



FRATING PARISH COUNCIL

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Policy Approved: 11th May 2026

Policy Review Date: May 2027

Closed Churchyard Management Policy

1. Introduction

Frating Parish Council (FPC) is responsible for the maintenance and safe management of the **Closed Churchyard, Frating**, under Section 215 of the Local Government Act 1972. This policy sets out how the Council will discharge its legal duties, manage risks, and ensure the churchyard remains a safe, respectful, and well-maintained place for visitors.

2. Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Establish clear procedures for the inspection, maintenance and management of the closed churchyard.
- Ensure compliance with relevant legislation.
- Protect the safety of the public, contractors, volunteers and council staff.
- Preserve the historic, environmental and community value of the site.
- Provide transparency and accountability in how the Council fulfils its responsibilities.

3. Legislative and Regulatory Framework

This policy is informed by the following legislation and guidance:

- Local Government Act 1972 (s.215) – transfer of responsibility for closed churchyards.
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.
- Occupiers' Liability Acts 1957 & 1984.
- Local Authorities' Cemeteries Order 1977 (as good practice).
- Faculty Jurisdiction Rules – for works within consecrated ground.
- Common law duty of care.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

4.1 Frating Parish Council

The Council is responsible for:

- Overall management of the closed churchyard.
- Approving this policy and ensuring it is reviewed annually.
- Ensuring adequate budget provision for maintenance and safety works.
- Commissioning inspections and remedial works.

4.2 Parish Clerk

The Clerk is responsible for:

- Maintaining inspection records and risk assessments.
- Liaising with contractors as appropriate
- Arranging urgent action where required to remedy hazards identified.

4.3 Contractors and Volunteers

All contractors and volunteers must:

- Work safely and comply with Council instructions.
- Provide risk assessments, method statements, and insurance where required.
- Report hazards immediately.

5. Inspection and Maintenance Regime

5.1 Memorials and Headstones

- Annual visual inspection by the Council or competent contractor.
- Formal testing every 5 years by trained personnel (NAMM/BRAMM-compliant).
- Any memorial posing immediate danger will be cordoned off or laid flat.
- Where owners are identifiable, they will be notified of defects.

5.2 Trees

- 5-year arboricultural survey by a qualified arborist.
- Additional inspections after storms or high winds.
- Deadwood removal and remedial works carried out as required.

5.3 Paths, Boundaries, Walls, and Fences

- Inspected annually for defects.
- Repairs prioritised based on risk.
- Faculty permission sought where required for structural works.

5.4 Grounds Maintenance

- Grass cutting, strimming, and vegetation control carried out by competent contractors.
- Weed-killing only by trained personnel following COSHH requirements.
- Litter, glass, and hazardous waste removed promptly.

6. Risk Management

The Council will maintain a **Closed Churchyard Risk Assessment**, reviewed annually and after significant incidents or weather events.

Key risks include:

- Unstable memorials
- Tree failure
- Uneven or slippery paths
- Boundary wall deterioration
- Anti-social behaviour
- Subsidence around graves
- Contractor activity

The full risk assessment is included in **Appendix A**.

7. Public Access and Safety

The Council will:

- Ensure the churchyard remains accessible and safe for visitors.
- Display appropriate signage where hazards are present.
- Cordon off dangerous areas until repairs are completed.
- Respond promptly to reports of hazards from the public

8. Biodiversity and Environmental Considerations

The Council will:

- Maintain the churchyard in a manner that respects wildlife and biodiversity.
- Avoid unnecessary disturbance to habitats.
- Consider seasonal timing of works (e.g., nesting birds, wildflower areas).

9. Record Keeping

The Clerk will maintain:

- Inspection logs (memorials, trees, boundaries, paths).
- Contractor documentation (insurance, RAMS).
- Incident and near-miss reports.
- Photographic evidence of defects and repairs.

Appendix A: Closed Churchyard Risk Assessment (Frating Parish Council)

A1. Summary Risk Table

Hazard	Risk	Who is at Risk	Controls in Place	Further Action Required
Unstable memorials	Collapse causing injury	Public, contractors	Annual inspection; 5-year testing; cordon/lay flat	Notify owners; maintain inspection log
Trees	Falling branches	Public, contractors	5-year survey; storm checks	Increase checks for high-risk trees
Boundary walls	Collapse, falling masonry	Public	Annual inspection	Faculty approval for major works
Paths	Slips, trips, falls	Public	Clearing debris; repairs	Consider resurfacing high-risk areas
Subsidence	Trips, falls	Public	Routine monitoring	Cordon off unstable areas
Grass cutting	Flying debris	Contractors, public	Contractor RAMS; PPE	Temporary signage
Anti-social behaviour	Injury, distress	Public	Liaison with police; litter removal	Consider lighting improvements
Dog fouling	Infection	Public	Signage; bins	Enforcement visits
Lone working	Injury without assistance	Staff, contractors	Lone-working procedure	Personal safety training

Appendix B: Inspection Schedule

Area	Frequency	Responsible Person
Memorials	Annual + 5-year testing	FPC/Contractor
Trees	5-year survey + storm checks	Qualified arborist
Paths	Annual	FPC
Walls & boundaries	Annual	FPC
Grounds maintenance	As per contract	Contractor

Appendix C: Emergency Actions

- Immediately cordon off dangerous areas.
- Lay flat any memorial posing imminent danger.
- Record all actions taken.

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Review date: May 2026

Next review date: May 2027