

Subject:	Extension of burial plots	Status:	For Publication
Report to:	Council	Date:	16 th July 2025
Report of:	Head of Environmental Services	Portfolio Holder:	Environment and Corporate Services
Key Decision:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Forward Plan <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	General Exception <input type="checkbox"/>	Special Urgency <input type="checkbox"/>
Equality Impact Assessment:	Required:	No	Attached: No
Biodiversity Impact Assessment:	Required:	No	Attached: No
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1. RECOMMENDATION

- 1.1 To add the development of new burial plots at Haslingden Cemetery to the Council's Capital Programme.
- 1.2 To delegate to the Head of Environmental Services in conjunction with the Lead Member for Environment and Corporate Services, The Monitoring Officer and the Director of Resources the responsibility to procure all necessary consultants and contractors to deliver the project.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Feasibility studies have been carried out for extending both Rawtenstall and Haslingden Cemeteries' capacity for Muslim burials due to the current shortage of space on current plots.
- A decision was made to initially develop Haslingden Cemetery, and an area suitable for the burials has been identified.
- Designs have been shared with members of the Muslim Community from Rawtenstall and Haslingden who are in favour of the plans.
- The next step is to gain Council approval of funding to progress through planning, detailed construction specifications and the procurement process, and to appoint a contractor to deliver the projects.
- Costs for development are likely to be approximately £600,000 for Haslingden.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Following discussions with the Muslim Community in 2021 regarding the future of burials for their faith at Rawtenstall and Haslingden, the council have been working with Harrison DD Consultants to carry out the necessary steps to develop concept designs for both sites. The work carried out by Harrison so far was procured via 3 quotes and to this stage has cost £6,930.
- 3.2 Following the necessary groundwater testing, topographical survey and initial costing exercise, it has been decided that the development at Haslingden will be pursued initially, with Rawtenstall being considered at a later date.
- 3.3 Officers have since met with representatives from both Rawtenstall and Haslingden Muslim communities to communicate the reasons for this decision, and to share the initial designs with them. The discussions were positive and a consensus has been reached on progressing with the concept design produced by Harrison DD.
- 3.4 The aim is to get the project ready for physical work at the beginning of 2026. The need for burial space in the short term has been addressed at both Rawtenstall and Haslingden. However, Haslingden will require additional capacity for Muslim burials by late 2025. Rawtenstall Cemetery has capacity until approximately late 2026.

4. DETAILS

- 4.1 Designs were shared with representatives of the community and were well received. There will be space for 217 concrete vaults which will provide burial capacity for approximately 11 years.
- 4.2 The cost estimate for this site is £380,000 including consultant fees, surveys, planning, construction and post-construction. This does not include the vaults which will cost approximately £120,000 to purchase, taking the cost to approximately £500,000. The need for an additional area for parking in the cemetery is clear and a new ashes garden of remembrance is planned for the development which will mean that including a contingency the total approximate cost for the project will be c£600,000.
- 4.3 The site has been leased off in recent years and used for agricultural purposes. The lease was terminated in December 2024 to allow the development to progress. Due to the proposed change of use a full planning application will be required.
- 4.4 The current cost to purchase a grave space, vault and to inter the deceased is £4046. At this rate it is expected that the capital cost will be repaid within 7-8 years at a burial rate of 20 per year. Towards the end of the expected 11-year lifespan a decision will need to be made on whether to pursue phase 2.

Next steps

- 4.5 Authority from Council is sought to continue with the development at Haslingden Cemetery and add the project to the Capital Programme.

4.6 Options

1. Do nothing and make a decision that when current capacity is reached, Rossendale Borough Council will no longer offer areas for Muslim burials. This will be unpopular with the Muslim Community and will reduce the income generation of Rossendale's Cemeteries.
2. Proceed with development at Haslingden Cemetery and revisit Rawtenstall after this is completed. This has been discussed with representatives from both towns and has their approval.

5. RISK

- 5.1 All the issues raised and the recommendation(s) in this report involve risk considerations as set out below:
- The council has worked alongside the community on this matter therefore failure to maintain momentum may affect relationships.
 - The development needs to progress due to the lack of space in current plots. This would lead to the council not being in a position to offer burials to the Muslim Community.
 - Failure to employ a specialist to do this work and attempt to carry out using in-house resources would risk the success of the projects due to lack of expertise.
 - Despite the initial cost, failure to develop the cemeteries would lead to a source of income generation being missed.

6. FINANCE

- 6.1 The proposal is not currently within the approved capital expenditure programme for 2025/26 and will therefore need Full Council approval to be added.

- 6.2 Based on estimated sales of 20 plots per year, by the end of the 11 year project life the project will have generated a surplus which will contribute towards the cost of cemetery staff time and ongoing running costs of the cemetery.
- 6.3 Whilst the current assumption is that the scheme will be funded by PWLB borrowing, when finalising the Capital Programme financing as a whole, officers will give consideration as to the optimum funding arrangements, which may include: use of capital receipts, internal borrowing and any other requirements for PWLB borrowing to minimise the financing cost.

7. LEGAL

- 7.1 The Council's Contract Procedure Rules will be adopted in procuring this work with all relevant legal agreements being signed prior to the commencement of works.
- 7.2 All statutory permissions and consents will be in place before project commencement.

8. POLICY AND EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no policy or equality implications. Any equality implications related to the project will be given consideration in a relevant and proportionate manner.

9. REASON FOR DECISION

- 9.1 The decision is to add the development of Haslingden Cemetery to the capital programme and allocate a budget of £600,000 for this purpose. This will mean that burials for the Muslim Community in Rossendale are supported for the next decade. This will address an issue for residents whilst continuing to provide a source of income for the Council.

No background papers