



**NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL  
SCRUTINY PANEL 1 – CEMETERIES**

**27 SEPTEMBER 2017**

**BRIEFING NOTE: Information for Scrutiny Panel 1 about local authority funerals.**

Under section 46 of the Public Health (Control of Disease) 1984, it is the duty of the local authority to cause to be buried or cremated the body of any person who has died or been found dead in their area, in any case where it appears to the authority that suitable arrangements have not been made for the disposal of the body. The legislation empowers the local authority to recover its expenses in arranging a funeral from the estate of the deceased person.

The number of local authority funerals carried out by Northampton Borough Council are detailed in the table below.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total number of local authority funerals</b>	<b>Number of cremations</b>	<b>Number of burials</b>
2016/17	11	10	1
2015/16	11	10	1
2014/15	17	16	1
2013/14	29	27	2
2012/13	28	26	2

As can be seen from the statistics above, the majority of local authority funerals carried out in the last five years have been cremations. In recent year it has been the normal practice. The costs of burials and cremations are broadly similar and a cremation allows for a service to take place in the chapel at the crematorium rather than at the graveside (which would be the case for burials). The burials that have taken place have been at the request of the Coroner, in cases where the deceased had already purchased a burial plot, where the deceased had religious beliefs that did not allow burial or where practical factors such as the size of the deceased meant that cremation was not possible.

The arrangement of local authority funerals is carried out by a funeral director under contract to the local authority. This contract has recently been re-let and it is possible that there may be a change in the proportion of burials and cremations in future.

Local authority funerals are carried out for a range of reasons. Some of the deceased have no immediate family members or friends who are able to carry out the funerals. In some situations estrangements within families mean that no one is willing to arrange a funeral. Sometimes family members do not have sufficient funds to pay the funeral directors, although social fund payments are available to assist with funeral costs, they do not cover the full cost.

Brief Author

Ruth Austen, Environmental Health and Licensing Manager

Date

4 August 2017