

# **Thurrock Council**

## **Procedure and practical guide for Muslim burials**

# Contents

1. Introduction .....	3
2. How to book a burial.....	3
3. Type of grave.....	4
4. Purchasing the burial rights.....	4
5. Cemetery fees .....	4
6. Legal requirements .....	4
7. How the actual burial takes place .....	5
8. Returning the soil to the grave .....	6
9. Help and assistance .....	6

## 1. Introduction

The Bereavement service is responsible for managing Thurrock Council's cemeteries and providing a helpful, sympathetic and professional service.

As the landowner, Thurrock Council controls and administers West Thurrock Cemetery utilising the powers set out in The Local Authorities Cemeteries Order 1977 (as amended).

A specific Muslim burial section has been created within West Thurrock Cemetery. The Muslim Section of the cemetery has been formed from one individual section of ground designated by the Registrar for that purpose and in consultation with the Imam of Grays Mosque.

The mounding of a grave is allowed within the Muslim Section, which will be marked by a simple plaque stone and maintained by the burials maintenance team.

## 2. How to book a burial

To register the death, phone Thurrock Register Office:

- **01375 372 822** – Monday to Friday, between 9am and 5pm
- **01375 372 468** – Saturdays and Sundays, between 9am and 2pm

Thurrock Register Office will notify the burials department.

Deaths must be registered with the Register Office for the district where the death occurred.

Interments (burials) may take place between 9:30am and 2pm.

The latest time for making a booking is 2pm on the day before the burial.

To comply with health and safety law, funerals are not allowed to take place later than 3pm on any day. This is to ensure the vault is closed and all soil is returned to the grave during daylight hours.

When a burial is booked, we will need to know:

- **funeral date and time** – the date and time the funeral cortege will arrive at the cemetery gates
- **details of the deceased** – full name, address and age
- **type of burial** – whether a coffin, casket or shroud is to be used

If a coffin or casket is to be used, we will need to know the coffin size to ensure the grave is the correct size. Coffin sizes must be given in writing. We cannot be held responsible if this information is later found to be incorrect.

Burials without coffins are permitted, provided that the deceased is brought to the grave in a temporary coffin. Shroud-only burials are not permitted if the deceased had a contagious or notifiable disease.

- **Notice of Interment** – a completed Notice of Interment form must be received to confirm the booking

The Notice of Interment form is available from the Cemetery Office or can be downloaded from [www.thurrock.gov.uk/burials](http://www.thurrock.gov.uk/burials). It must be completed on or before the day of burial.

If the form is completed on the day of burial, it must be sent to the Cemetery Office before the burial takes place. The person applying for the burial ('the applicant') will become the owner of the burials rights, known as 'The Deed of Grant for the Exclusive Right of Burial'.

### **3. Type of grave**

**Earth graves** are usually single depth – about 1.7m or 5.5 feet – in the Muslim Section, unless a specific request is made for a double depth grave for two people. The grave will be 2.1m (7 feet) long and 75cm (30 inches) wide, shored with timber for health and safety purposes.

If a timber-shored grave is not be available, it may be necessary to use a different type of shoring that will need to be removed prior to closing the grave.

### **4. Purchasing the burial rights**

#### **Exclusive right of burial**

Purchasing 'The Deed of Grant for the Exclusive Right of Burial' ensures that no other burials may take place in the grave. A deed for the grave, in the name of the applicant stated on the Notice of Interment, will be issued for a period of 50 years following the burial. The ownership of the land and responsibilities remain the property of Thurrock Council.

#### **Public health graves**

'Public heath funerals' are funerals arranged by local councils for people who have died and have no known relative to arrange or pay for their funeral. These types of funeral are normally referred via the Coroners Service.

Public health graves can be provided in the Muslim Section at West Thurrock Cemetery. These have no burial or memorial rights and non-family members may be buried in the same grave.

### **5. Cemetery fees**

The fee for a burial should be paid to Thurrock Council or a funeral director before the burial takes place. Current fees and charges are online at [www.thurrock.gov.uk/burials](http://www.thurrock.gov.uk/burials), or may be obtained from the Cemetery Office by phoning 01375 652 304.

The full fee for non-residents of Thurrock is double the subsidised fee for Thurrock residents.

### **6. Legal requirements**

The death must be registered with the Register Office in the district where the death occurred.

The Registrar will require a certificate of the cause of death, issued by a medical practitioner. The Registrar will issue a certificate for burial (known as a 'green form').

The certificate of burial must be handed in to the Cemetery Office or to the cemetery supervisor at the time of burial. The burial cannot take place without the certificate of burial ('green form').

## 7. How the actual burial takes place

### Arrival of the deceased

A member of the council's staff will meet the cortege at the cemetery gate at the time arranged for the burial. They will witness the burial, confirming the details of the deceased match the certificate of burial (green form). They will also offer advice and assist whenever required.

It is important that the body of the deceased arrives at the grave by the specified time. If this will not be possible, the Cemetery Office must be informed.

If the cortege arrives late and cemetery staff have commitments attending at other funerals, the council cannot guarantee that the funeral will be able to go ahead – in this instance, the council reserves the right to postpone the funeral and rearrange for the next day.

### Lowering the body into the grave

Where possible, a nominated Muslim community representative should be present to ensure the smooth running of the burial.

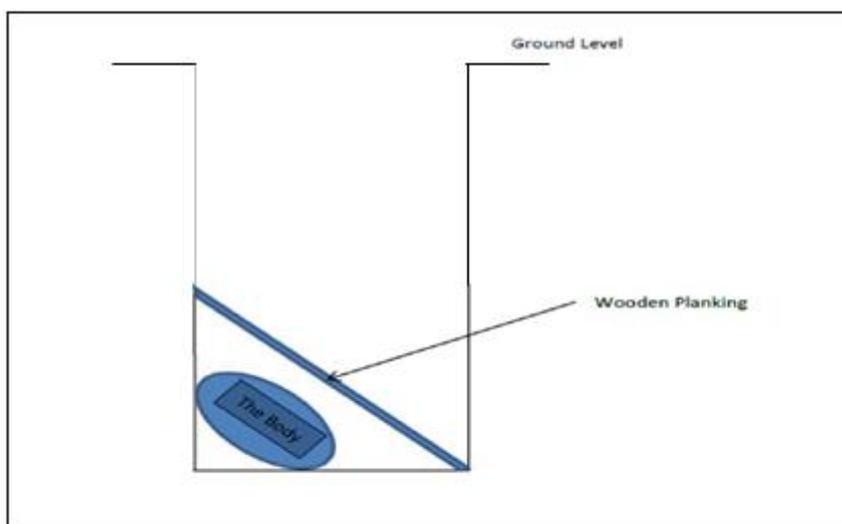
The lowering of the deceased must take place in a controlled and dignified manner.

If a shroud is to be used, a suitable container must be provided to transport the deceased to the graveside. Consideration must also be given to how the deceased will be placed into the grave.

Slings should be used to lower the deceased. It is not safe or sensible for anyone to enter a grave. You must ensure there are sufficient bearers to carry and lower the deceased into the grave.

For coffins and rigid containers, slings are available at the graveside.

Once the body has been lowered into the grave, has been orientated correctly and the shoring at the corresponding depth removed, individual wood planks will be placed side-by-side inside and along the entire length of the grave as shown below. Only then can phased backfilling of the grave begin as the grave shoring is removed in a phased procedure.



Wooden planking is approximately 1m by 20cm by 4.5cm (39 inches by 8.5 inches by 1.75 inches).

## **8. Returning the soil to the grave**

### **Families and mourners**

In many cases, families and mourners prefer to return the soil to the grave themselves. Spades will be provided for this purpose.

Great care must be taken to ensure families and mourners are not injured during the backfilling process. We recommend that only two people return the soil to the grave at any time.

We also recommend that suitable footwear is worn to prevent injuries to feet. Bare feet are not allowed under any circumstances.

The soil on the grave should be left mounded to allow it to settle.

### **After the ceremony**

Our gravediggers will tidy the grave area and remove excess soil.

### **Severe weather**

In the event of severe weather, we reserve the right to cancel an interment if we believe there are unacceptable hazards to the safety of members of the public and cemetery staff.

## **9. Help and assistance**

Help and assistance is available either at the Cemetery Office or via your local funeral director. Advice is also available from the mosque and your community representative.

Contact the Cemetery Office:

- web – [www.thurrock.gov.uk/burials](http://www.thurrock.gov.uk/burials)
- email – [burialcremations.admin@thurrock.gov.uk](mailto:burialcremations.admin@thurrock.gov.uk)
- phone – 01375 652 304
- post – Cemetery Office, Environment Depot, Oliver Close, West Thurrock, RM20 3ED