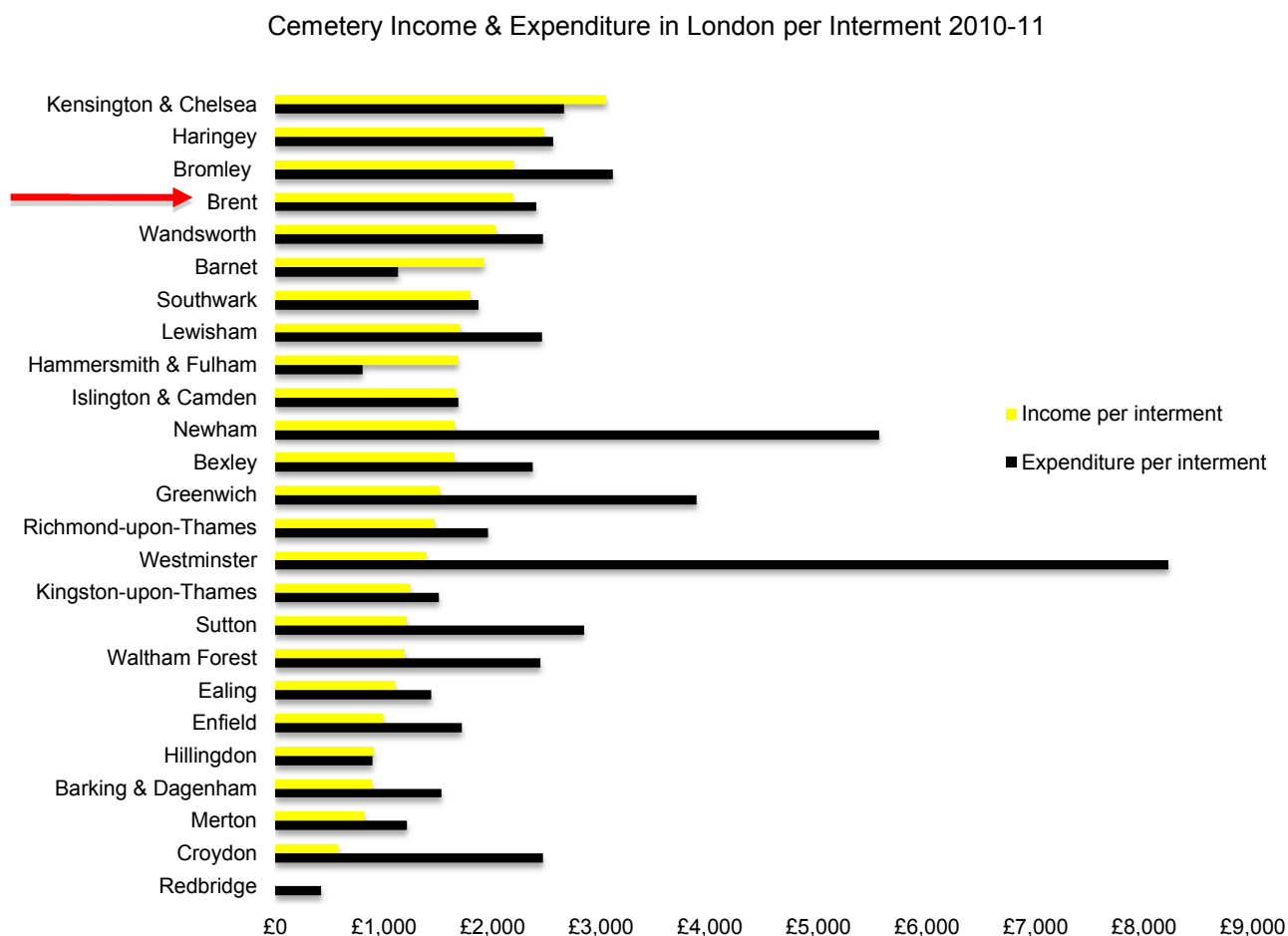


**Source: Data Cipfa Cemeteries Actuals 2010-2011**

Although income does not currently match expenditure, Brent compares well with many London local authorities, falling halfway in the hierarchy of expenditure. It is reasonable to conclude that this is partly due to good management of burial costs.

## Cemetery Income and Expenditure per Interment

The graph below illustrates income and expenditure per interment, sorted in order of income:

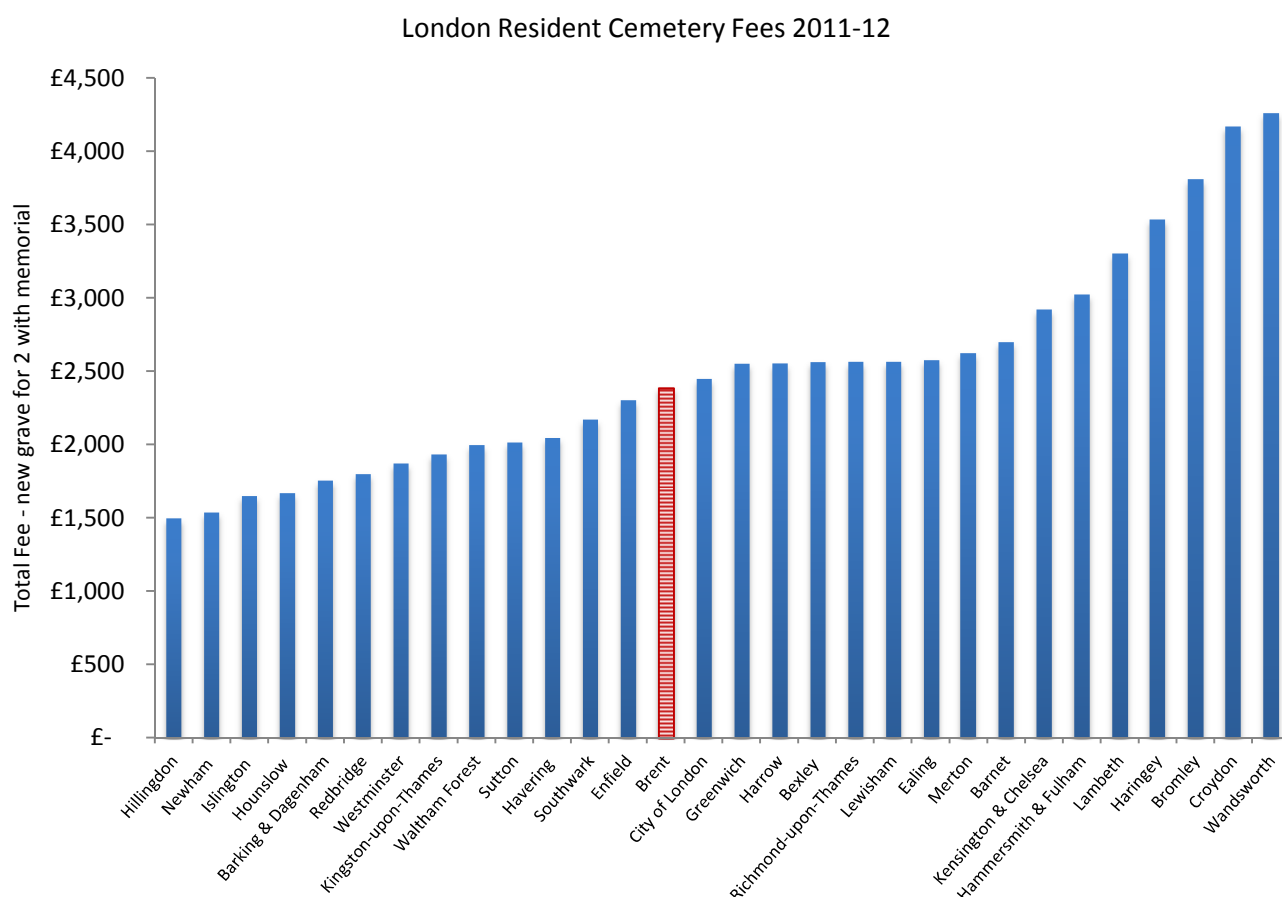


**Source: Data Cipfa Cemeteries Actuals 2010-2011**

- Brent compares well with other London local authorities in terms of income.
- This is partly a reflection on the higher than average demand for burial in Brent and the availability of grave space through reclamation.
- Future income from the sale of exclusive rights in reclaimed burial space will play an important part in the provision of a cost effective service.

## Cemetery Fees - Residents

The graph below illustrates the cemetery fees for residents in each borough based on core elements of burial costs:



**Source: Local authority tables of fees 2010-2011**

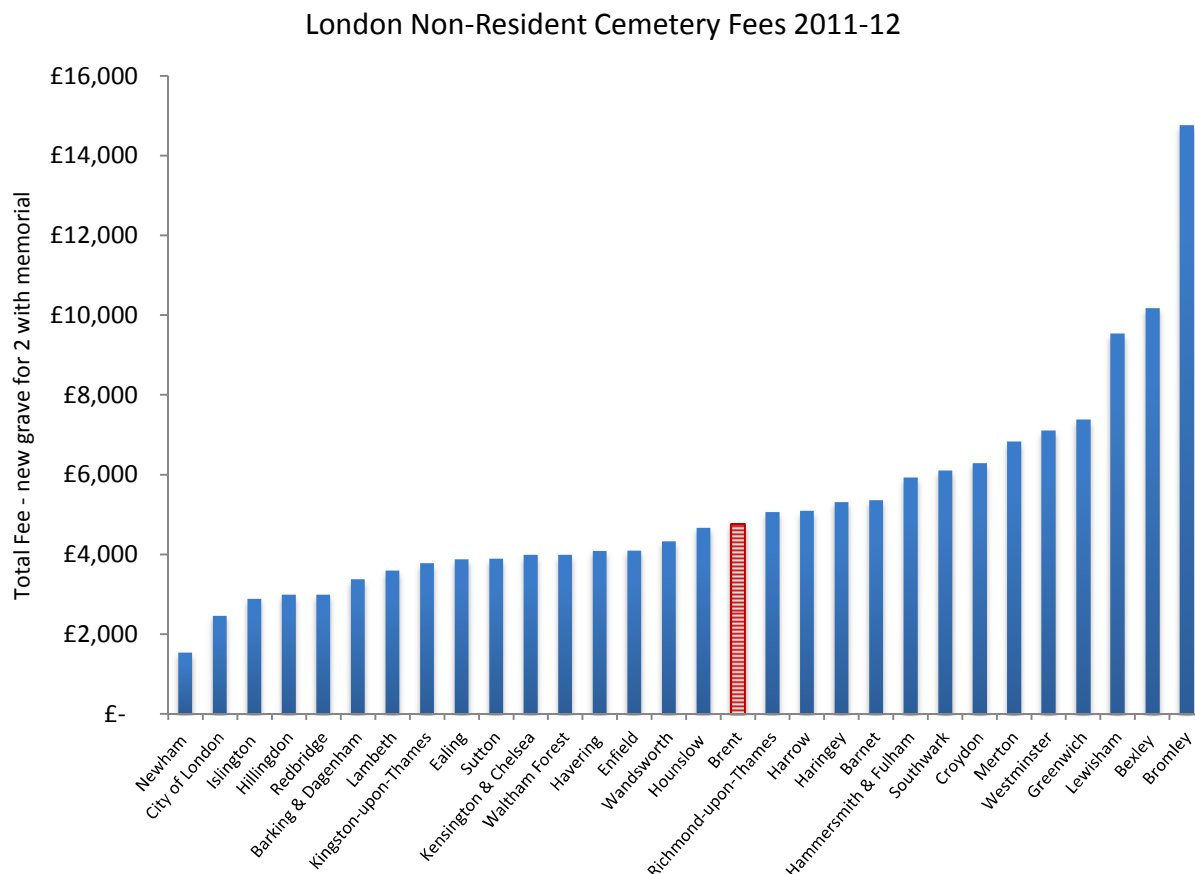
There is significant variation in fees across London which is partly a reflection of the variety of grave space sizes, locations and periods of exclusive rights. In order to make comparison meaningful, the above graph compares the lowest cost option in each borough incorporating the following elements:

- Exclusive rights of burial in a grave for two coffin burials
- Interment fee for first burial in the grave
- Memorial rights fee

Brent's fees for residents are average for London. There is a difficult balance to be struck between having charges that enable the service to match income with expenditure and yet do not prevent access to burial by people suffering deprivation.

## Cemetery Fees – Non-Residents

The graph below shows the cemetery fees for non-residents in each borough:



**Source: Local authority tables of fees 2010-2011**

To make comparison meaningful, the above graph compares the lowest cost option in each borough incorporating the following elements:

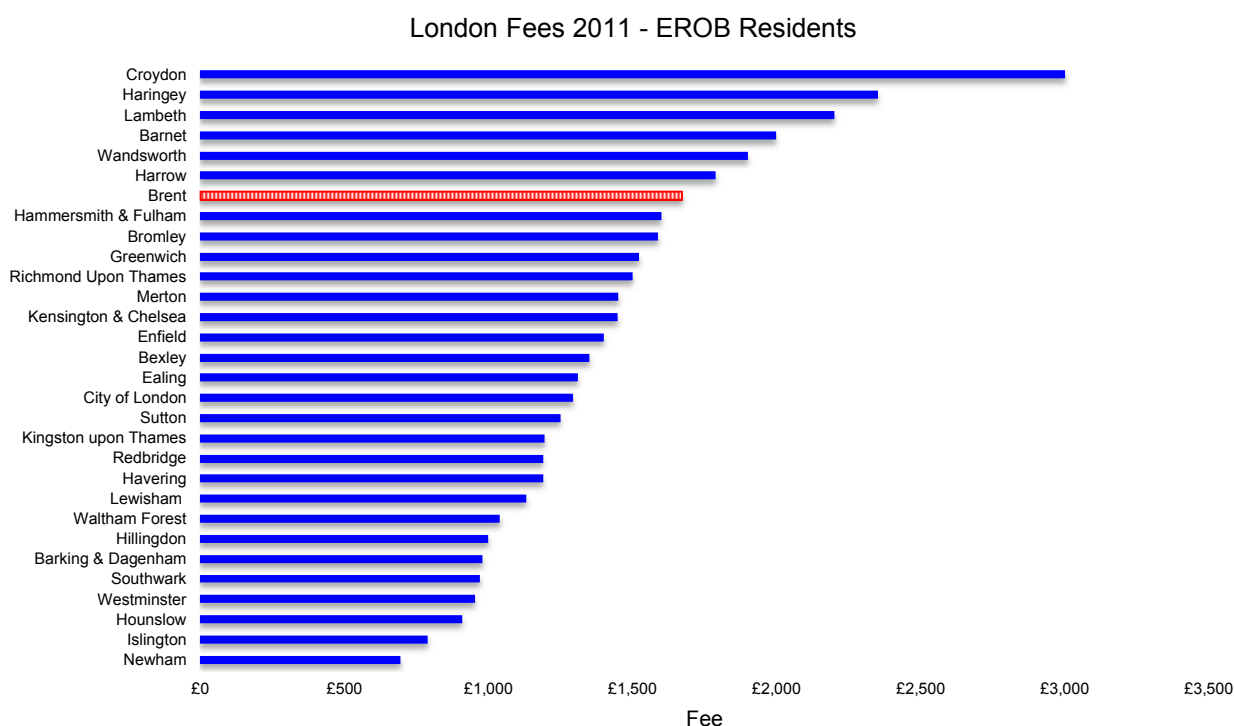
- Exclusive rights of burial in a grave for two coffin burials
- Interment fee for first burial in the grave
- Memorial rights fee

Brent's fees for non residents are average for London. Compared to our neighbouring boroughs Brent's non resident fees are higher than Ealing and Kensington and Chelsea but lower than Harrow, Barnet, Hammersmith and Fulham and Westminster.

## Differential Fees and Charges

Although some authorities discontinued differential fees for non-residents following a 2003 European Court decision on museum charges, the UK government has not introduced legislation prohibiting differential fees. Brent Council is therefore entitled to make a surcharge for non-resident burials. The rationale for higher charges relates to the provider's need to ensure that burial space is available primarily for local people who have contributed to its provision through taxation. Thus non-residents, who have not contributed through taxation, can be expected to contribute higher fees upon burial. Whilst it is the total cost of burial that matters to the customer, it is useful to compare the main elements for the purposes of strategic planning.

The fee charged for the exclusive right of burial (EROB) is effectively a capital payment to fund the maintenance of the grave and the wider cemetery for the full period of the grant of exclusive right of burial; this is currently fifty years in Brent's case. The graph below shows resident EROB fees in London for 2011/12:



**Source: Local authority tables of fees 2010-2011**

In 2011-12, Brent charged the 7<sup>th</sup> highest resident fee in London for the exclusive right of burial in an adult grave space. The equivalent fee for 2012/13 is £1,945, equivalent to an annual charge of £38.90.

Brent charged the 12<sup>th</sup> highest EROB fee for non-residents in 2011/12 but, due to interment fees being relatively low, the combined charge was average for London. Non-residents account for 23% of burials in Brent's cemeteries and generate a proportionately higher percentage of income.

## Section 5: Key Issues and Areas for Development

### Methods of Developing Burial Space

To make continued provision of local burial space to meet current and future demand, a number of practices can be considered for adoption at cemeteries that do not have any new ground available. In undertaking any or all of these options, councils must ensure the strictest compliance with legal requirements and best practice. Methods 1 to 5 do **not** involve the disturbance of old burials while methods 6 and 7 involve the temporary and permanent disturbance of burials respectively.

1. Raising and mounding the ground level above areas of old common (unpurchased) graves to provide sufficient depth for new graves without disturbing existing burials. It is common practice, though not a legal requirement, for this to be undertaken after 75 years have elapsed since the last burial.
2. Installing burial vaults or chambers above areas of old common graves to provide new graves without disturbing existing burials. It is common practice, though not a legal requirement, for this to be undertaken after 75 years have elapsed since the last burial.
3. Undertaking new burials in the space remaining within graves above old burials without disturbing existing burials. This reclamation of space can only be implemented where there has not been a burial for at least 75 years and after the exclusive rights of burial have been extinguished.
4. Raising and mounding the ground level above areas of old purchased graves to provide sufficient depth for new graves without disturbing existing burials, where there has been no burial for at least 75 years and after exclusive rights of burial have been extinguished.
5. Installing burial vaults above areas of old purchased graves to provide new graves without disturbing existing burials, where there has been no burial for at least 75 years and after exclusive rights of burial have been extinguished.
6. Using the 'lift and deepen' method in old purchased graves to provide increased depth for new burials by temporarily disturbing existing burials, where there has been no burial for at least 75 years and after exclusive rights of burial have been extinguished.
7. Obtaining faculty permission from the Church of England to exhume old burials from old common (unpurchased) graves to enable the reuse of graves by permanently disturbing existing burials. Two London boroughs have exhumed burials from old common graves and reburied the remains communally nearby prior to reusing the graves for new burials. This practice is not common and is only permitted in London, rather than in the UK generally.

Administrative work to extinguish burial rights in old purchased graves has been undertaken to provide a supply of new grave space in Alperton and Willesden cemeteries sufficient to meet current levels of demand until 2018 and 2019 respectively. However, available grave space at Paddington Old Cemetery is currently non-existent.

The original grave sizes in Paddington Old are much smaller than present day requirements, so the only realistic option to create space is to raise the ground level through either mounding or the installation of burial vaults. This in turn requires sufficient numbers of graves to have been reclaimed in a specific area: it is neither practicable nor desirable to raise the ground level above a small number of graves. A rolling programme of further administrative work is required to identify suitable areas.

The land available to extend Carpenters Park Cemetery is currently occupied by a plant nursery and measures approximately 3-4 hectares. Making an allowance of 25% for roads and other features, this land could accommodate approximately 8,000 adult sized graves. However, the current lease does not expire until late 2051 so, at current rates of demand and even if new grave space is created at the other cemeteries, it is conceivable that there will be a 10-year period when Carpenters Park Cemetery will not be able to offer new graves.

It is reasonable to assume that at least some of the demand would then switch to the other cemeteries within the borough, where it could only be met through a combination of methods already described. This would impact upon the capacity of Brent's cemeteries during a pandemic.

The costs of installing burial vaults far exceed the excavation of graves in virgin ground. However, vaults to meet current demand could be installed in planned phases to avoid the situation that exists at present, where no vaults are available

### **Options for Creating Burial Space**

Additional space can be created above unpurchased graves, or purchased graves where the exclusive rights have expired or been extinguished, by:

- Mounding soil on top of the graves
- Installing burial vaults on top of the graves
- Installing mausoleums (above-ground burial chambers) on top of the graves.

Brent has already implemented the first two options in Willesden New Cemetery and has mounded soil above old graves in Paddington Old Cemetery.

### **Mounding and burial vaults**

Raising the level of the ground by mounding offers the following potential benefits:

- may be achieved at a lower cost than the installation of burial vaults
- reproduces traditional earth burial graves

Burial vaults offer the following potential benefits:

- Relative ease of installation providing instant grave availability without potential future safety issues
- Fixed cost for supply, installation and landscaping
- Landscaped areas of vaults provide easy and clean all-weather access for Funeral Directors and mourners at funerals and for visitors at all other times.
- Much reduced grounds maintenance costs and no subsequent subsidence.

The option of burial vaults offers significant benefits to both bereaved people and the council but has a higher cost than mounding. This would be reflected in the purchase price and would have affordability implications.

In whichever way new burials are accommodated above old burials:

- The council may grant exclusive rights in the new space
- There will be no need to disturb previous burials

## **Mausoleums**

Mausoleums are above-ground chambers that may be preferred to below-ground burial, particularly but not exclusively by Italian people. The installation of mausoleums would involve significant expenditure and this is only likely to take place if a definite demand is expressed. No demand was expressed during the consultation period on the draft strategy.

## **Reuse of Graves**

It is likely to be only a matter of time before London local authorities use the powers contained within the London Local Authorities Act 2007 to not only reclaim old purchased graves, but also to 'lift and deepen' the remains they contain in order to provide more burial space. This will involve the temporary disturbance of remains while the work is undertaken. Regional developments can be monitored to inform judgment about initiating this practice in Brent.

Any remaining depth in unpurchased graves may be used for further burials at any time. Two London boroughs have also exhumed remains and reburied them communally nearby, prior to re-using the graves for new burials. It is usual for part of the land in a cemetery to be consecrated so permission has to be granted under the faculty jurisdiction of the Church of England prior to the exhumation of burials. Brent has not implemented such measures to date but will monitor the results of work undertaken in other boroughs and investigate reuse options as a cheaper alternative to mounding where appropriate.

## Excess Deaths

There are times, e.g. an influenza pandemic, when deaths exceed anticipated numbers. There have been false alarms but scientists consider a pandemic resulting in excess deaths to be inevitable in the foreseeable future. The UK Influenza Pandemic Preparedness Strategy 2011 states at paragraph 7.20:

“The number of additional deaths expected as a result of a pandemic is impossible to predict. However, local authorities in conjunction with local service providers should ensure that they have plans in place to surge their capacity to cope with an increase in burials and cremations during a pandemic. When planning for excess deaths, local planners should prepare to extend capacity on a precautionary but reasonably practicable basis, and aim to cope with up to 210,000 - 315,000 additional deaths across the UK over a 15 week period (or a higher level where possible).

Brent has a relatively high demand for burial and already faces significant challenges in providing space to meet this demand. Capacity to cope with high numbers of funerals during a pandemic would be a challenge as excavation of new graves requires personnel, plant and fuel.

A key issue would be the storage of bodies and temporary mortuary facilities would enable bodies to be stored and released at manageable rates to cemeteries and crematoria. There is no crematorium in Brent but a high number of residents require cremation and do not accept burial for various reasons. Liaison with neighbouring boroughs is therefore required to establish what provision could be made.

Without additional mortuary capacity to effectively regulate the release of bodies for burial, excess deaths during a pandemic would likely overwhelm Brent's current operational capacity. Alternative arrangements need to be in place as part of a contingency plan. The Influenza Pandemic Contingency Plan (2011) provides a strategic overview of the council's business continuity measures and emergency response to Swine Flu. It references emergency plans for individual services, outlines management structures and key post holders. The Cemetery and Mortuary Service Excess Deaths Contingency Plan 2009 outlines the process for dealing with mass burials. Both plans require updating in line with the London Resilience Pandemic Influenza Response Plan 2012 which aims to provide a strategic framework to support integrated preparedness and response to pandemic influenza.

As at any time, demand will be for burial in either an existing family grave or in a new grave. However, unless the level of demand can be regulated by additional mortuary capacity, burials may have to take place on a temporary basis either in open areas of cemeteries or in other land. It may then be necessary to undertake exhumations after the pandemic subsides to rebury bodies in preferred locations.

Alpertons, Paddington and Willesden cemeteries have no virgin ground and, in general, are heavily memorialised. In contrast, areas of unused virgin ground and the open nature of Carpenders Park Cemetery make this Brent's primary site for burial space where required during a period of excess deaths. The installation of burial vaults would provide a resource that would be readily available for immediate use and would offer easy exhumation if required.

## **Maximising Technology**

Work has been undertaken on the scanning and data capture of cemetery records but the council does not have a computerised administration process in operation. Burial records available to the public through Deceased Online are currently incomplete.

Significant benefits can be realised by the full implementation of a software system for the booking and recording of all new funerals. This would provide

- A secure method of storing statutory data
- The potential to produce work instructions, Deeds of Grant etc.
- Statistics readily available on demand.
- Mapping of graves, recording of burial dates and grave depths

The benefits of a software system would be greatly enhanced by the addition of historic data. This would require further data capture but, in addition to making the data available to council officers, it could be publically available on Deceased Online.

## **Management Plans**

“Burial space should not only be local and accessible, but also appropriately maintained and managed. The landscape and management of cemeteries should be appropriate to the purpose first and foremost of serving the bereaved. An environment which feels safe and well cared for is essential.” - House of Commons Select Committee.

Individual site-specific Management Plans are used by a number of local authorities to bring together relevant work plans within a comprehensive framework for:

- Development of burial space
- Grounds maintenance
- Memorial management
- Tree management
- Heritage management
- Asset management

For example, the creation of new burial space is dependent upon the specific layout of grave sections, periods of use, the level of existing memorialisation and the presence of landscape features such as trees. Management plans can be used to identify the appropriateness of mounding or burial vaults for particular cemeteries with due regard to any specific historical features and, where appropriate, a phased approach to implementation.

## **Community engagement**

Greater community and educational use of cemeteries can be encouraged by

- Identifying memorials commemorating individuals or families of particular historic interest, particularly if there is a local link such as a house or building.
- Including the origins and history of cemeteries in promotional material available online. The preparation of Tomb Trails in the older cemeteries could benefit from input from the council's Heritage Service and local historians.
- Creating Tree Trails as a means of encouraging the wider community to benefit from cemeteries as landscaped green spaces.
- Setting aside specified areas as wildlife zones to stimulate community interest in plants and the encouragement of wildlife, thereby increasing biodiversity.
- Developing links with schools and colleges to ensure that the educational and cultural value of cemeteries is recognised and used.

## **Private Sector Leasing**

Some local authorities have leased their cemeteries and crematorium service to the private sector. Lease arrangements are not in the public domain, but they have resulted in significant income to each authority with no expenditure on the service. However, all of these transfers include crematoria: there is no obvious incentive for private operators to enter into agreements with Brent Council. If a long term opportunity for a crematorium in Brent arises it would be worth revisiting this option.

## **Contracting out options**

Two thirds of London authorities employ contractors for various levels of cemetery management while some authorities, for example Westminster and Hounslow, have contracts for the management and operation of all their cemeteries. Discussions on joint working arrangements are currently taking place between some boroughs. There is clearly an option for Brent to explore the costs and benefits of entering into an agreement with a contractor to undertake some or all of the functions relating to the maintenance and operation of its cemeteries.

## **Buildings for hire**

Disused cemetery buildings could be hired out for use by, for example, florist businesses and cafes while the chapels at Alperton and Paddington are hired out for filming purposes.

## Section 6: Vision and Objectives

### Vision

Brent Council will aim to meet the needs of bereaved people and the wider community in the borough by:

- Conducting the burial and commemoration of the dead of the diverse community in a secure, sustainable and well-maintained environment.
- Offering burial options at a choice of four cemetery sites.
- Enabling local communities to access cemeteries as valuable historic green spaces which promote wellbeing, biodiversity, learning and recreation.

### Objectives

1. Meet current and future needs in respect of local burial options, while providing accessible green space and encouraging biodiversity and sustainable environmental practices.
2. Deliver a value for money cemeteries service that is at least self-financing.
3. Provide a supportive and inclusive service that fully reflects the religious, ethnic and cultural diversity of the borough and supports the wellbeing of bereaved people.

#### **Objective 1: Meet current and future needs in respect of local burial space, while providing accessible green space and encouraging biodiversity and sustainable environmental practices.**

There is clear evidence of a sustained demand for burial in Brent's cemeteries. The provision and availability of burial space that meets the requirements of bereaved people and generate income for the council will be achieved by:

- Providing burial vaults and/or mounding above old graves in Willesden and Paddington cemeteries.
- Reclaiming old graves to ensure a constant and reliable source of available graves at Alperton and Willesden cemeteries for a rolling period of five and ten years ahead.
- Reusing memorials from graves where the exclusive rights of burial have been reclaimed.
- Reviewing arrangements for an unknown number of excess deaths, e.g. in a flu pandemic, including consultation with crematoria in neighbouring boroughs.

- Producing individual Management Plans for each cemetery to bring together relevant work plans within a comprehensive framework for the development of burial space, grounds maintenance, asset management, memorial management, heritage and tree management and increasing biodiversity.

**Objective 2: Deliver a value for money cemeteries service that is at least self-financing.**

Cemeteries provide valuable green space for everyone but they primarily provide funeral facilities for a minority of residents. It is logical that people who choose to use cemeteries for funerals should meet service costs through fees and charges with higher charges applying for non residents. Unlike many council services, cemeteries generate income and a strategic approach to their management can lead to a reduction or elimination of costs. Brent can achieve a self-financing service without a reduction in standards provided that adequate space is made available and the range of burial options is proactively marketed to funeral directors.

On the basis of anecdotal evidence, it is possible that Brent has lost funeral bookings to Kensal Green and other cemeteries due to a lack of flexibility with funeral timings, insufficient provision of burial options and a lack of clarity regarding space availability and pricing details being available to funeral directors.

The council will work towards achieving a self-financing and value for money cemetery service with income matching expenditure by

- Introducing an online payment mechanism.
- Fully computerising cemetery records and administration to improve record management and make records publically available via the web site 'Deceased Online', providing better access to statutory records and data.
- Developing and maintaining good communication links with Funeral Directors, Officiants and Memorial Masons through holding regular funeral liaison meetings, producing update bulletins and clarifying contact arrangements for funerals.

**Objective 3: Provide a supportive and inclusive service that fully reflects the religious, ethnic and cultural diversity of the borough and supports the wellbeing of bereaved people.**

In addition to providing burial space to meet demand while providing value for money, the council will aim to provide an accessible and quality service which supports bereaved people and reflects the needs of a diverse borough by:

- Providing a range of burial options in each of the cemeteries that meet the needs of the diverse community

- Providing flexibility in the numbers and timings of funerals available, so ensuring that all religions and secular lifestyles can receive appropriate services at relevant times where practicable.
- Working with the Muslim community on future burial provision at Carpenders Park
- Establishing a Friends Group for each cemetery

## **Monitoring and Review**

- Annual monitoring and review of the action plan will be undertaken to measure the effectiveness of the implementation of the strategy. Lead officers will be responsible for delivering and tracking progress on their respective actions and taking corrective action as required.
- A number of key and local performance indicators are monitored on a quarterly basis and reported on the council's performance scorecard.
- The council submits CIPFA returns for the cemeteries service on an annual basis.
- The Charter Assessment process enables organisations to assess themselves against key service features and to obtain a Gold, Silver or Bronze award. Authorities complete a questionnaire with 382 questions on burial, cremation and social and environmental aspects and return it to the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management for scoring. The process is not designed to be used as a means of competing with other service providers but to give clear evidence to service users and elected members that the particular service is continually moving forward. Brent was awarded a silver medal in 2012.