



Cemetery Fees Benchmarking Report Sturminster Newton Town Council

1. Purpose and scope

The purpose of this report is to assess whether Sturminster Newton Town Council's cemetery fees should be increased. It compares SNTC's charges with those published online by Shaftesbury, Blandford Forum, Sherborne and Gillingham Town Councils, focusing on fees that can be matched reasonably closely.

2. Comparative cemetery fees

Charge	Sturminster Newton	Shaftesbury	Blandford Forum	Sherborne	Gillingham
Exclusive right: full grave	£320	£231	£272 single / £436 double depth (rotation)	£700	Not available for new adult burial plots
Exclusive right: cremated remains	£160	£122.50	£180	£375	£118
Adult interment	£90	£158.20	£149	£625 including grave preparation	£123
Child interment / grave	Free to age 18	Free age 0–5; £72 age 6–12	Free to age 18	Free under 16	Free to age 17
Headstone with first inscription	£90	£144 headstone/footstone	£190	£75	£123
Additional inscription	£30	£43	£41	£50	£37
Transfer of burial right	£30	£0 without new documents / £35 with documents	£37 + VAT	£40 incl. VAT without statutory declaration / £100 incl. VAT with declaration	£0 without new documents / £20 with documents
Records search	£30 incl. VAT	£0 digital / £21 paper	£28 + VAT minimum	£25 initial half-hour; then £13 per half-hour + VAT	£25
Non-resident multiplier	2×	2.5×	2×	2×	2×

Notes: Categories are not always identical. Blandford distinguishes rotation and selected-site graves. Sherborne combines grave preparation with interment. Gillingham does not offer new adult burial plots, other than plots for ashes.

Wider Dorset comparison: A broader review of published cemetery charges from other Dorset town councils, including Bridport, Lyme Regis, Dorchester and Portland, supports the same overall conclusion. SNTC's adult interment and headstone charges are generally below the wider range, and its additional-inscription charge is at or near the lower end. The wider comparison therefore supports increasing these selected fees. It provides less evidence for a substantial rise in the full-grave right, so the more modest proposed increase is appropriate.

3. Overall assessment

The comparison supports an increase in selected SNTC cemetery fees. Adult interment, headstone and additional-inscription charges are notably below most comparable councils and do not appear to reflect the level charged elsewhere for similar services. SNTC should therefore revise these fees so that they are set at an appropriate level when compared with neighbouring authorities, while also taking account of the actual cost of providing each service.

4. Recommendations

1. **Increase the adult interment fee from £90 to £140.** This would move SNTC closer to the neighbouring charges of £123, £149 and £158.20, while remaining below the two highest directly comparable local figures.
2. **Increase the headstone fee from £90 to £125 and the additional-inscription fee from £30 to £40.** These amounts better reflect the wider comparison while remaining close to the lower-to-middle range of published Dorset charges.
3. **Increase the full-grave right from £320 to £350 and the cremated-remains right from £160 to £175.** These modest increases would align SNTC more closely with comparable charges without applying the larger increases justified for interments and memorials.
4. **Retain free provision for children through age 18 and the two-times non-resident structure.** These policies remain broadly consistent with neighbouring councils and preserve a clear community benefit.
5. **Set the records-search fee at £25 plus VAT for up to one hour, with additional time charged at £12.50 plus VAT per half hour.** This provides a clear initial allowance and a proportionate charge for more detailed searches.