

# Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council

Fairground and Cemetery 20/07/2023

## Memorial Permits for Non-residential Interments

Agenda item 23/007 2. To review the fees being charged and agree any changes for recommendation to full Council.

### Background

Earlier this year, the parish council office received an enquiry regarding the installation of a memorial on a plot they held the Exclusive Right of Burial to. They considered the additional cost of the required memorial permit as overly expensive and asked if the parish council could review the fee structure in comparison to other cemeteries.

### SMPC Cemetery Fees

Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council currently charges for the following fees which is in line with normal cemetery practice:

1. The purchase of the **Exclusive Right of Burial** (also known as a Deed of Grant) gives the holder the right to burial into the plot, request a burial into the plot of another person, or request a memorial to be erected on a particular grave plot within the cemetery and to be responsible for the safety of the memorial. The Deed of Grant is normally purchased at the time of the first interment into a new plot. As is standard practice, this does not include the fee for the interment or the memorial permit. Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council grants the Deed of Grant for a period of 50 years from the date of the first interment at which point the rights to the plot revert to the parish council. To date, we have not needed to extend the lease period of a Deed granted since 1999. The Deed is normally purchased by a next of kin (but can be anyone nominated by the deceased or family) and this individual then holds the rights granted by the parish council.

The Grant of Deed may be transferred on to another person via a legal process as laid out in the Local Authorities Cemeteries Order 1977, either by a form of assignment or as part of the deceased's estate through Grant of Probate/Statutory Declaration, and runs for the remainder of the time left on the grant.

2. The **memorial permit**, when granted by the parish council, gives permission for the Deed owner to erect a memorial on the plot, add an additional inscription or carry out any renovation work, including cleaning of the existing headstone/tablet.
3. The **interment fee** is a separate administrative fee incurred each time a plot is opened and includes the processing of the legal burial records.

Stratfield Mortimer fees do not include the digging and backfill of graves which is the responsibility of the funeral directors.

Residents pay precept so cemetery fees are lower than those for non-residents. Non-residents pay approximately three times the resident fee.

The term '**Resident**' is a person who was an inhabitant of the civil parishes of Stratfield Mortimer or Wokefield immediately before their death. '**Non Resident**' is a person who moved from the said parishes within a five year period prior to death.

The fee structure was set by the parish council when the cemetery was first opened up for use in 1999 and the fees were originally fixed to limit access to those residing within Stratfield Mortimer or, under exceptional circumstances, those with a connection to Mortimer but not living in the parish at the time of death.

Over the past few years, the parish council has annually reviewed the fees for resident and non-resident and set an increase of approximately 3% each year across both categories. This past year, the council agreed to increase costs for 2023 at a higher rate of 5%.

A comparison of SMPC's current costs against those from several different cemeteries in the south of England is attached for reference. (*Appendix 23/007 2.1 Cemetery Fee comparison table*)

*Assistant to the Clerk – 13/07/2023*