



Ware Town Council

Report of Cemetery & Allotments Officer
Report to Community & Environment Committee
Date Monday 18 September 2023
Subject Cemetery and Allotments Report

Allotment Waitlist Report

There is currently a total of **44** people on the waiting list covering both sites.

Site	# on Waitlist	# of Vacant Plots
Crosspath Field (King George Road)	7	4
Warehouse Field (Widbury Hill)	37	7

There are 3 people on the Warehouse Field waiting list who already have a plot but would like an additional one and 4 people who are not residents of Ware. Priority is given to all others on the list before non-residents or those wanting additional plots.

There is also 5 people on the Warehouse Field waiting list who have shared, over the last 9 months, they do not feel in a position to take on an allotment plot at this time. I will periodically contact them to see if their situation has changed and what their wishes are in regards to remaining on the waiting list. Them remaining on the waiting list does not impact those further down the list.

Allotment Inspections

Allotment re-inspections, across both sites, is in the process of being completed. The 25 of those 60 have been marked as 'poor' (16 at Warehouse Field and 9 at Crosspath) have been re-inspected and in cases where no work has been undertaken or conversations had with the Allotments Officer, a Notice of Intent to Terminate has been issued. This Notice gives the plot holder 30 days to take action on their plot.

Allotment Competition Awards

The main allotment competition was completed in July, with Mayor. Thomas Day and Cllr. Graeme Hill judging the shortlisted plots. Unfortunately, this year we was unable to judge the 'Best Newcomer' category due to the very limited number of appropriate plots. The Allotment Competition Awards will take place from 6:30pm on Monday 18 September, with the plot holders placed 1st and 2nd place for 'Best Kept

Plot' for each site attending. Committee members of the Ware Allotment & Gardens Society (WAGS) will be attending the Awards.

Sunflower Competition

This year we opened the Sunflower Competition was opened out to all residents of Ware, with both adult and children categories for tallest flower and largest flower head. We have had 3 entries into the adult category and 2 in the children's.

Cemetery Topple Testing

Headstone topple testing was completed at Ware Cemetery in July. This process is also known as Memorial Stability Testing. Topple testing is required by Law to ensure all cemeteries are deemed safe. The work involves a headstone's stability being tested by hand to ensure it is not at risk of falling over. This previously became a statutory requirement following the death of a child visiting a London cemetery.

We contracted The CDS Group to complete the testing and they did so "in line with the practical and pragmatic methods as laid out in the guidance notes of the Ministry of Justice and the recently published BSI Standards Publication (ref 8415:2018 – Memorials within burial grounds and memorial sites – Specification)".

A total of **2585** memorials were tested. Of these **348** were deemed unstable due to movement occurring and of these, **31** were deemed 'High Risk'. The remaining 317 were deemed 'Medium Risk'. The company does not mark any as 'Low Risk'.

Where possible we have written to all Registered Owners of the 'High Risk' memorials to advise them immediate action is required to make their memorial safe. We have asked they make contact with a qualified Stonemason, who is either registered with NAMM (National Association of Memorial Masons) or BRAMM (British Register of Memorial Masons), to undertake the required repair work. We will be reinspecting these memorial in 3 months' time and if no arrangement has been made to repair and make safe, Ware Town Council will need to decide whether to appropriately lay the memorial flat on the grave space.

I am in the process of putting together a mail merge to send letters to all Registered Owner's of those memorials deemed 'Medium Risk'. This involves finding the original Deed for each grave space and checking the Registered Owner's information (whether they are deceased or address is still valid), as well as updating the Burial Records.

Some of the difficulties we face, is that the Registered Owner may be deceased and we do not hold any information on living relatives or a Registered Owner has changed address, so we have no way of contacting the family. Some families may also not be in agreement that the memorial is unstable and refuse to repair. In those situations, dependent whether the memorial has been deemed 'high risk' or 'medium risk', Ware Town Council will decide whether it is appropriate to lay the memorial flat.