

State of the Market Survey 2022

Cemetery and Crematoria Services





This state of the market survey was conducted by Wayne Priestley, APSE Principal Advisor for Environmental services

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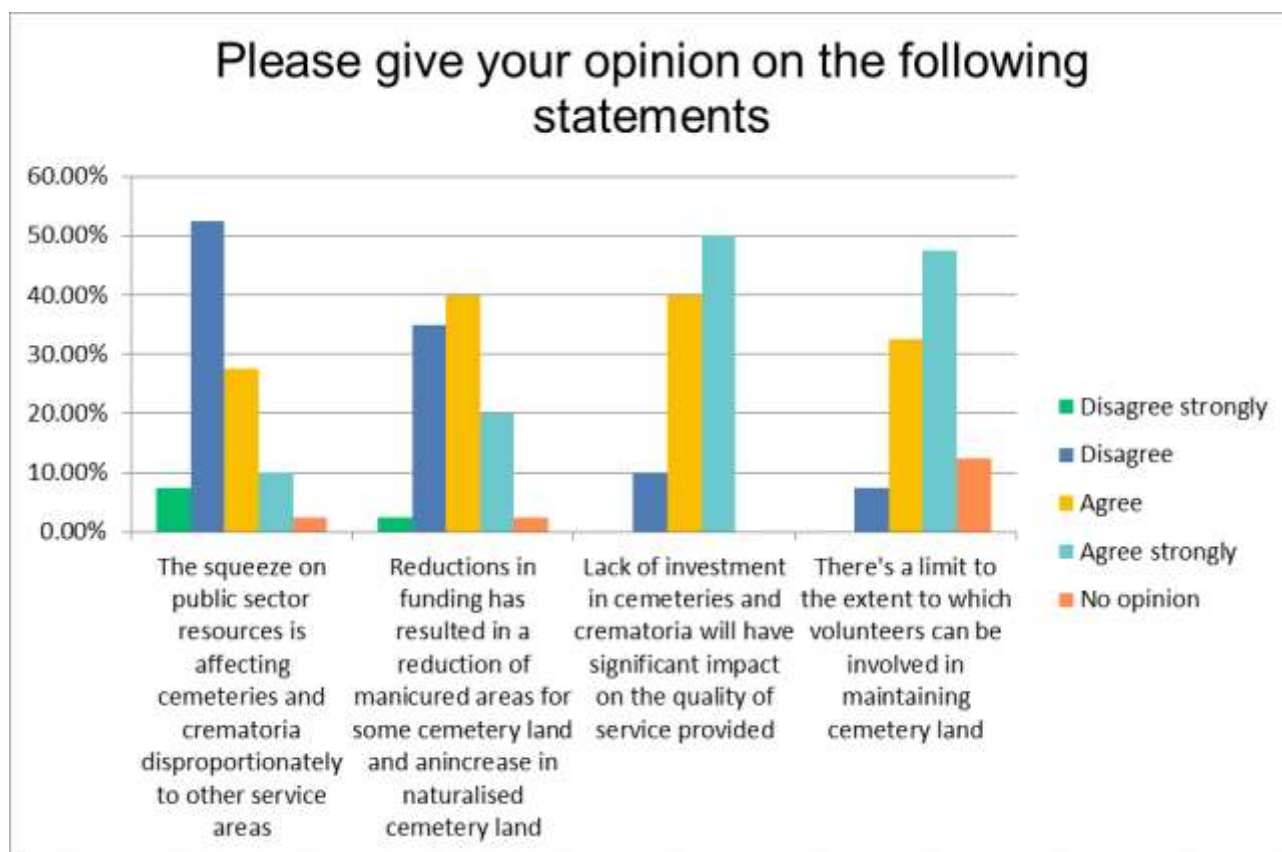
Local Authority Cemetery and Crematoria Services

State of the Market 2022

APSE conducted an online survey during January to March 2022. The questions contained within the survey have been formulated to allow future trend comparisons to be made on the key issues affecting Cemetery and Crematoria services. The questions have been written in co-operation with local authority bereavement services managers. Despite the ongoing impacts of the coronavirus and its effect on the service areas, local authority responses were received from over 40 councils throughout the UK which is a valid representative sample.

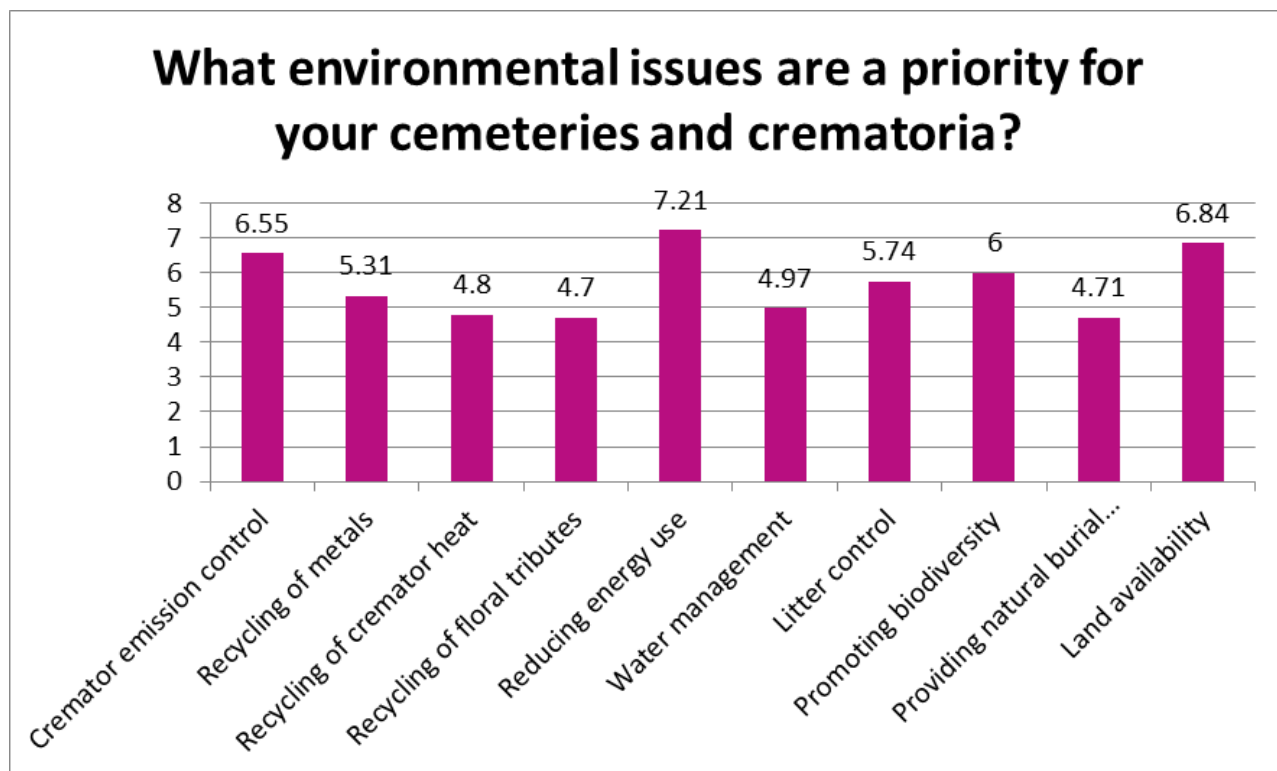
This report identifies the key findings of the survey.

Results from the survey



From the opinions received, 40% feel bereavement services have had disproportionate funding cuts compared to other services which is a rise of just 5% on 2021 when 35% felt this was the case. This may be a reflection of people experiencing higher levels of budget reductions as councils look to manage the wider corporate costs of the pandemic. Accordingly, a high proportion of respondents at 90%, feel that the lack of investment in cemeteries and crematoria will impact on the quality of future service delivery. To some extent, this concern over the decline in service quality, is reflected in the fact 62% of respondents have experienced reductions in the manicured quality of their grounds,

Interestingly with regards to the use of volunteers, as in 2021, 92% felt that there was a limit to involving them in grounds maintenance. Volunteers are very much seen as bringing added value to services rather than being seen as being able to carry out core service work, but there are likely to be variations in the complexity of roles volunteers are given. However, their ability to bring in extra funding is widely recognised.



Regarding key environmental priorities, since last year there has been some change. The importance of reducing energy use is now at the top of the ten environmental priorities in 2022. Considering the increase in energy prices this is perhaps not unexpected. There have also been increases in the importance of identifying land for cemeteries, controlling cremator emissions and promoting biodiversity, in fact, improving opportunities for biodiversity has risen in significance now being the fourth highest priority.

Although reducing energy use is still the highest environmental priority, it is telling that the importance of land availability is now becoming a major issue for local authorities and one which will no doubt continue to rise in importance as burial space reduces, with a contributory factor being the impact of the increased death rate, during the height of the pandemic, in some areas, as well as a growing population and the on-going demand for new housing.

The visual appearance of cemetery grounds is also well represented, with litter control and opportunities or promoting biodiversity again highlighted. It is clear from these results that cemetery and crematoria managers are building environmental considerations into their service delivery as much as financial and social aspects.

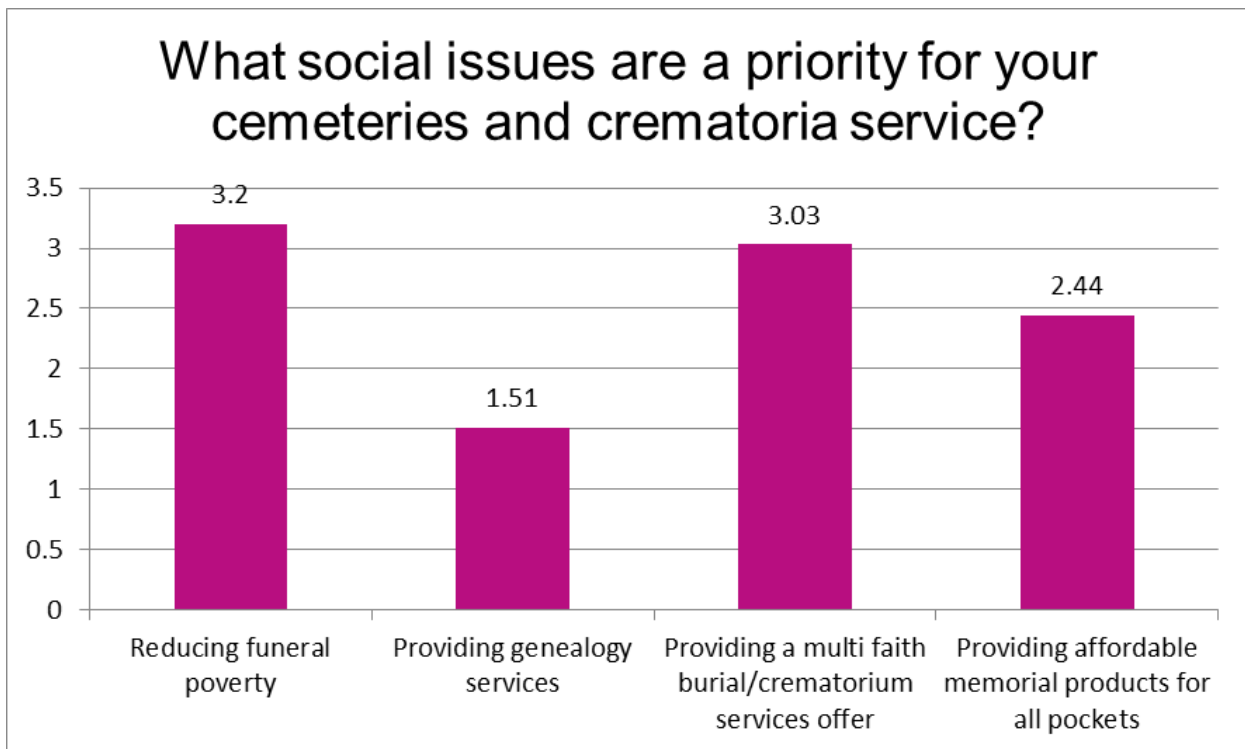
Are there any other environmental issues which are impacting upon your service?

Because of the nature of the service and its strong connection with the physical environment, there are a wide variety of environmental issues which can impact on the service.

Bereavement Managers have highlighted the following as areas of concern:

- Tree management – including safety and aesthetic maintenance requirements
- Re-use of soil from graves.
- Scottish Environmental Protection Agency guidelines in relation to burial ground, including ground water pollution
- The lack of space for new burial grounds caused by both land availability, increasing population pressures and the competing demands for local housing construction
- The increased need for cutting grass due to a warmer wetter climate, including winters. This change in climate has also been causing issues for re-opening graves in some areas due to waterlogging
- The use of chemicals and changes to what can be used
- Weed and Moss control
- Noise pollution from surrounding industries which may be a localised issue but may also reflect the need to use consider the impact of land use near to cemeteries.
- Increased rainfall which may be attributed to climate change causing increased incidents of waterlogging
- Mourners planting non-native invasive plant species in naturalised burial areas.
- The increased need for re-instatement after extreme weather events
- Increased requests for carbon neutral funerals.
- The Impact of badger activity on cemetery grounds.

New areas of concern included the need to look at alternatives to the traditional gas-powered cremator e.g. electric cremators, or water cremation / resomation. Added to this is the move towards using more electric vehicles and battery powered tools rather than the usual petrol/diesel powered ones.



As with last year's results, it is apparent that there is a growing need to adapt service provision to enable Bereavement Services to meet the growing demand for affordable funerals which clearly is the key social issue. This may have a financial impact on Bereavement Services from a cost perspective and this is perhaps trying to be addressed through the adoption of greater levels of income generation via the sale of genealogy services and memorialisation products. However, the importance of providing multi-faith burials and cremations caused by the UK population becoming more ethnically diverse has now risen considerably on respondents agendas.

Are there any other social issues which are impacting upon your service?

Ensuring residents are dealt with in a sympathetic manner is key to quality service delivery, and as such Bereavement Managers have to consider ways in which to help vulnerable families at their time of loss. Some of the survey responses received over the past few years have highlighted the following:

- The need to ensure the availability of local cemeteries to remove the need to travel outside the area to visit departed family members.
- The need to provide free child funerals.
- Providing more celebratory services with more personal content.
- Coping with the responsibility for providing the increasing number of Public Health Services both where the deceased has no family, but increasingly where a family does exist but are unwilling or unable to take on the funeral costs.

- Working with NHS colleagues to deliver best quality service for foetal and babies funerals
- Dealing with changing demographics and in particular, low- income sections of the community
- Dealing with the demands on Bereavement Services to provide revenue earnings for local authorities, which is not always reinvested in the service. There was a view that if fee increases were kept to what was necessary for the service, then it would ease the financial strain on bereaved families.
- Unauthorised memorials as well as the different styles/suitability of memorials being requested/installed.
- Anti-social behaviour appears to be increasing
- Bereaved reporting government-funded funeral grants are insufficient and overly complicated.
- Transfer of ownership of exclusive rights of burial are causing problems for some.
- Increasing number of requests for information on DIY funerals.
- Unauthorised burial of ashes in cemetery grounds.
- Need to improve information about funeral options, so that the bereaved can make more informed choices.

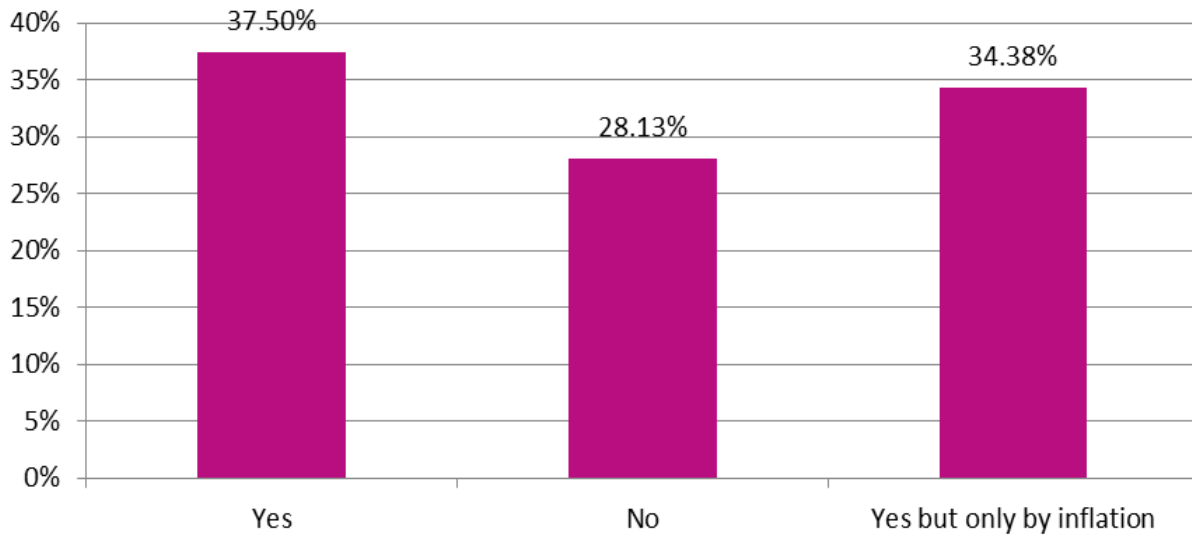
A new area of concern, is the need to improve accessibility around cemeteries, particularly memorial gardens.

Budget matters

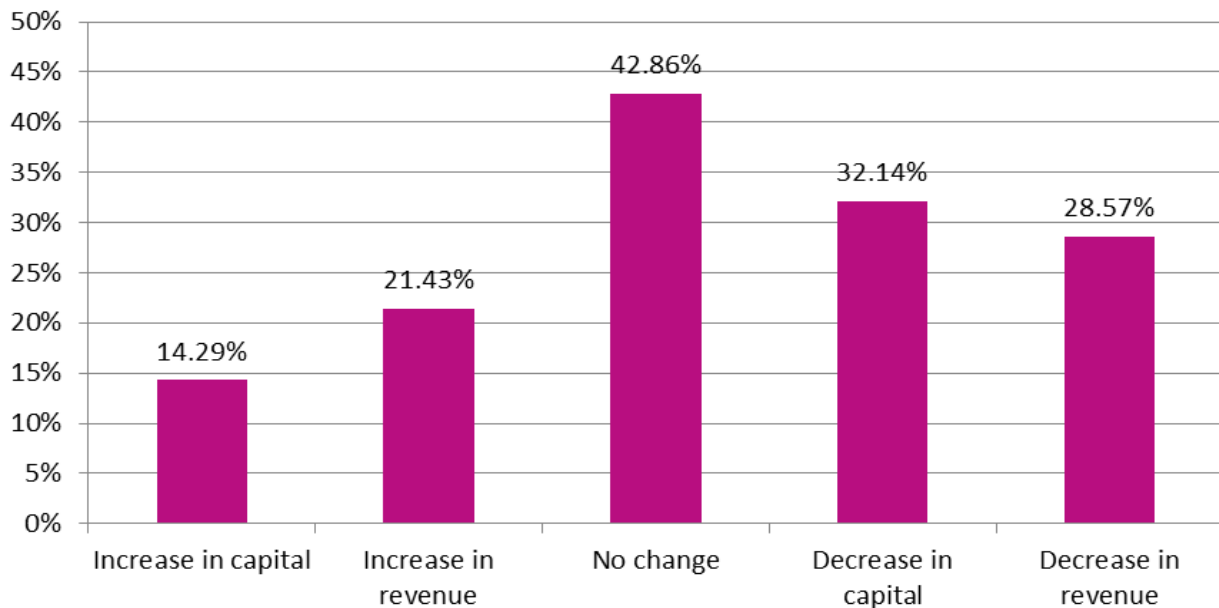
From the three graphs below it is clear that over half of the respondents are expecting changes in budgets over the next 5 years, however there does not appear to be any great threats to the long-term viability of service provision with most respondents expecting increases or no change to current levels of funding.

Notably as well as increases in budgets, the one significant change over 2021 is there has been a 5% decrease in those expecting to see a reduction in both their capital and revenue budgets over the next five years. This together, with the majority of respondents 46%, expecting no change over the next five years, may be seen as a sign that budgets are expected to stabilise once the impacts of the pandemic have eased.

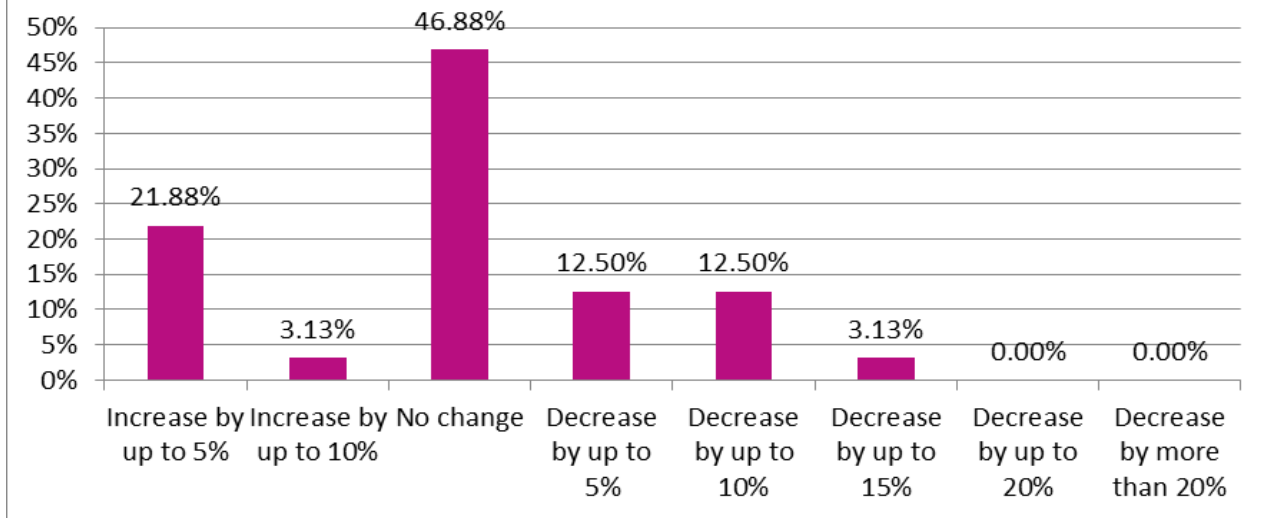
Do you expect the cemeteries and crematoria budget to change over the next year?



If yes, do you expect:



What is your expectation of the level of funding in your service budget in the coming five years?



How do you expect to achieve any efficiencies required (e.g. increased income levels/introducing new services offers)?

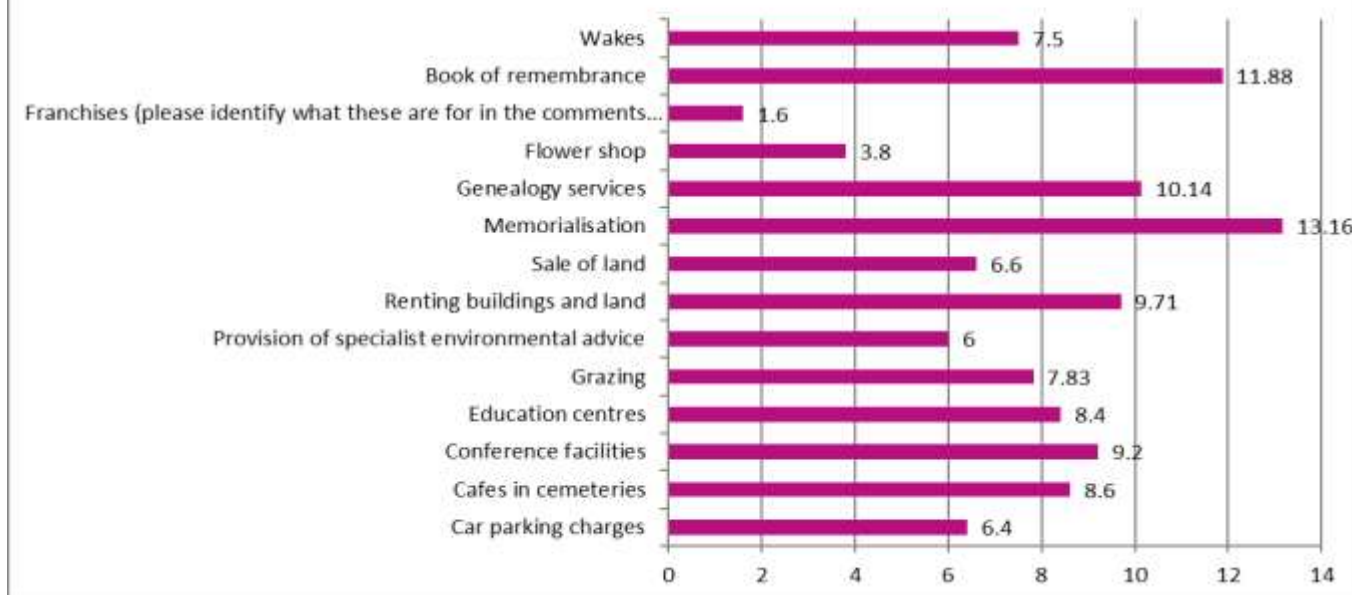
As in the 2021 results, improving service efficiency is an area where there is a great deal of focus. With budgets across many local authority services being reduced the need to income generate in order to plug these funding gaps is paramount. From the responses received it is evident there is no shortage of ideas being considered, and implemented, which are helping address these problems.

- Increase existing fees & charges
- Charging differential rates e.g. for non-residents
- Additional fee for pre-purchase
- Charge for products previously free
- Introducing new and increased memorial offer and memorial mason services
- Re-engineering of management of burial and grounds maintenance
- Reviewing and altering staffing levels
- Replacing existing cremators in order to improve efficiencies and bring in an additional income through higher productivity levels.
- Utilising unused cemetery land to develop burial vaults, sarcophagi and mausoleum plots. This has led to increased revenue, additional burial provision and greater choice for local families.
- Creation of new woodland burial service and reviewing fees and charges by benchmarking the market.

- Service review, rationalisation, growth and diversification.
- Letting-out vacant cemetery buildings
- Full cost recovery dependent upon political agreement.
- Reducing ground maintenance
- Utilisation/consultation with local friends' groups
- Better utilisation of current facilities, including expanding into the undertaker / funeral Director side.
- Introduction of pet cemetery
- Attempt to increase income levels through the provision of new services such as Municipal Funeral Service.
- Introduction of a memorial service, headstones etc. and created a number of new memorials/graves combined.
- Introducing new service with additional fees (e.g. Saturday service provision).
- Introduction of digital solutions to manage workflow, the staff resource can then be utilised to provide the new services and ancillary items.
- Use of heat exchange to reduce heating/energy bills.
- Parks Services are taking the biggest hit to reduce pressure on the cemeteries section.
- Using the ceremony rooms for other things other than funerals (outside funeral service times).
- Seven-day working.
- Offering pre-purchasing of burial plots.
- Greater market-testing of suppliers rather than using traditional suppliers.
- Decreasing utility costs via green initiatives such as solar panels.
- Rain water collection and LED lighting in chapels.
- Application for grants to improve cemetery buildings of historical importance.
- Offer more options such as reduced rates for funerals taking place on early mornings and late evenings.
- Reduce grounds maintenance costs by carrying out less grass cutting and creating more wildflower areas.

A new addition for 2022 was providing cremations for neighbouring authorities.

Apart from burial and crematorium charges, what other areas do you currently generate income in through fees and charges (either provided in-house or through a franchise)?

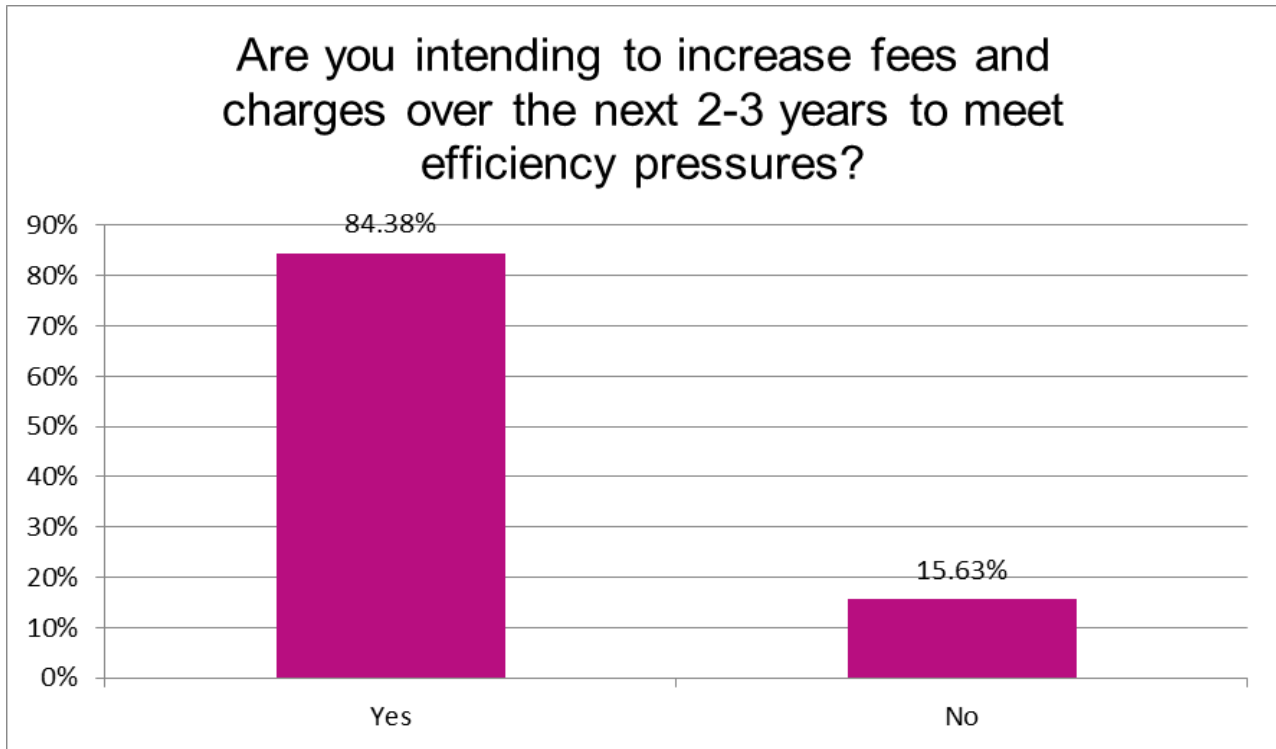


Notable changes since 2021 appear to show that although there has been a continuing reliance being placed on memorialisation, genealogy services, Books of Remembrance and the rentings of buildings and land as the main income generators, the provision of conference has grown in importance. In 2021 cafes and education centres were seen to be growing areas of income generation but these have reduced slightly due to COVID restrictions.

Do you have any other sources of income which are not included above?

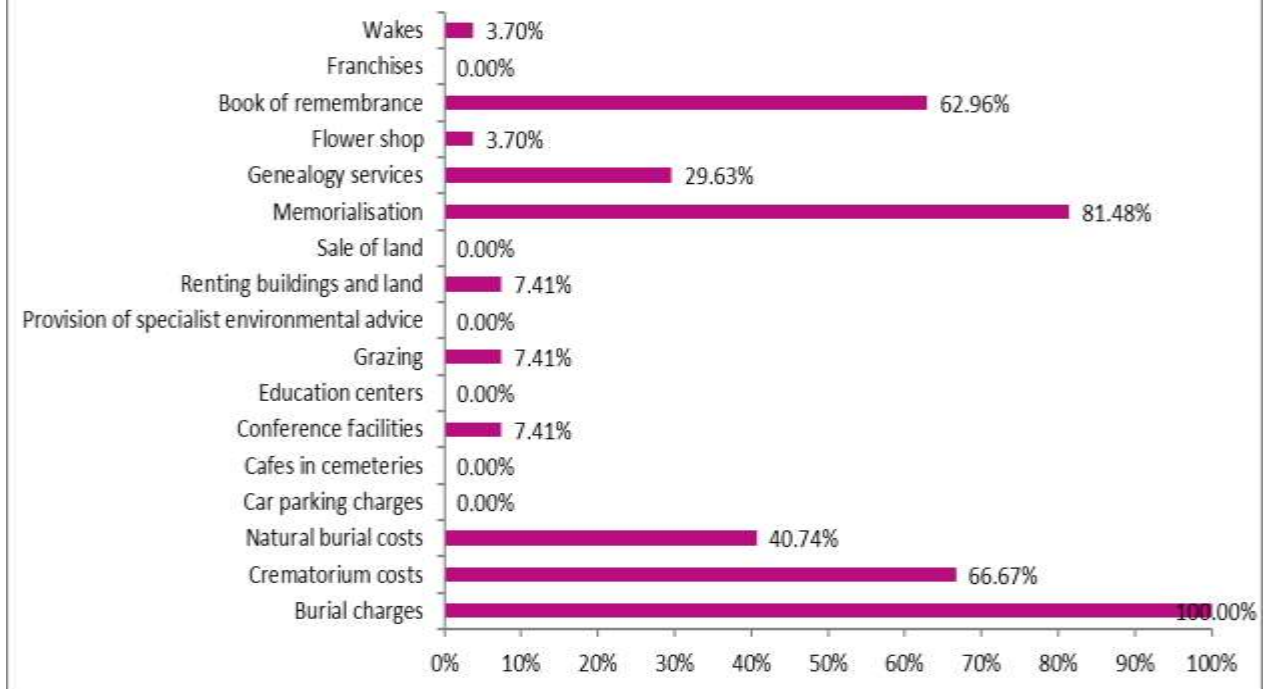
- We make income from memorialisation and genealogy and providing burial service to local parish council cemeteries
- Sports Pitches
- CAMEO mercury trading payments
- Provision of officer time in assisting other authorities to process Public Health funerals.
- Profit share with music partner.
- Pre-paid cremation service for future use by families.
- Grave digging services for adjoining local authorities
- Leasing of memorials (benches, trees, rose bushes etc.)
- Creating a pets cremation offer.
- Provision of webcasts and recordings of services.
- Provision of jewellery containing ashes.

- charging for the transfer of ownership,
- allowing weddings in funeral chapels
- cave tours in a closed cemetery.

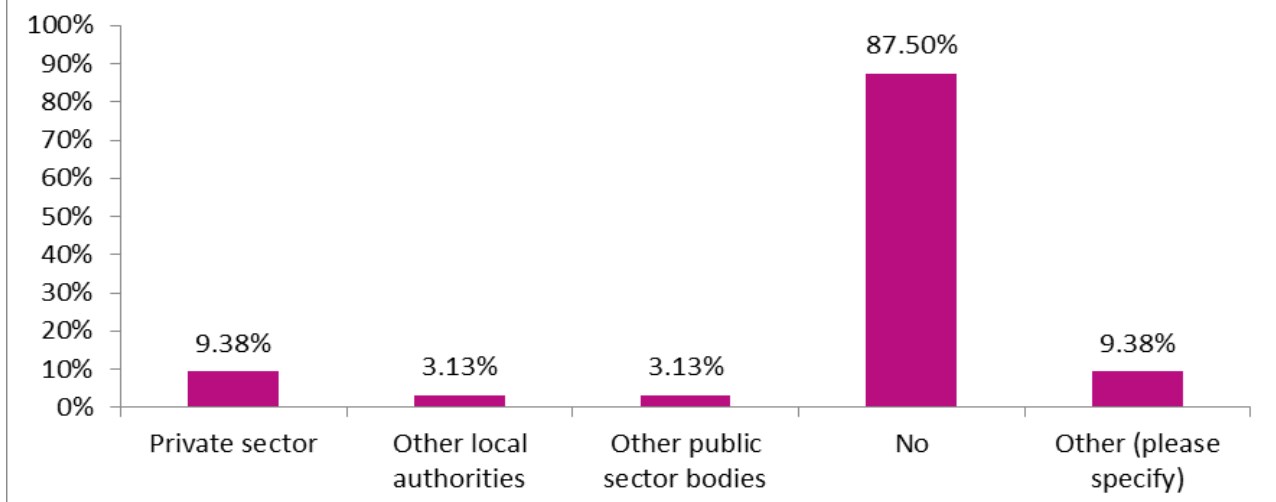


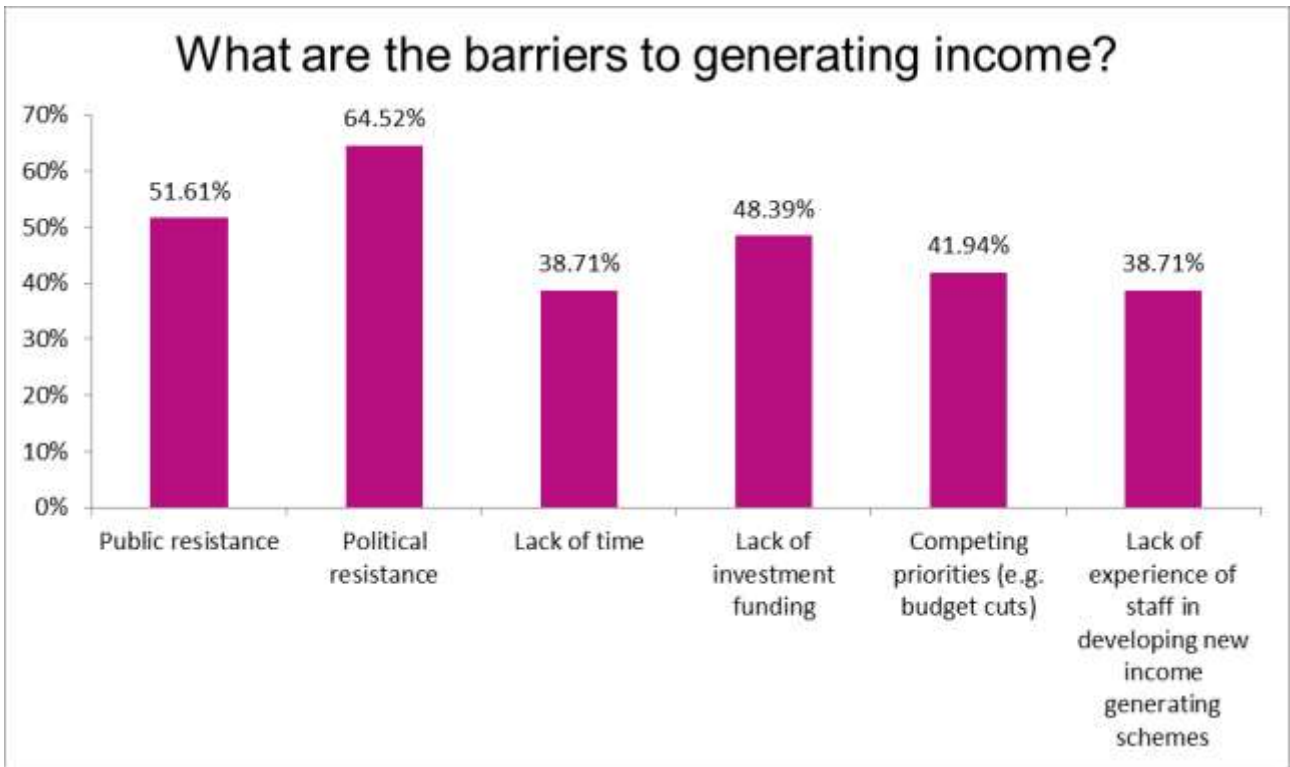
Responses in 2022 show that the percentage of local authorities intending to increase fees and charges has changed significantly, with over 84% intending to increase fees and charges as opposed to only 69% in 2021, possibly a reflection of the need to find extra income to offset increased costs of COVID, either directly, or as a result of corporate budget cuts.

If yes, what areas do you intend to increase fees and charges in over the next 2-3 years?



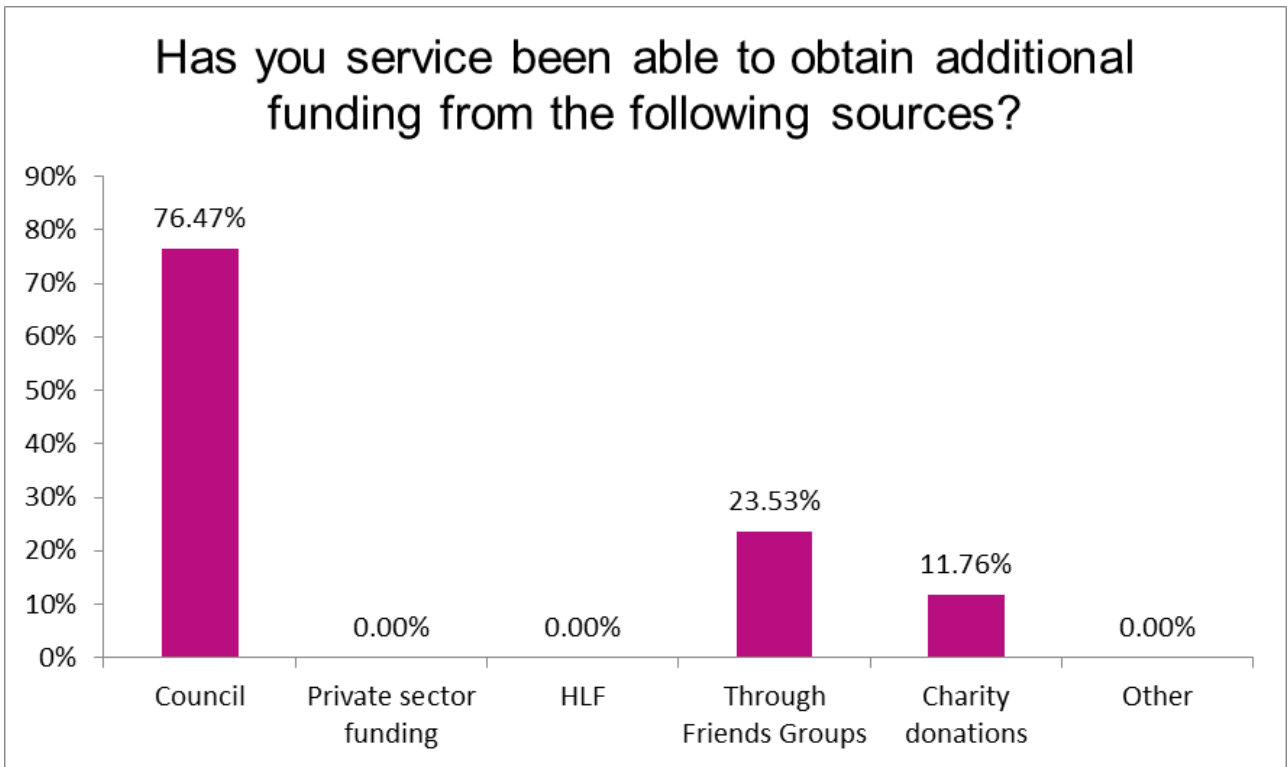
Do you sell your services other than burial and cremation to customers outside of the Local Authority?



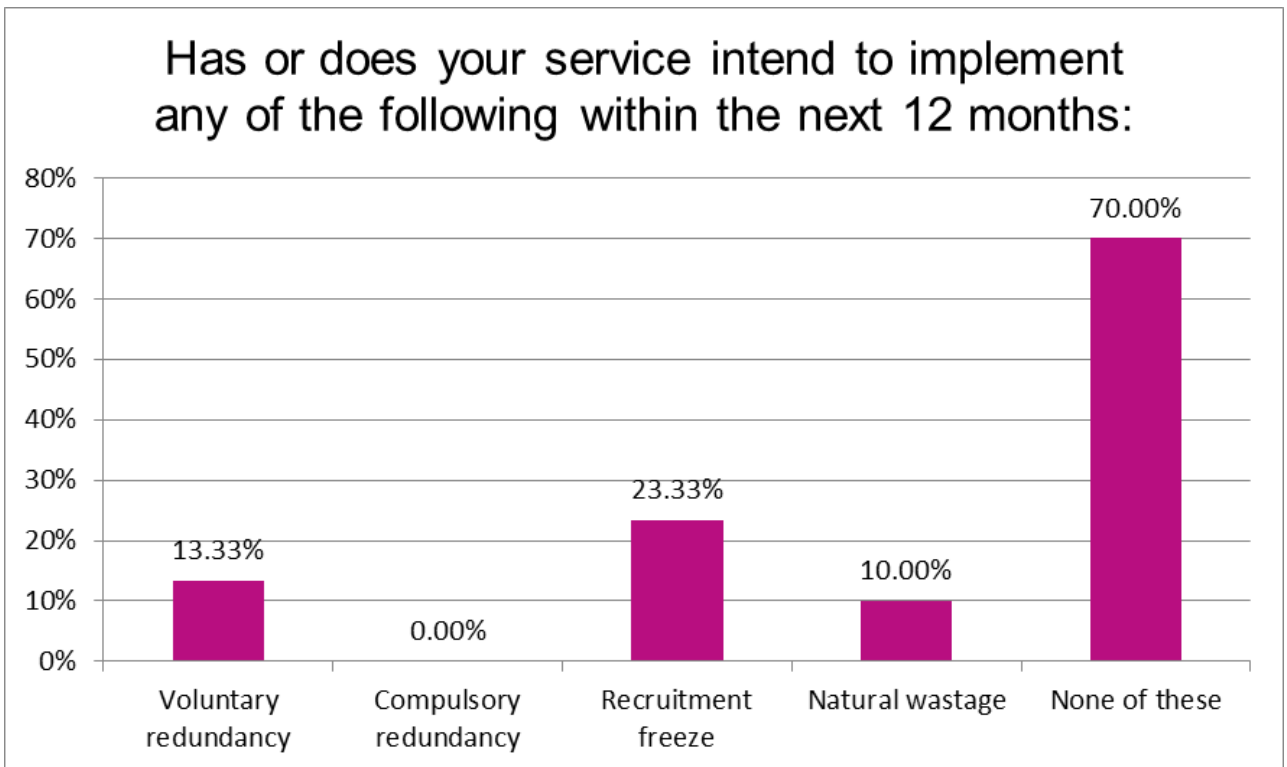


It is clear that because of the nature of the service and the fact many families are extremely vulnerable at the time of loss, it is still seen by many as unseemly to be generating income from the provision of additional services.

Equally, where income generation is pursued, it does appear there may be a clear need to train staff to look more closely at the services they provide and their commerciality together with opportunities to develop new service offers in order to help generate additional income. What is noticeable however, is that public and political resistance as a barrier to income generation is much higher than in 2021, when public resistance was 35% and political resistance was 49%. This increase is most likely as a result of the pandemic and the appearance that the council may be 'benefiting' from this by pursuing income generation would be inappropriate.

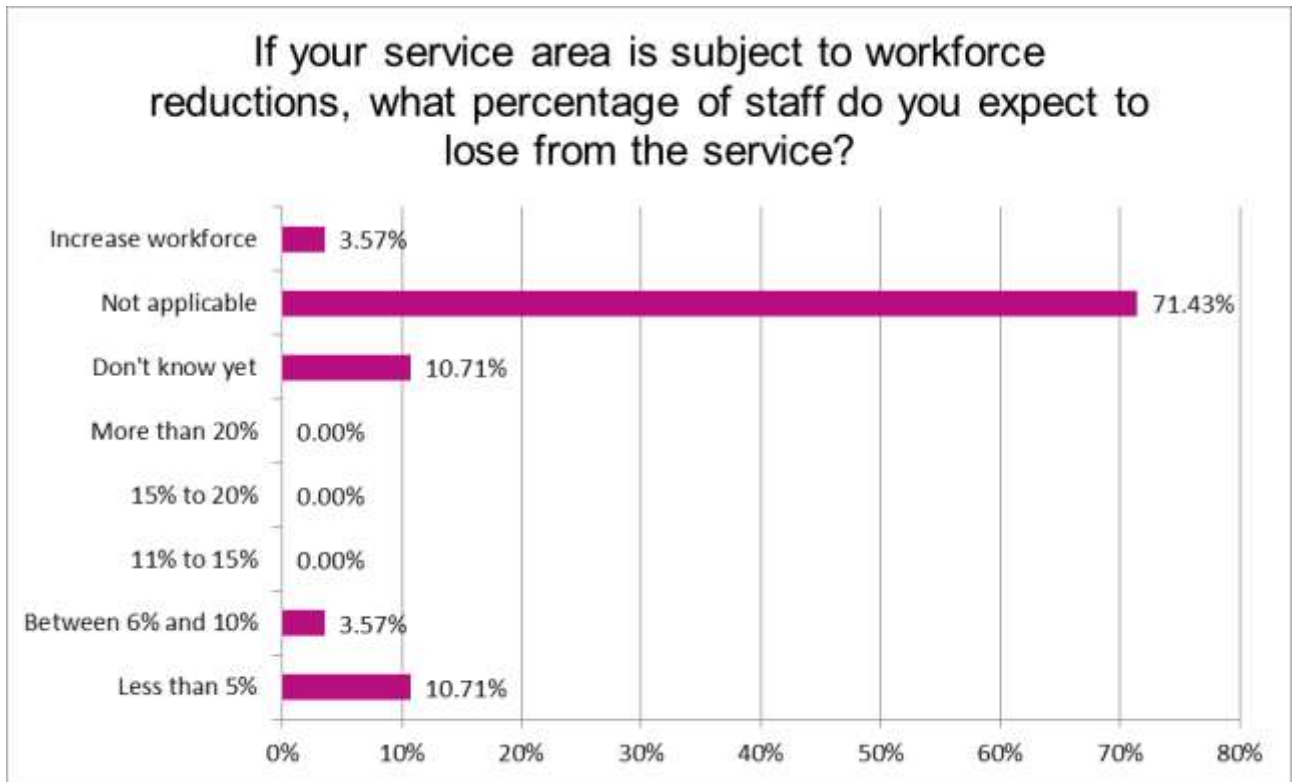


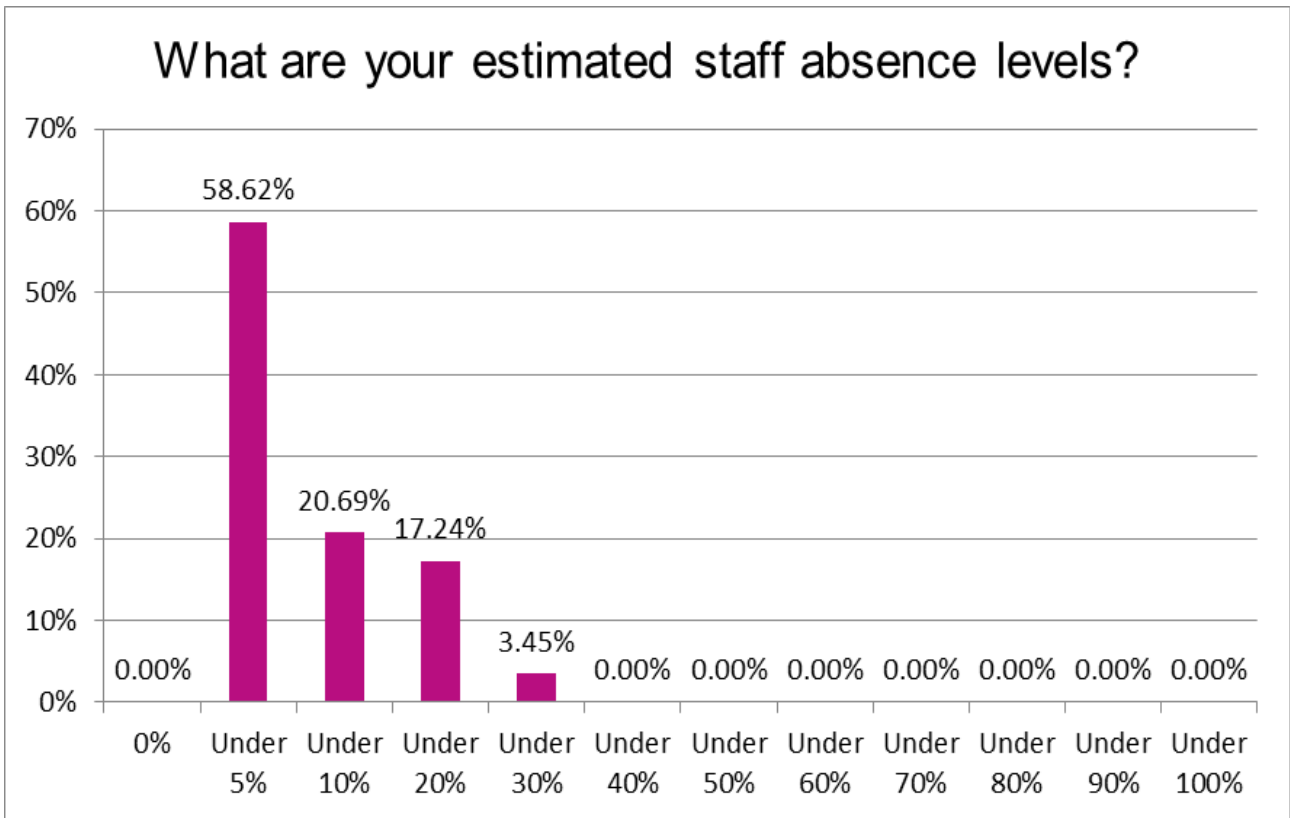
As in 2021, council funding is still the main source of additional funding. This increase is likely to be due to the reductions in income from other sources such as HLF. However, what is clear although many volunteers were not active on the ground during the pandemic their fund-raising capacities have not been affected with funding from such sources staying stable. This funding, shows the importance of the contributions such groups and organisations are making towards the upkeep of cemeteries in normal times.



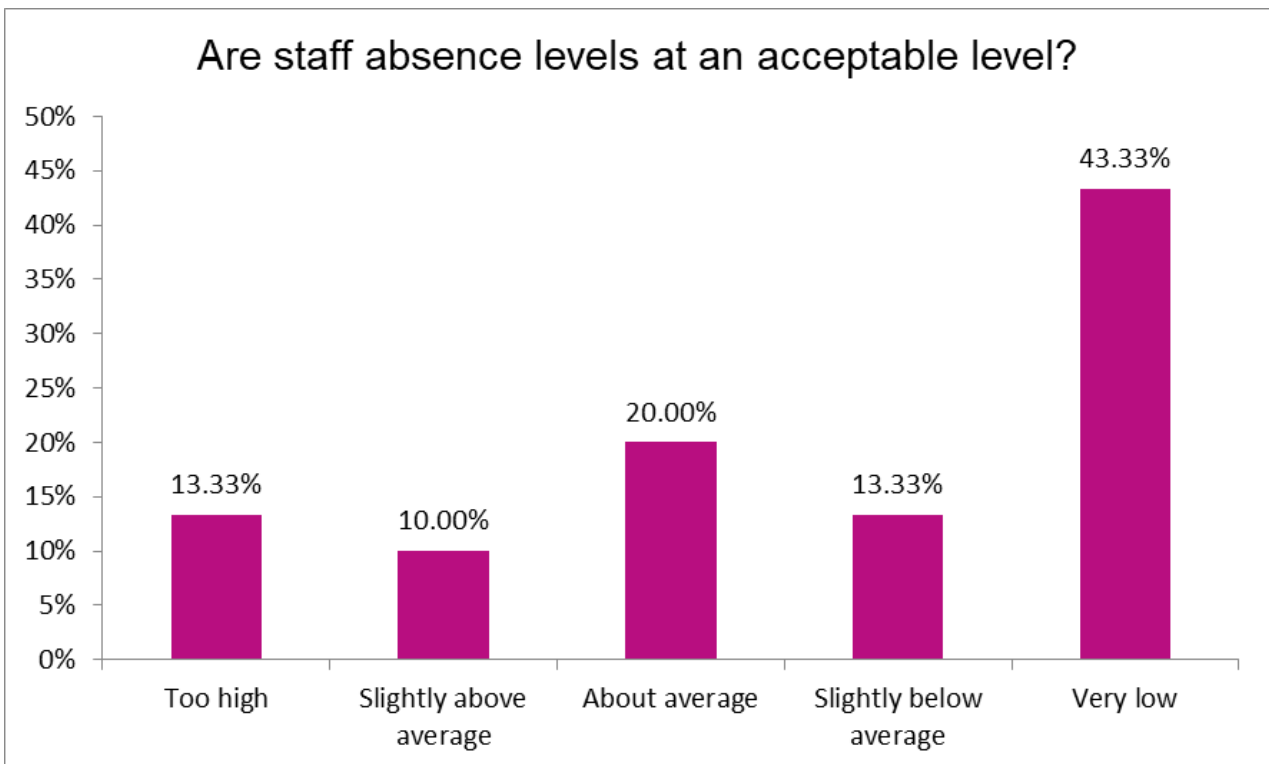
With regards to staffing levels over the next 12 months, 70% of respondents declared they were not looking to lose staff (62% in 2021). It is perhaps heartening to note compulsory redundancy as an option is completely absent. F

Fewer respondents are looking to go down in size, (10% in 2021). Voluntary redundancy as an option has fallen by 5% and in response recruitment freezes have increased by 5%.





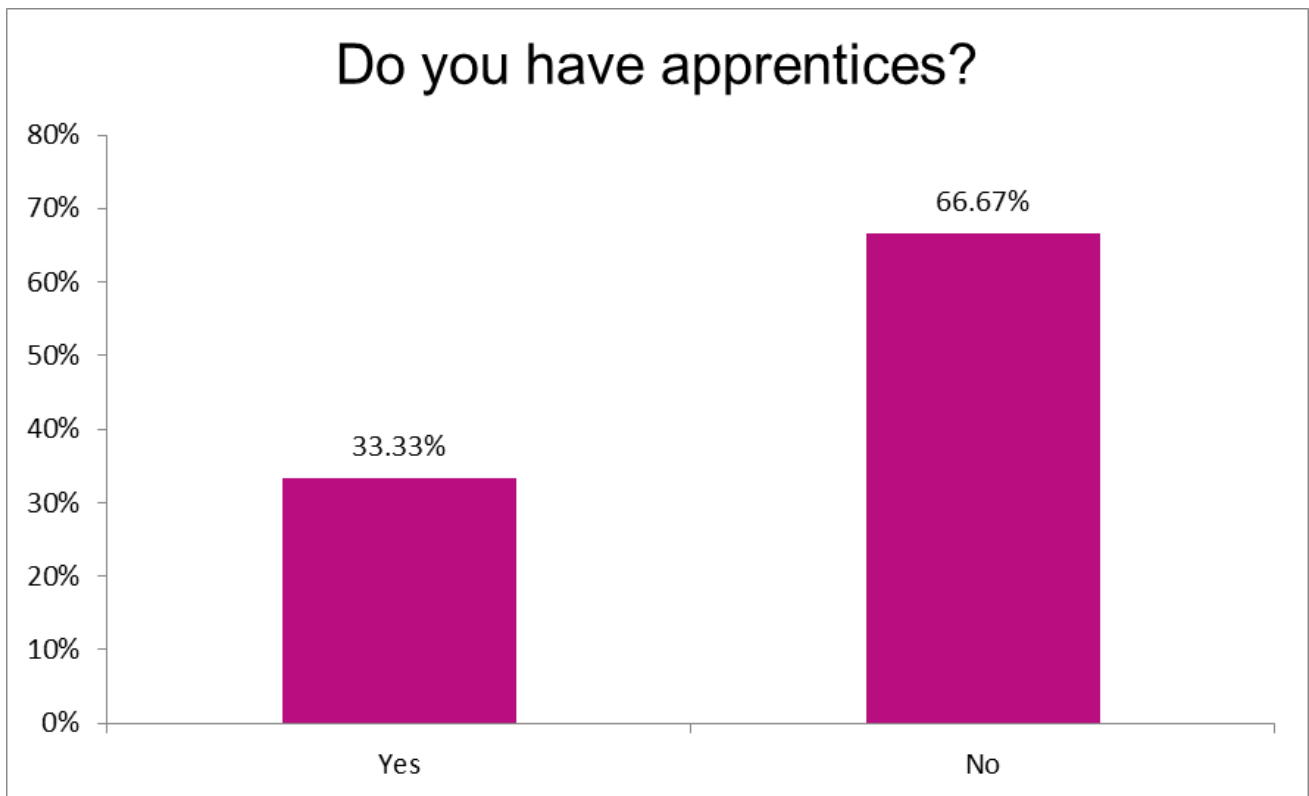
The largest increase has occurred in the number of staff absence levels at under 20%, from 5% in 2021 to 17% in 2022, most likely due to the impact of COVID and self-isolation..



Regarding staff absence levels, it does appear that recorded levels of absence are manageable, with over 76% recording sickness levels of acceptable to very low in 2022, which considering these figures were compiled when COVID was still having an impact, are admirable.



The relative lack of budget reductions in training levels, may suggest that because of service reviews, multi-skilling of staff and new job requirements such as developing new sources of income, then the need to up-skill staff has been recognised and funding provided accordingly. 2022 sees 90% (82% in 2021) keeping their budgets the same



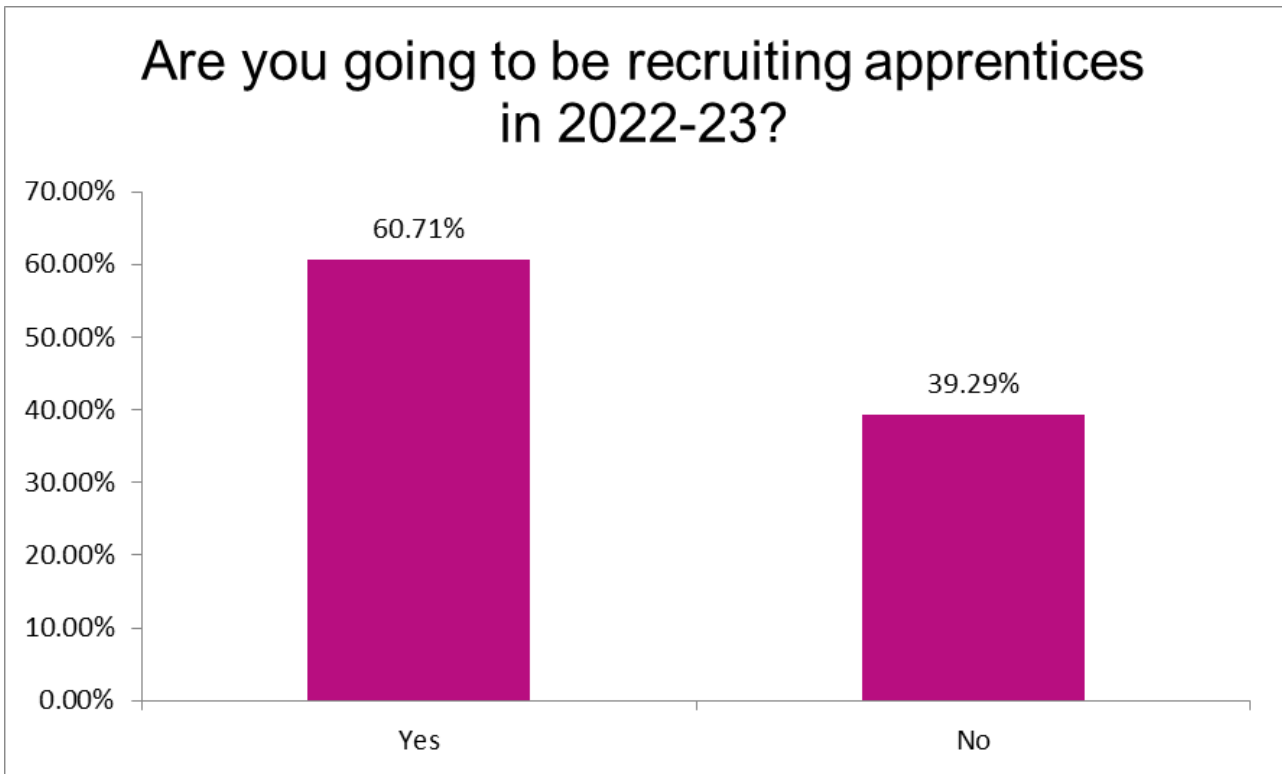
The numbers responding positively to having apprentices has fallen slightly from 40% in 2021 to 33% in 2022.

Are you retaining all apprentices from the last recruitment round?

If not, why?

Those who are employing apprentices all seem keen to retain staff wherever possible. The following responses were received:

- Our intention is to do so if there is a vacancy to fill. We will keep apprentices employed temporarily for as long as we are able.
- Unfortunately, due to poor performance we will not be retaining the current year of apprentices.
- Any vacant posts will be filled by redeployed staff rather than by apprentices.
- Where no position is available within service posts are often found in other council services.
- Difficult to retain staff on low salary levels.



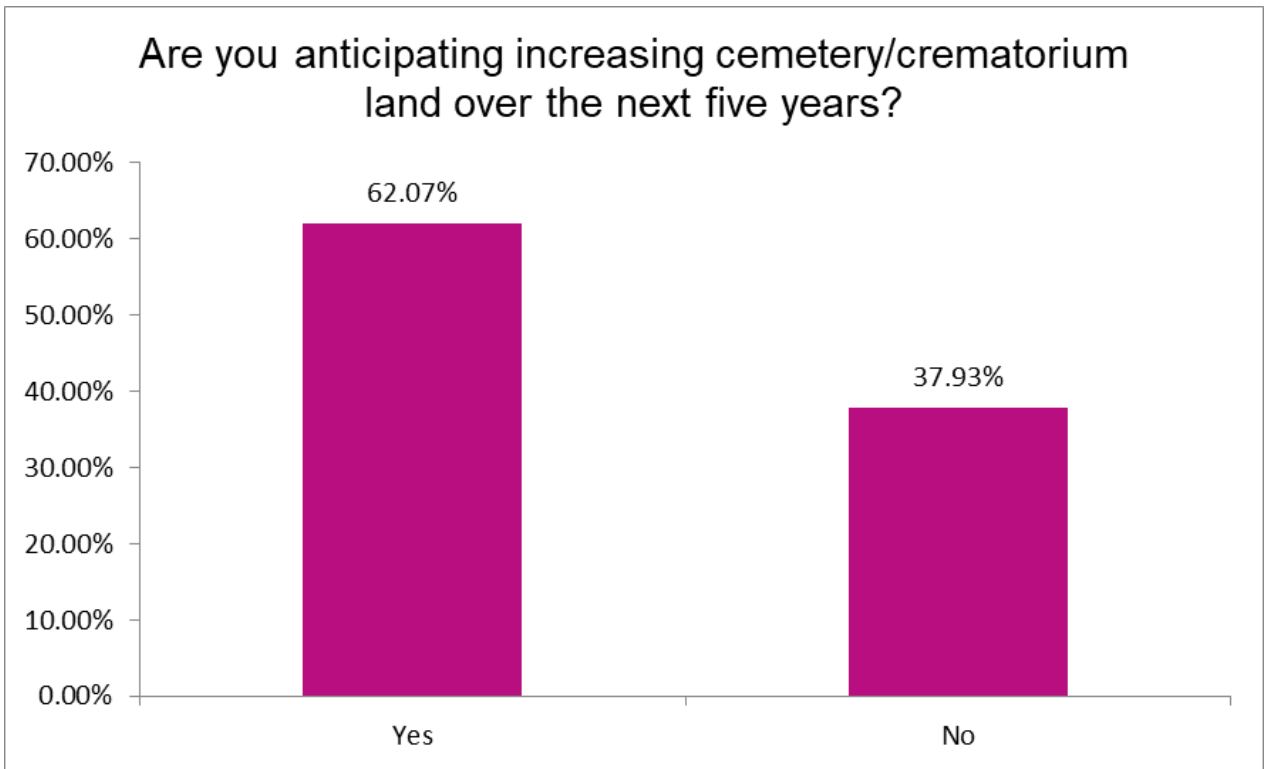
The results for 2022 survey are encouraging with an increase of 30% in those responding who say they will be recruiting apprentices in 2022.

How many cemeteries does your authority manage?

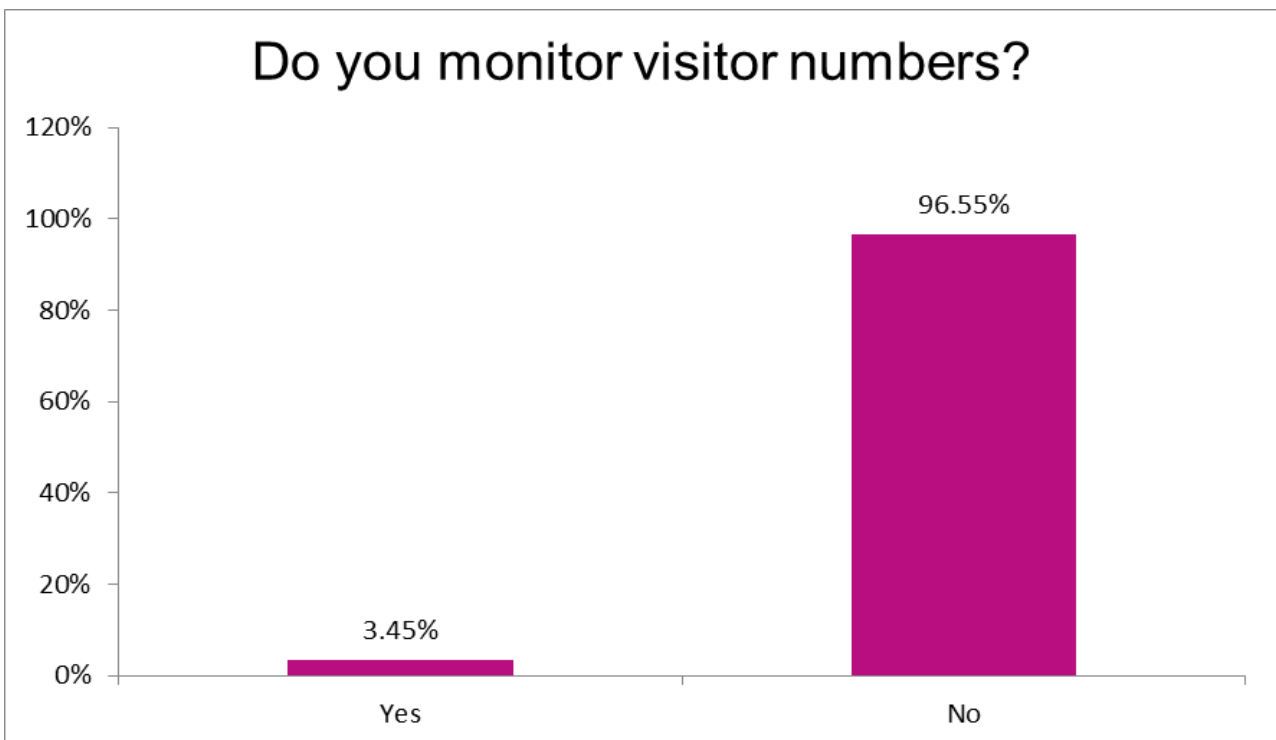
The following results were received:

- Most local authorities who replied manage between 1 and 10 cemeteries (64%).
- 14% manage 11-15 and
- 22% manage 16 or more.

When asked about the percentage of cemeteries that would run out of burial space over the next 10 years there was obviously mixed replies, with a few respondents reporting issues within the next few years with a proportion of their cemeteries, but most seemed to feel that significant problems will start to arise after the next five to ten years when the largest proportion of respondents said they would face significant problems with finding burial space in existing cemeteries.

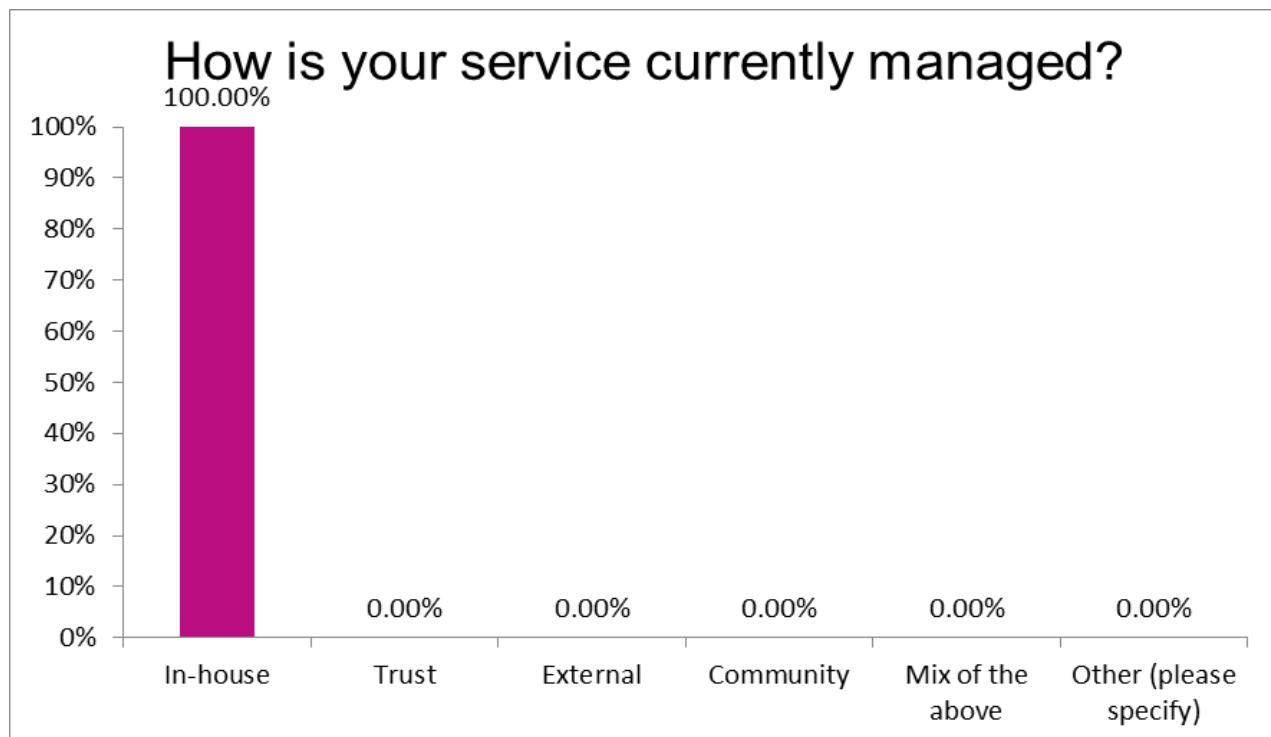


There has been an increase in the number of authorities looking to increase cemetery land over the next five years from 59% in 2020 to 62% in 2022. This is perhaps in some part a reflection of the increased need for burial space during the Coronavirus pandemic. The manner in which new land is being sought varies to purchasing adjoining land, including future provision within the Local Development Plan and even looking to purchase land in neighbouring authorities.

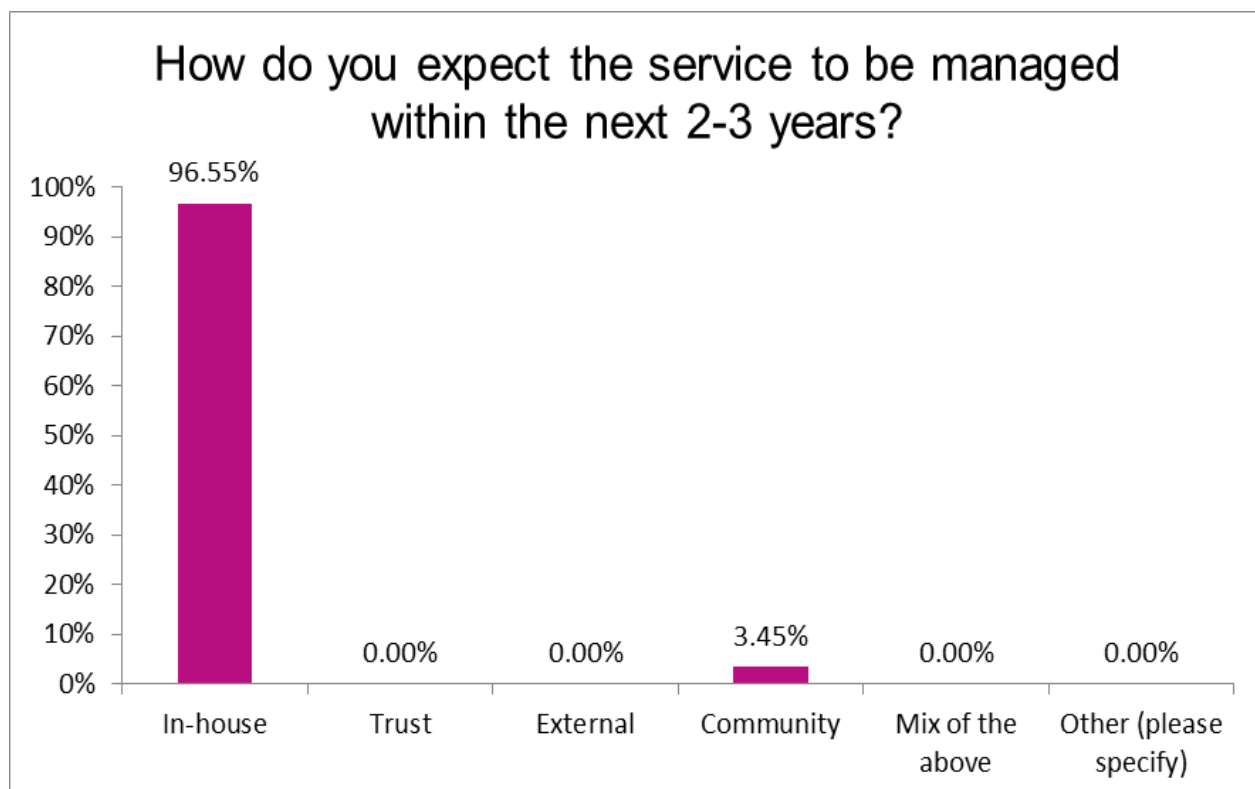


Interestingly just over 3% of respondents appear to measure the number of people who visit their cemeteries. This statistical data would be very useful information when justifying the importance of the

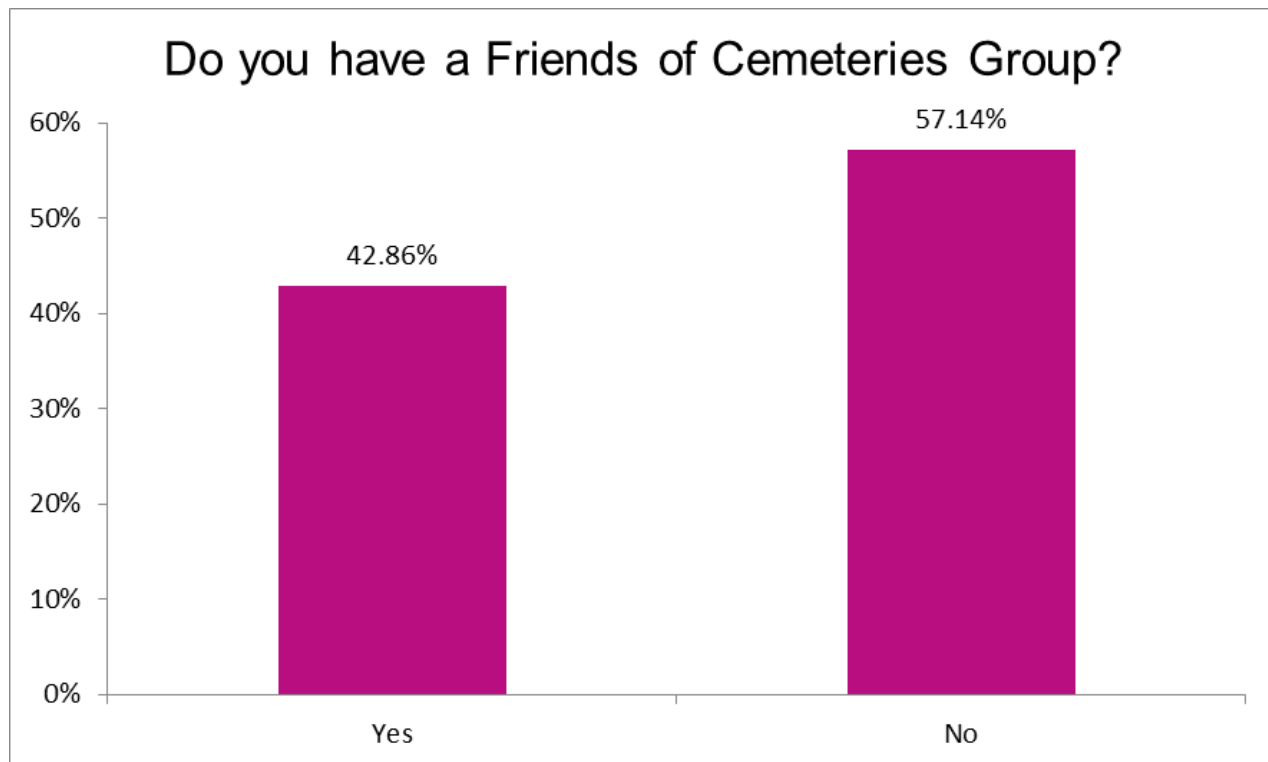
service, in particular, budget setting to ensure high standards of physical features and grounds maintenance levels can be maintained. This type of information would also be useful if considering the provision of on-site cafes or florists by allowing a footfall estimate to be established.



The percentage of services being managed in-house has increased from 95% in 2021 to 100% in 2022. Although this suggests no services are being provided externally, this clearly is not the case nationally, but rather all those who have responded are running cemeteries as a purely local authority provision.



From the above two graphs the future provision of Bereavement Services does appear to be remaining firmly in control of local authorities. Over the next few years councils anticipate that services will be managed in-house. From previous State of the Market surveys, it does appear that there is a growing commitment to in-house delivery.

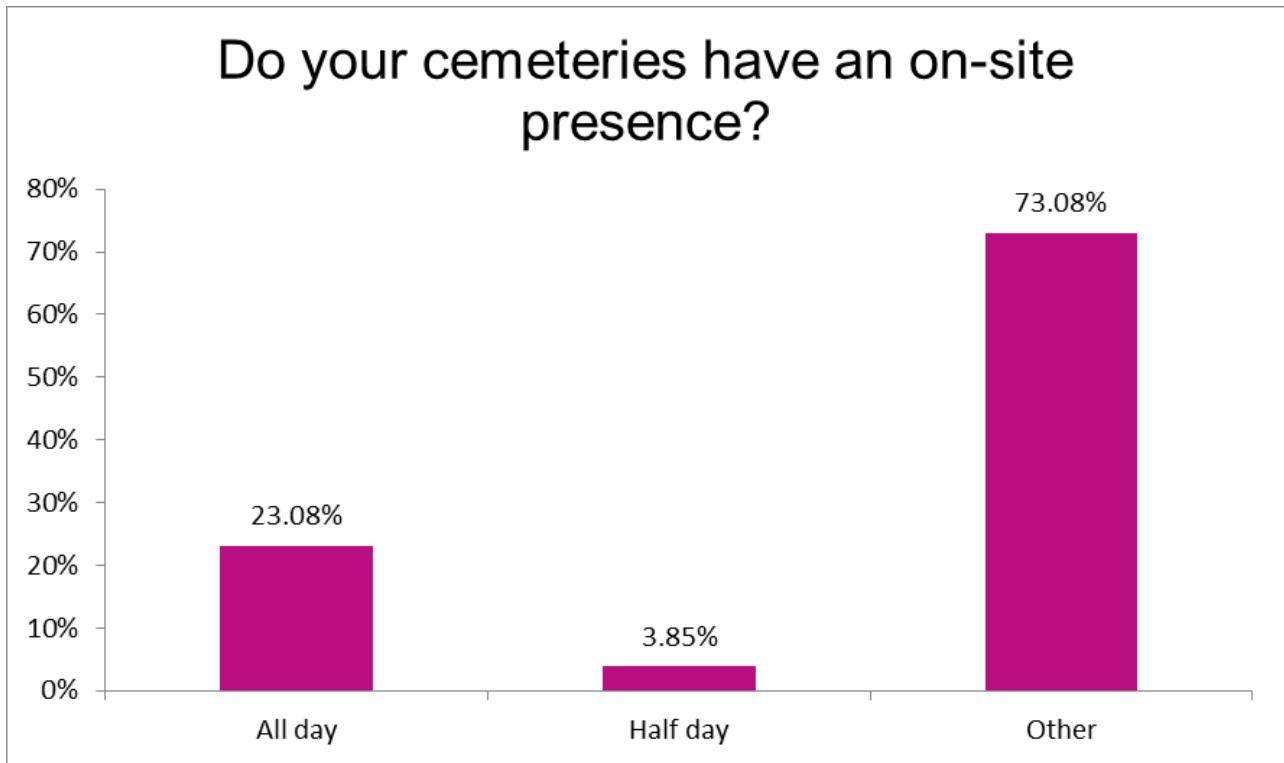


There has been a slight fall in the number of authorities saying they have Friends Groups from 45% in 2021 to 42% in 2022, perhaps a reflection of the pandemic affecting the ability of Friends Groups to operate. Whether the support from Friends Groups is strategic, operational or financial, the role of such groups seems to be coming common place across a number of local authority services.

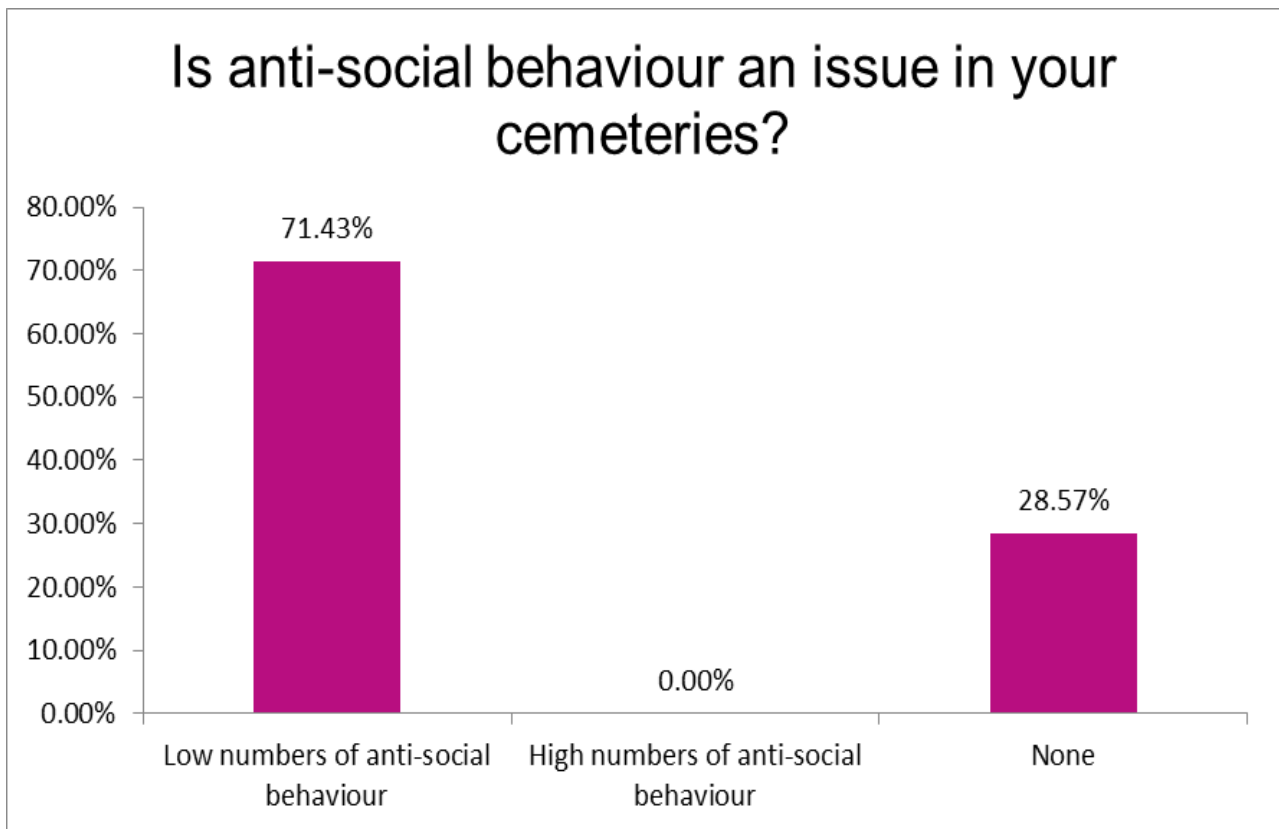
If you have a Friends of Cemeteries Group, please give a brief description of their roles and activities

- Grass cutting, painting, general grounds maintenance.
- Fund raising for memorials to be reinstated - working groups clearing leaves and carrying out general gardening works.
- Seeking funding opportunities and policing cemeteries to manage anti-social behaviour and control of pets.
- Roles highlighted include; staffing a visitor centre, providing guided walks/talks, arranging remembrance services, educational visits, recording all memorial inscriptions, fundraising, horticultural and environmental maintenance tasks, helping visitors find graves.

- Accessing funding and assisting with promoting the facility as a visitor resource.
- Genealogy advice



Since 2019 there appears to have been a decrease in the number of local authorities which have an all day presence in their cemeteries (41% 2019 to 23% in 2022). Nevertheless, there is a growing number of councils who have some type of presence in their cemeteries, no doubt as a response to ensuring visitor safety against the threat of anti-social behaviour and also as a result of the growing number of Friends Group who often provide on-site presence throughout the year with regards to the variety of works they carry out.



2022 has seen a reduction in the number of ASB incidents reported with 71% reporting low level incidents of ASB as compared to 82% in 2021. Equally those reporting no incidents has risen to over 28% as compared to only 16% in 2021. Possibly some of this reduction is linked to increased visitors and services in cemeteries during the peak of the pandemic and therefore more people were using these areas.

If yes, please give a brief description of any incidents

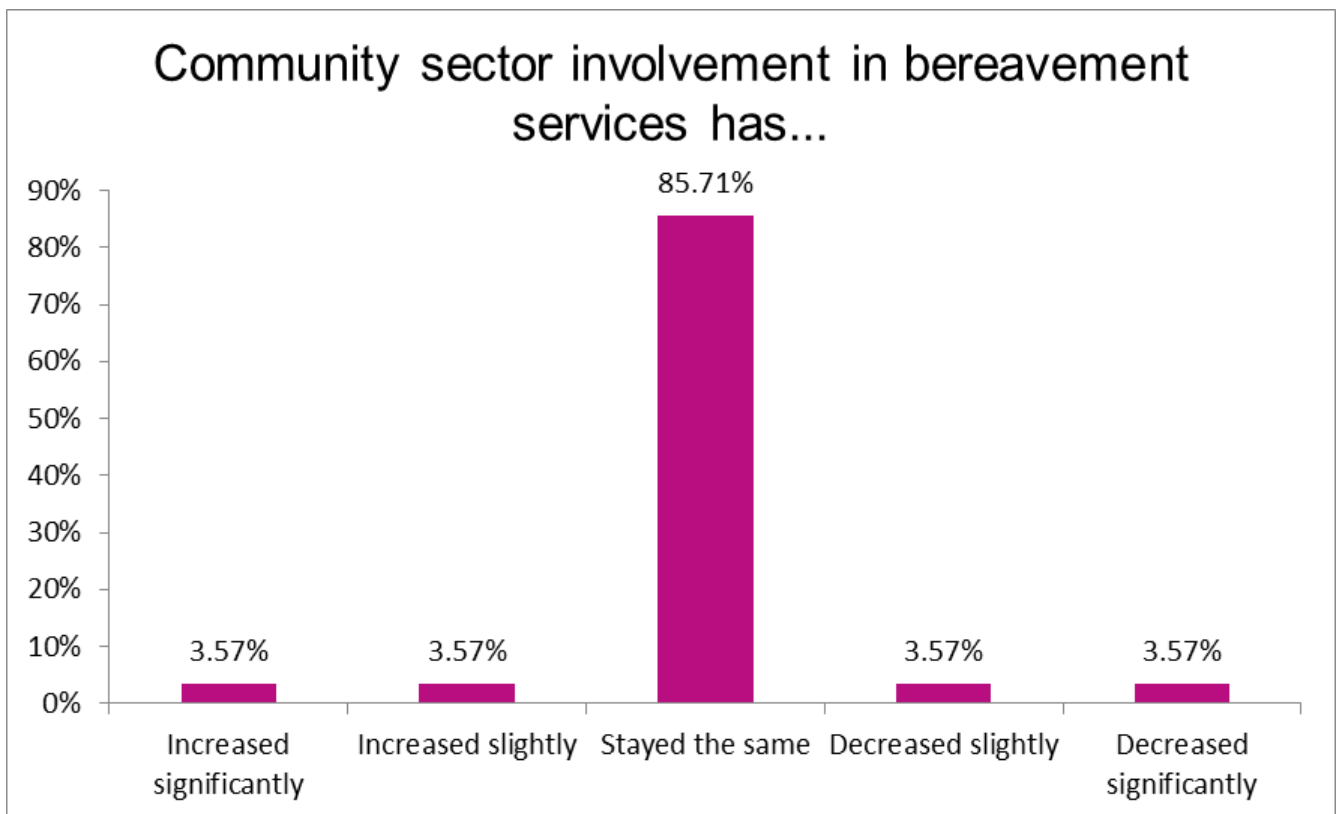
It appears incidents of anti-social behaviour in cemeteries are falling, and the majority of these do seem to be in specific cemeteries rather than across an authority's area. Also, only 25% of respondents gave answers to this question perhaps reflecting a lack of any ASB incidents of note in their cemeteries

Incidents which seem to be common across all respondents, include:

- Drinking alcohol and leaving bottles/cans etc.
- Interference with memorials, drinking, pushing headstones over, unauthorised felling/damage to trees, fly-tipping
- Removal of items from graves
- Vandalism, littering, drug taking, drinking
- Dog fouling/Dogs off leads at all sites
- Dog walkers, youths causing a nuisance
- Anti-Social Behaviour particularly related to Toilet areas

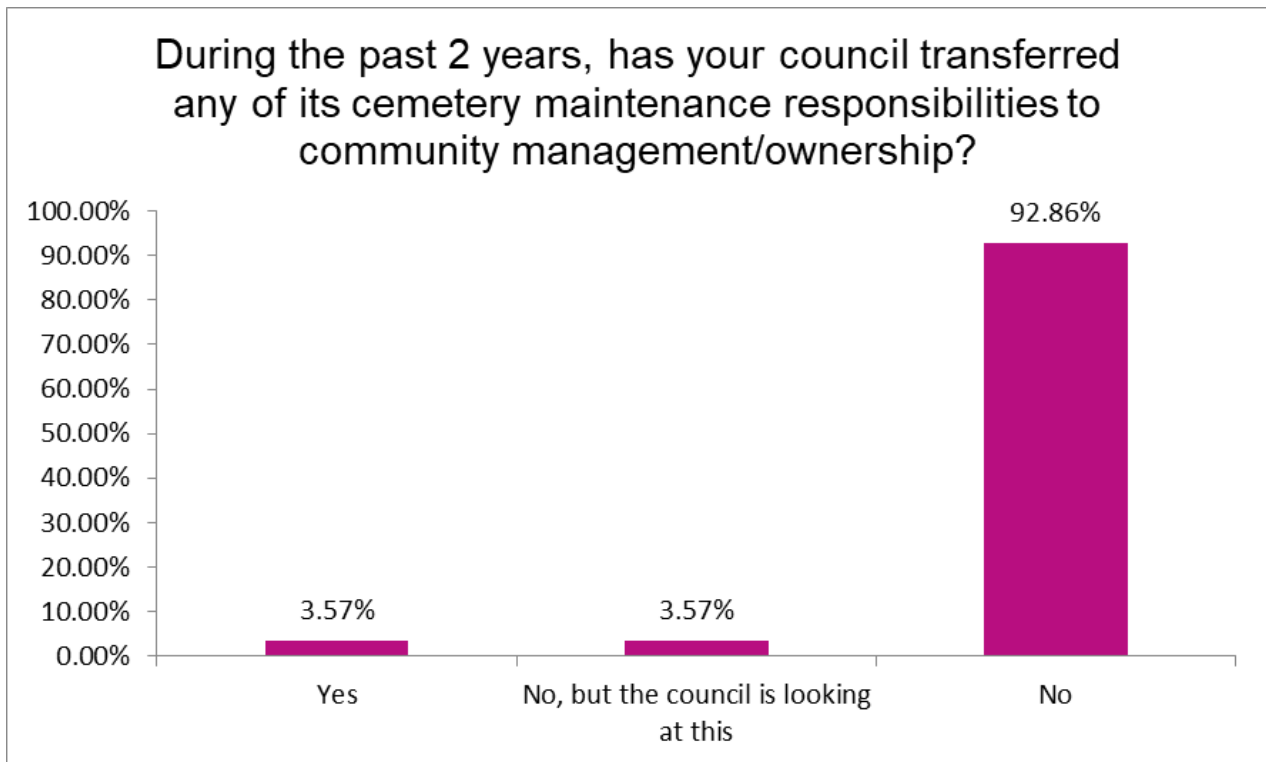
- Break-ins
- Thefts from cars
- Rough sleeping
- Un-authorized access
- Issues around gang-related funerals

There has been a welcome reduction of high numbers of anti-social behaviour incidents as compared to 2019, when 10% of respondents reported high levels.



If yes, in what areas is this increasing?

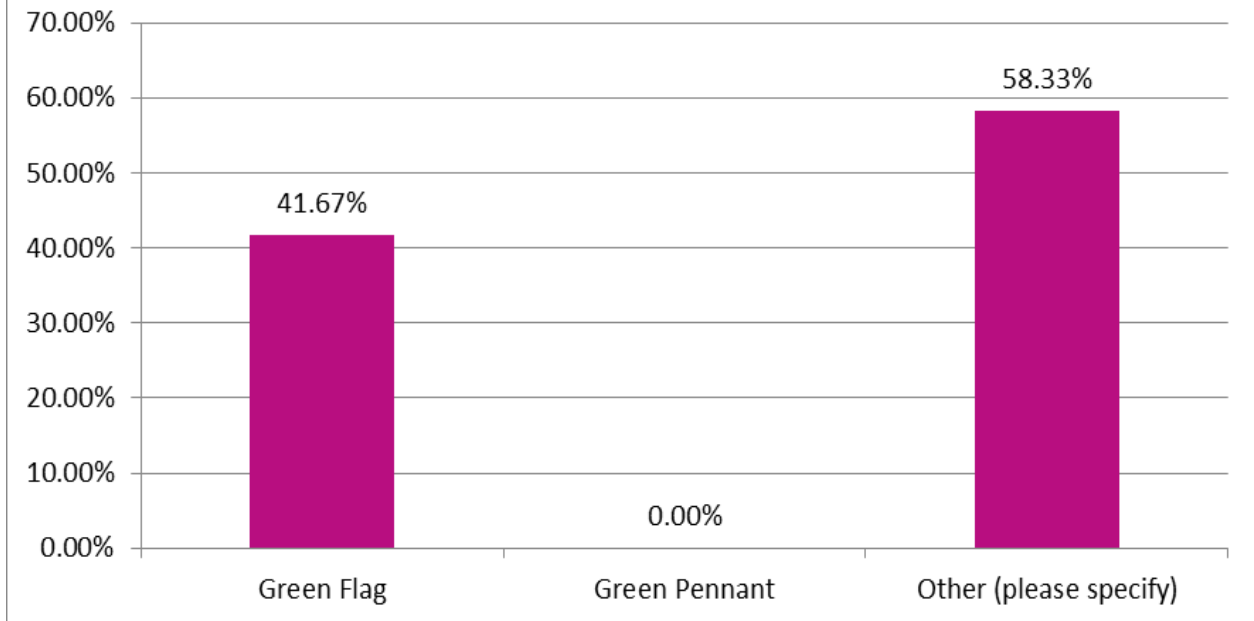
- grass cutting, clearance of fly-tipping, and dog fouling
- Cemetery maintenance
- Vigilance
- Joining Friends group meeting and participating in local community meetings
- Voluntary group helping at our Victorian Cemetery.
- Genealogy
- Maintenance of closed cemeteries/churchyards



If yes, what elements have been transferred to community management/ownership?

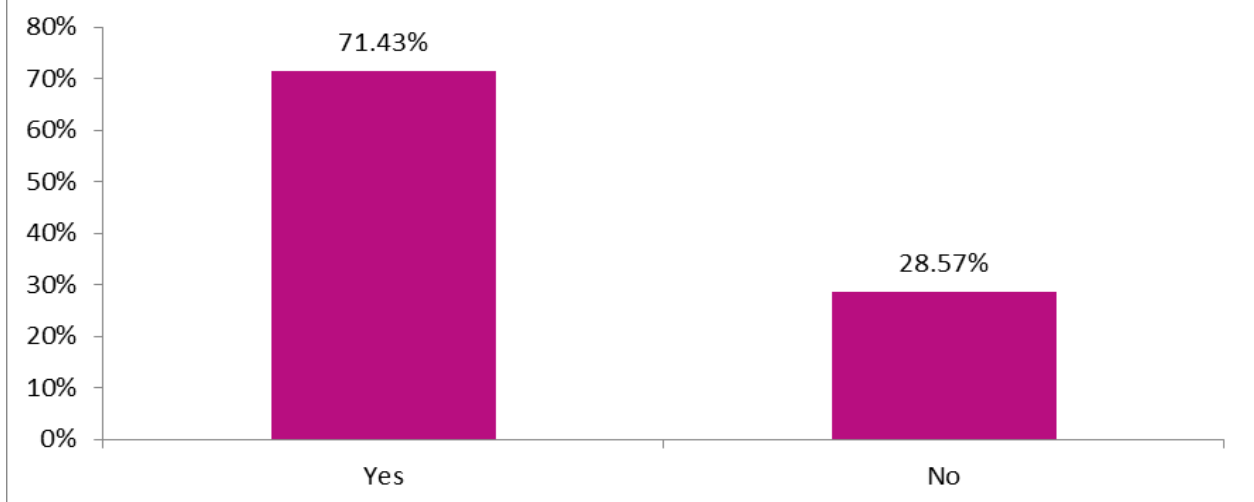
This still appears to be a very rare occurrence, in fact from the responses received in this survey, no-one recorded that they had transferred any cemetery maintenance to community groups apart from one which was allowing a community group to cut grass, the remaining transfers were either to other council departments or to Town and Parish councils.

Do you have any cemeteries holding environmental quality awards?

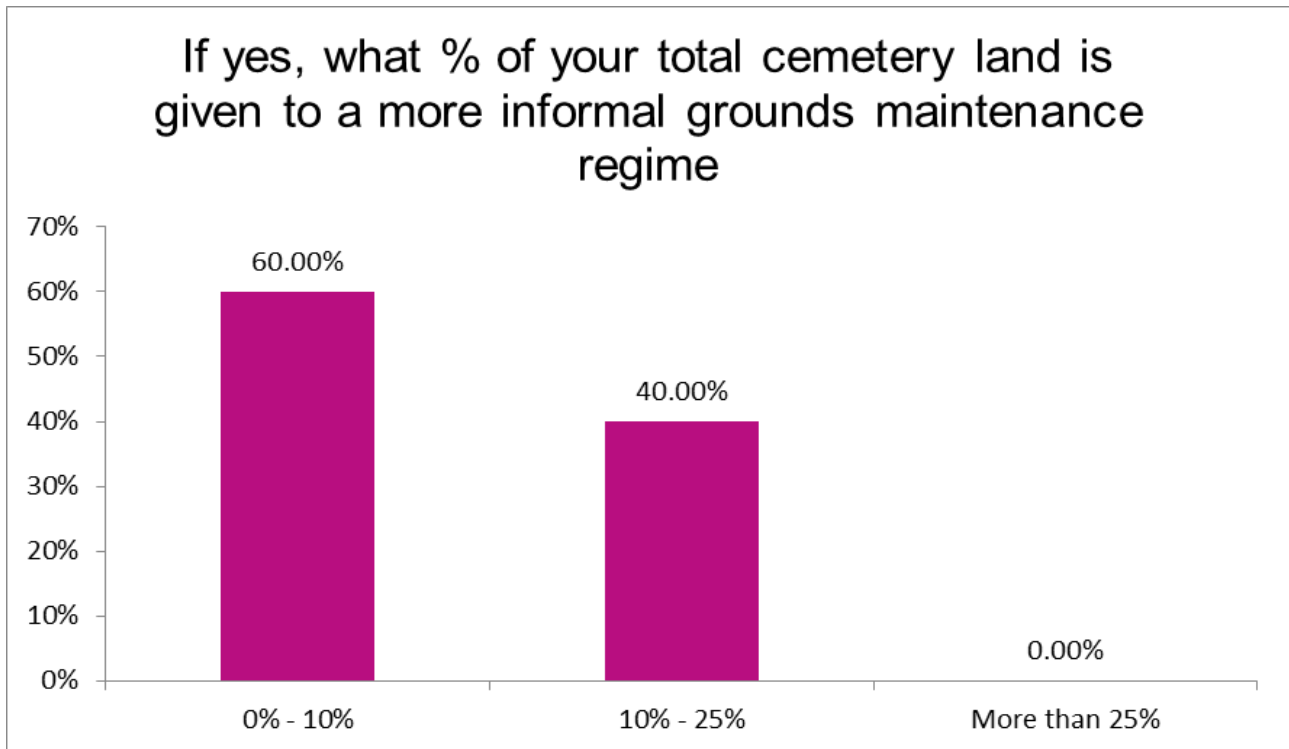


This result is welcome, even though there has been a slight decline in the number of authorities holding the Green Flag Award, 42% in 2022 as opposed to 63% in 2021. In some case's cemeteries are the only greenspaces to which many people have access therefore monitoring their quality is an important aspect in order to keep standards high. In addition, well-kept grounds are a clear signal to visitors that their loved ones final resting places are being well cared for.

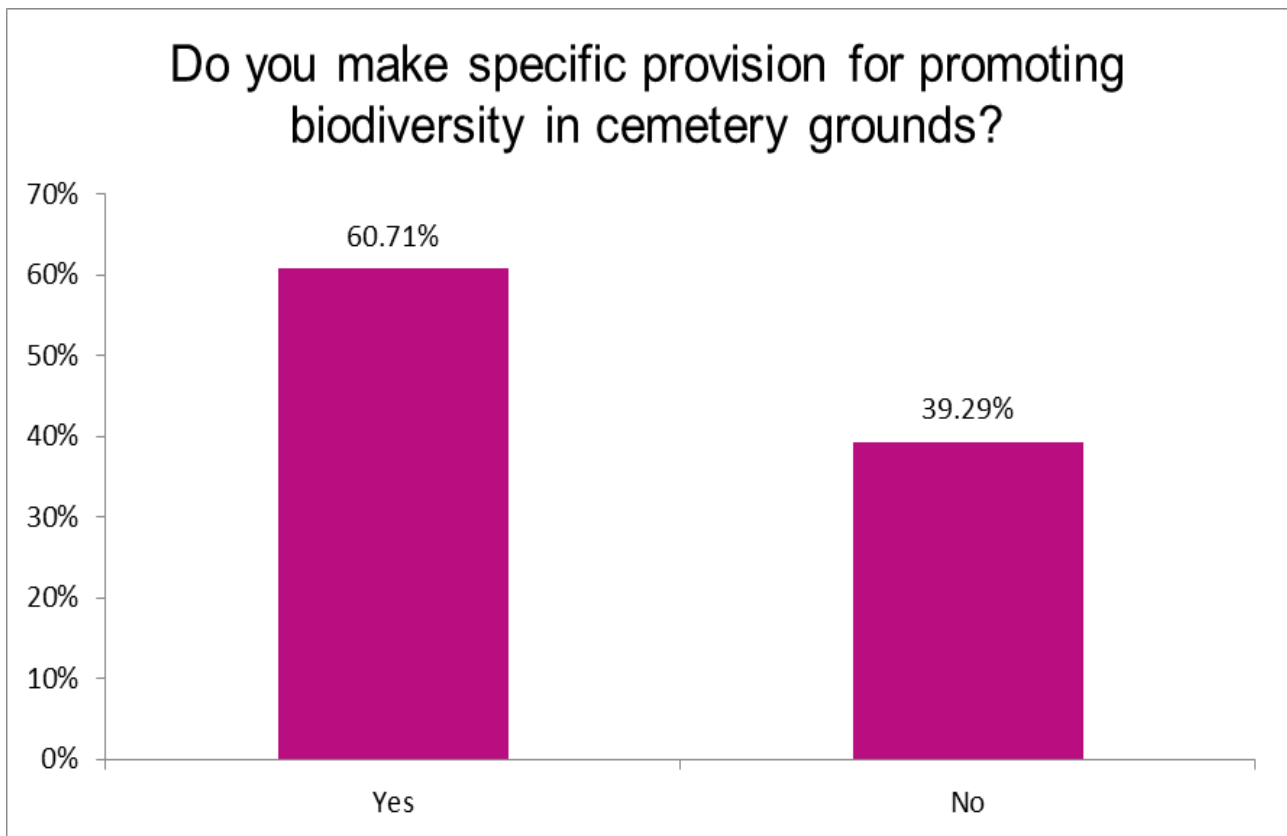
Do you manage any of your cemetery land as wildflower areas or nature reserve?



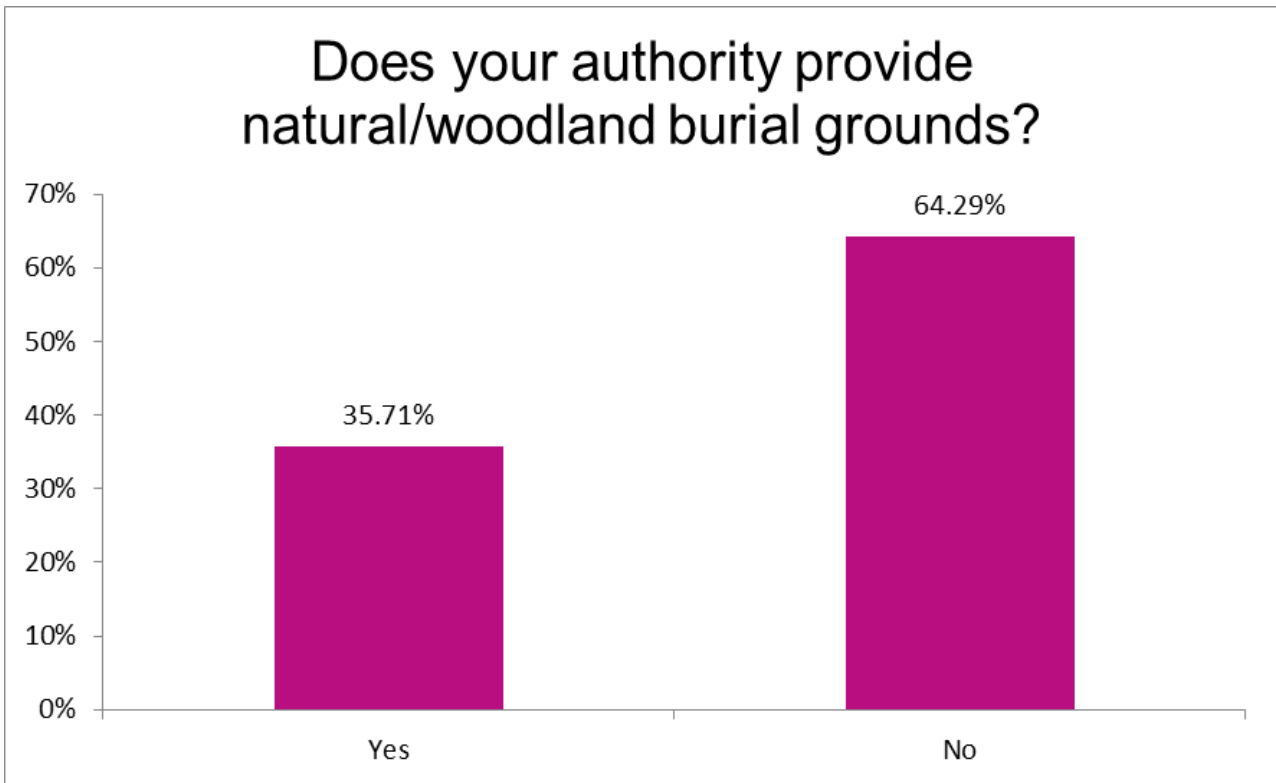
This year has seen a significant increase in respondents stating that they manage areas of their cemeteries for wildflowers or nature reserves from 50% in 2021 to over 71% in 2022. This increase is likely to be a reflection of the growing interest in adopting a more naturalised maintenance approach, allowing greater opportunities for biodiversity as well as potentially reducing costs. Many areas of older cemeteries are now being managed in a way which provides both an aesthetically pleasing appearance for cemetery visitors, and provide havens for pollinators and local wildlife. There are many advisory leaflets available on how to make the best use of such areas in promoting wildlife [such as this link provided by 'Caring for God's Acre'](#)



There has been a significant rise in the number of respondents in the 10– 25% category (14% in 2021). This may show that there are an increasing number of cemetery managers now beginning to incorporate more informal grounds maintenance schemes into their cemeteries, particularly within the older, less well visited areas of their cemeteries. It is important that visitor's see that these areas are not neglected, therefore mowing paths through these areas and perhaps installing information boards outlining the benefits to local wildlife and increasing biodiversity in general.



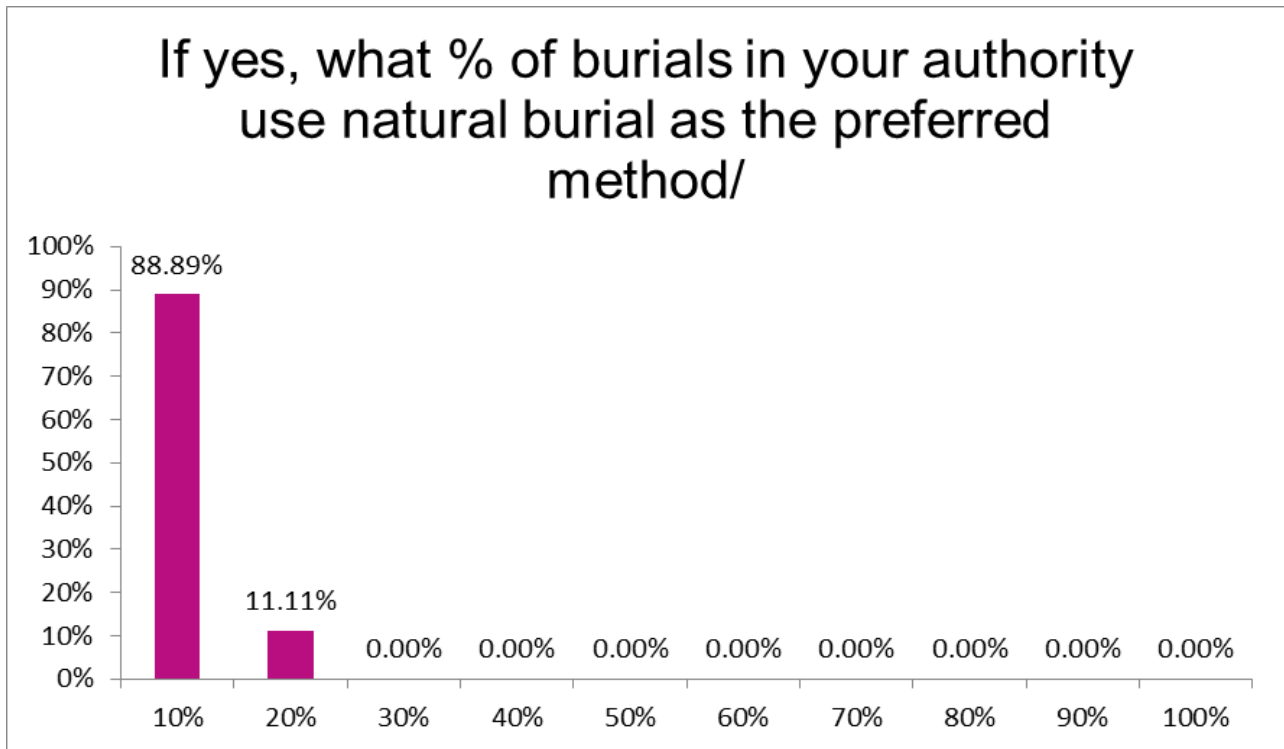
This graph again shows an increase from 50% in 2021 to over 60% in 2022 regarding making provision for wildlife within cemetery grounds. Whether this is as a result of reduced maintenance, or a deliberate policy to promote wildlife, is unclear, although from the comments received there does appear to be clear indication that the main reason is for the promotion of biodiversity. Such actions can only be applauded when local biodiversity is under such pressure.



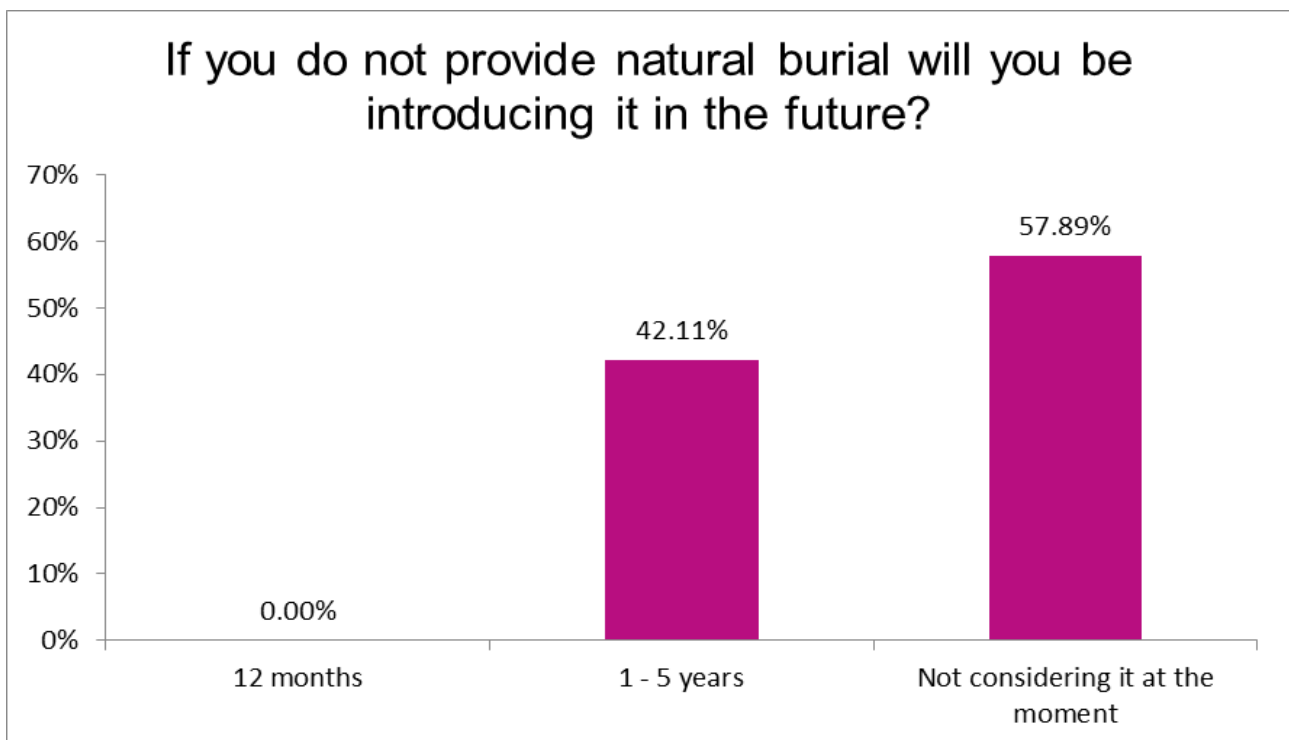
The use of natural/woodland burial in 2022 seems to have fallen slightly which is in contrast to the previously growing popularity previously recorded for example 44% in 2018 and 59% in 2019 and 61% in 2020 although 2021 recorded this at 39%. This figure may be an anomaly and therefore we will await 2023's survey results to see if this is a continuing trend. However, where natural burials are offered many local authorities are now adopting this practice in order to provide an alternative to traditional funeral practices. It should be noted however that the quality of such areas is still a vital element of the service provision rather than simply providing an area which receives little or no maintenance on the pretext that it is a 'natural area'. There is government guidance available for those local authorities providing or considering such an approach in the future.

[Natural burial ground: guidance for operators](#)

If yes, what % of burials in your authority use natural burial as the preferred method?

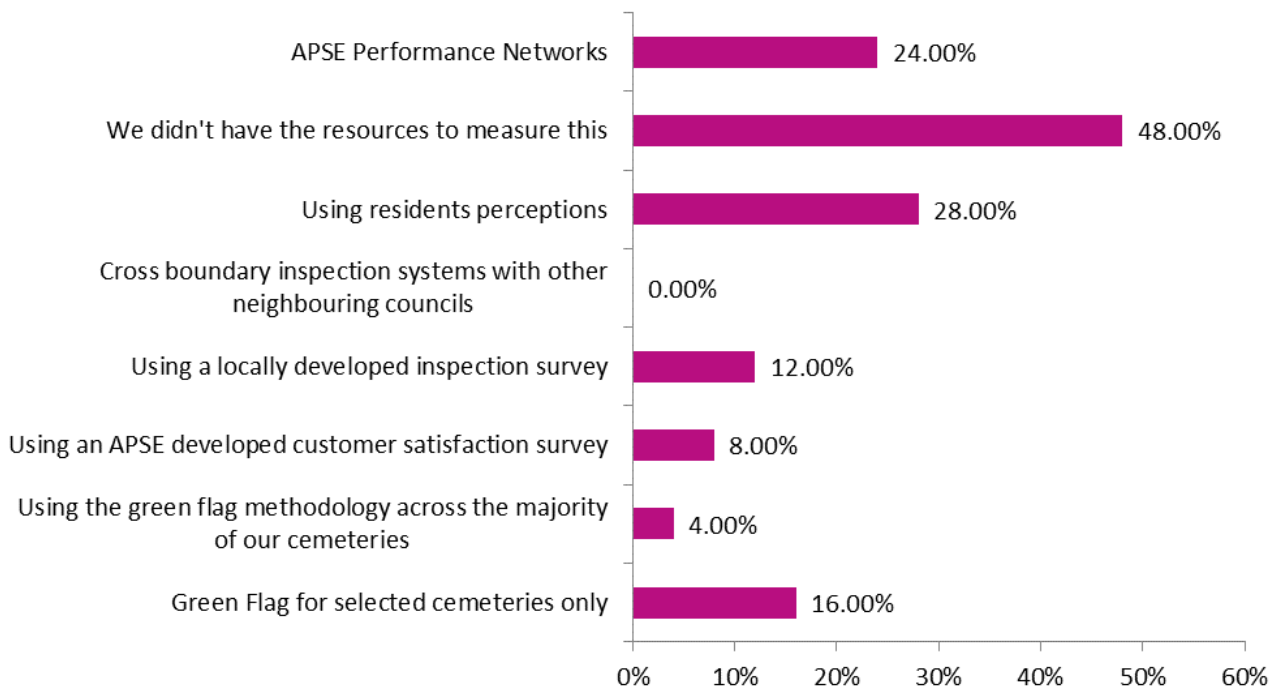


Of the respondents who replied to this question, the average response was that 10% of customers were choosing natural burial/woodland burial as their preferred choice.



There has been a noticeable shift in the number of local authorities considering/providing natural burials. The number considering it in 2021 was 55%, 2022 results show that 42% authorities are considering natural burial as an option. authorities.

How did you measure the quality of cemeteries during 2021-22?

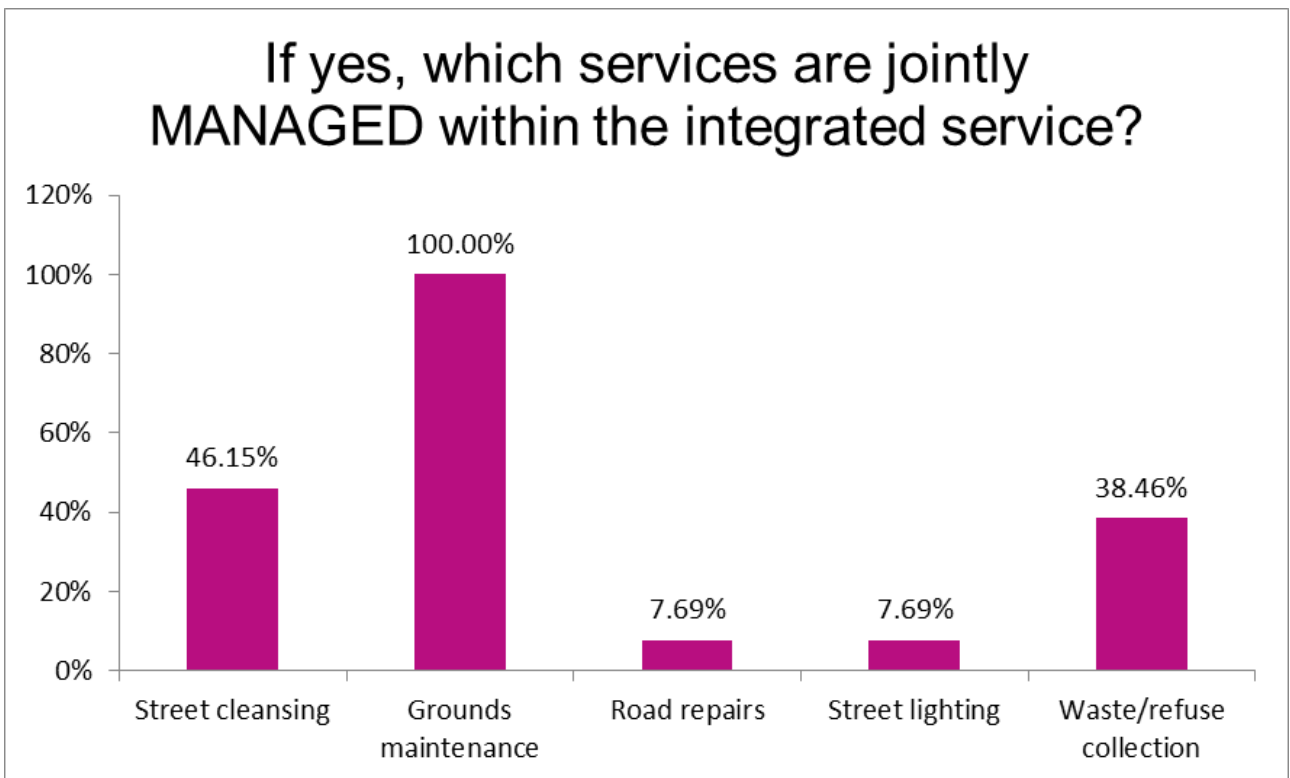
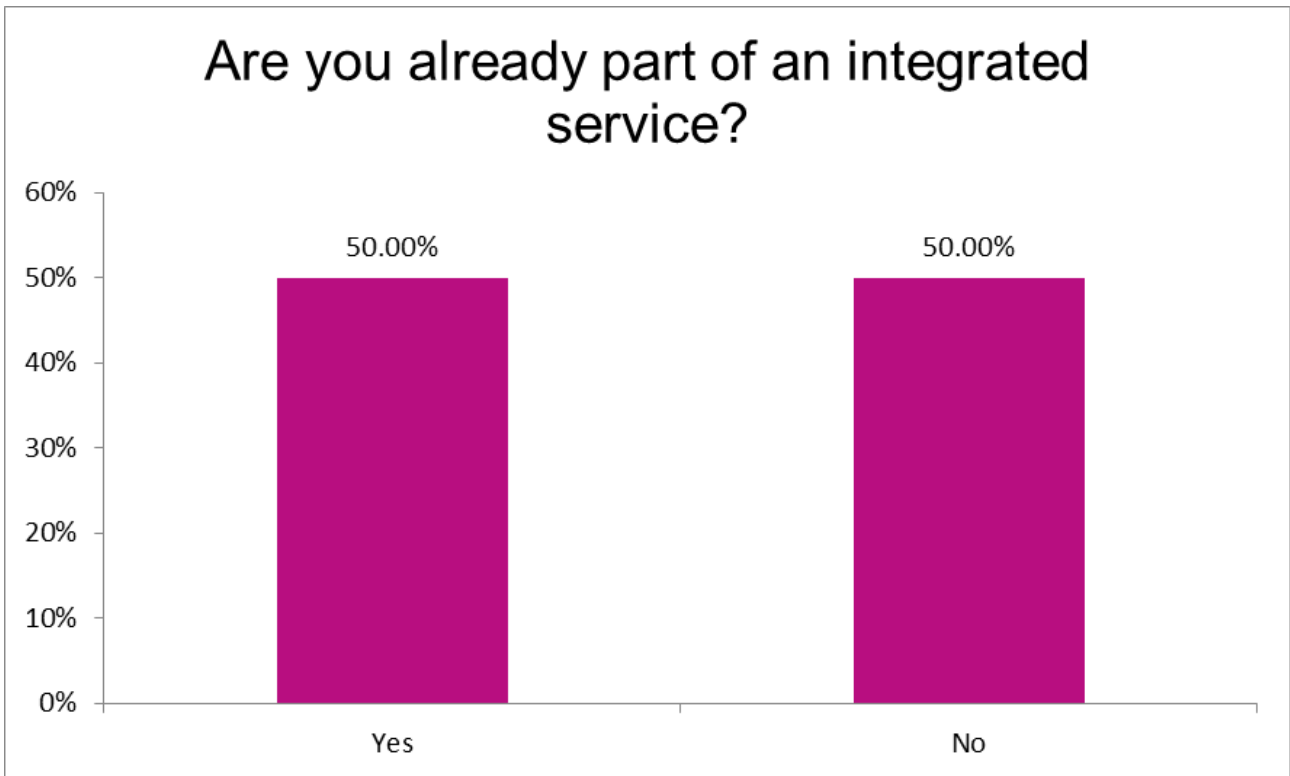


This year has seen a significant rise in the number of authorities who state they do not have the resources to measure quality (15% in 2021) which is perhaps a worrying increase, considering the rise in the number of authorities who have increased the amount of cemetery land being given over to naturalised maintenance. However the deployment of staff to cope with the pressures arising from the pandemic is likely to be a reason behind this figure.

The need for a consistent and measurable quality standard has been an area APSE has been considering for a while. As such it has now introduced a separate element of the Land Audit Management System (LAMS) which can now be used to measure the quality of cemeteries.

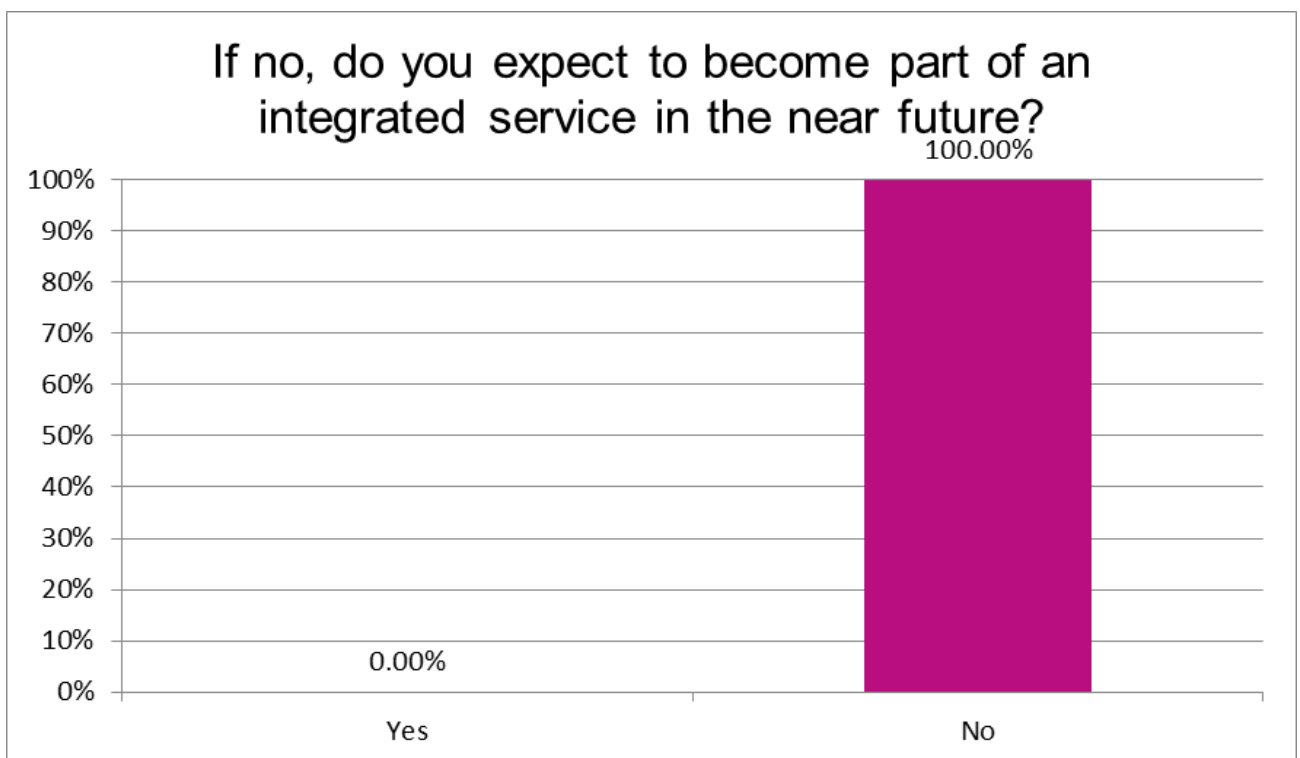
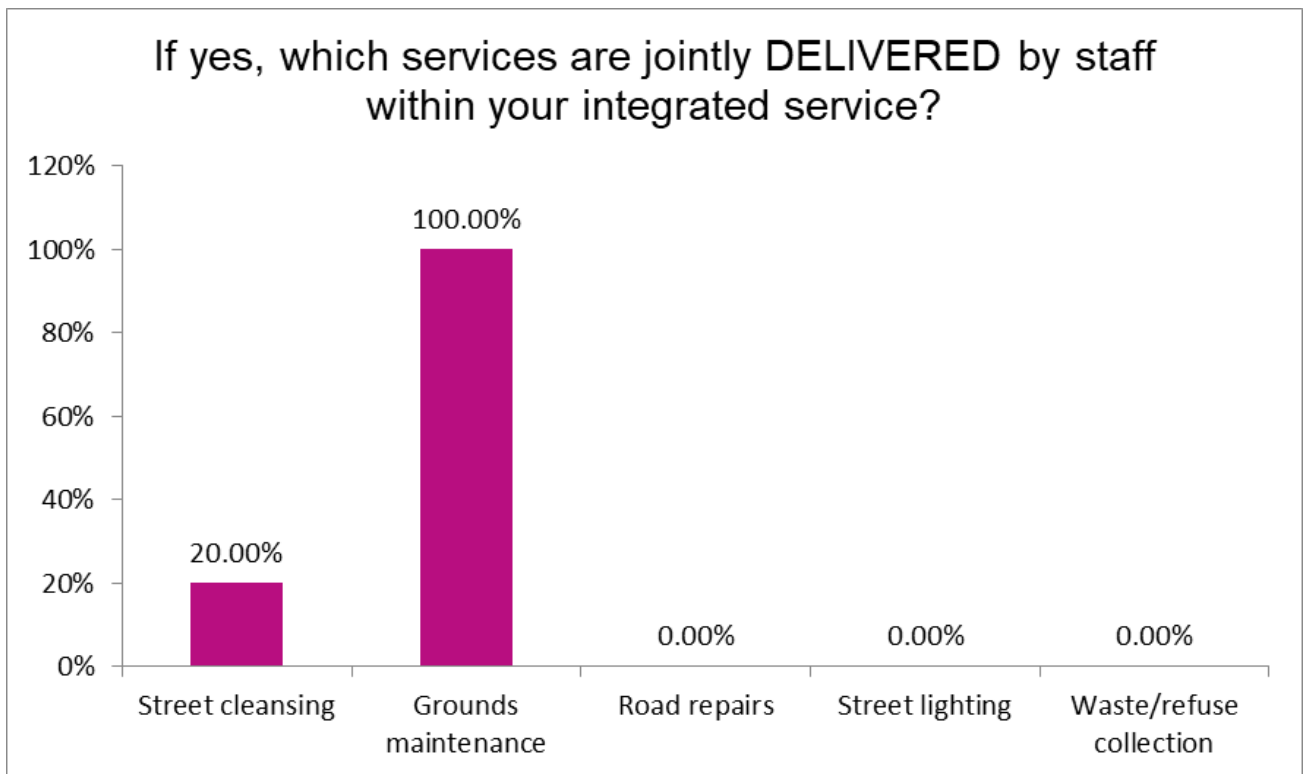
For further information on the general land audit management system please click the link below.

[Land Audit Management System \(LAMS\)](#).

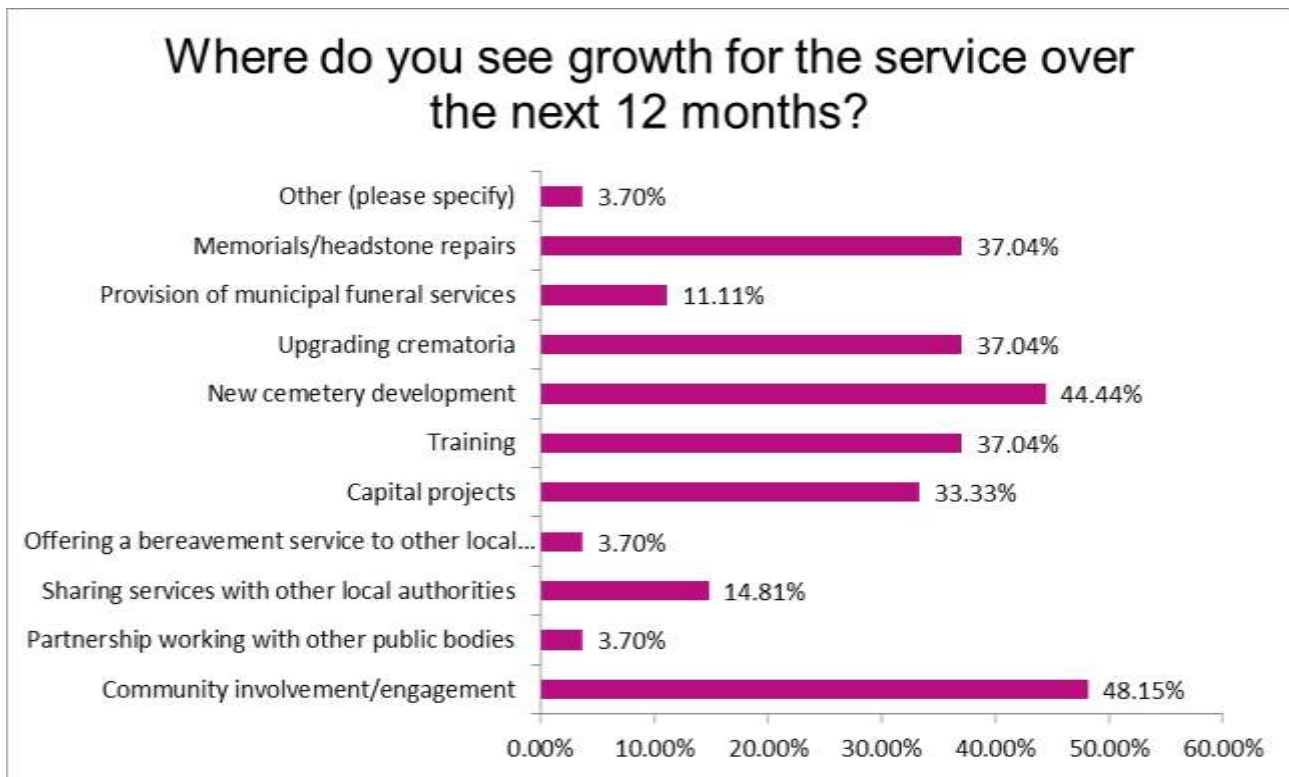


Currently a half of the local authorities responding to this survey, run their cemeteries and crematoria services as part of a wider integrated service provision, usually linked with grounds maintenance and to a growing degree street cleansing. However, where there is often multi-tasking between street cleansing refuse collection and to a degree grounds maintenance, staff employed within cemeteries tend to remain quite specialised in their roles such as grave digging, operating cremators etc. Although during

the pandemic, staff from across these services were redeployed to help the increased demand for Bereavement Services.

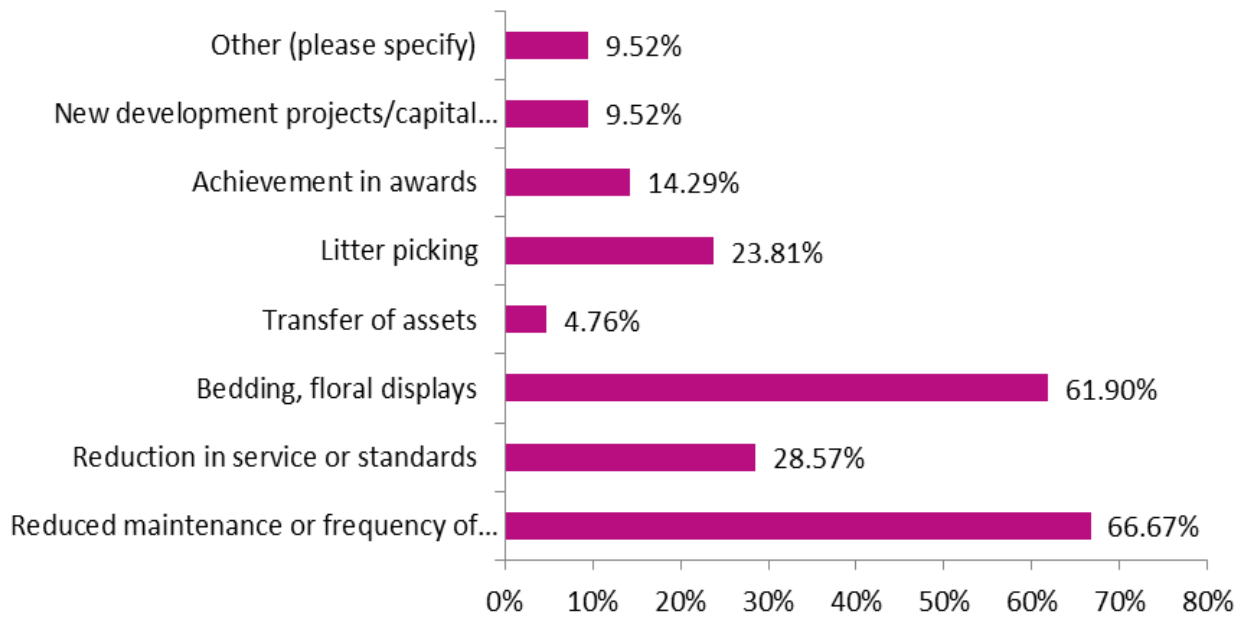


Here we see a clear distinction beginning to appear as there is less of an intention to integrate Bereavement Services into a larger integrated service approach than in 2018 when 15% were considering integration.



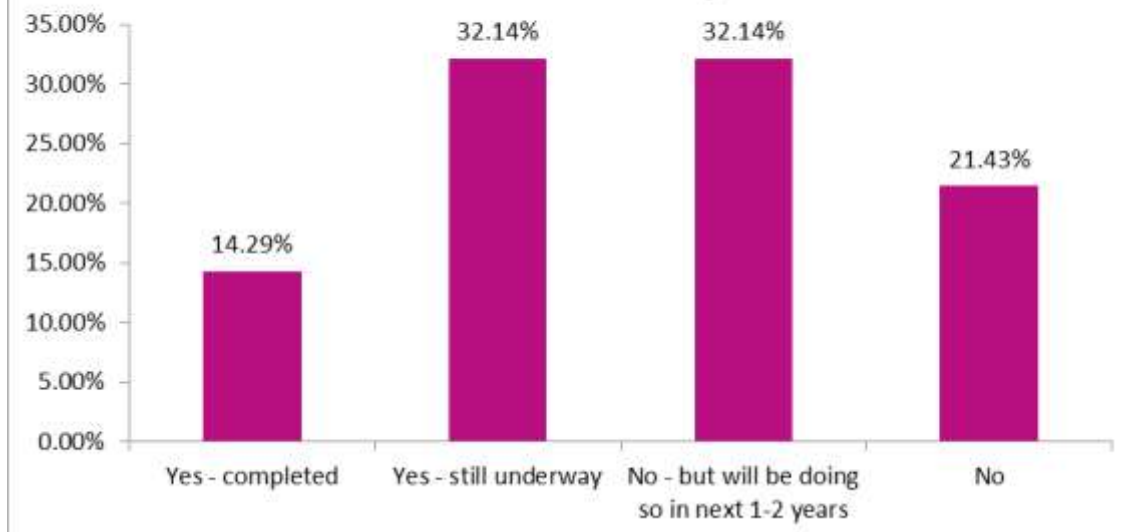
It is notable that areas of growth are quite diverse, but those areas which have been seen as potentially having the biggest increases over the next twelve months are memorial and headstone repairs, upgrading crematoria and training. It is therefore interesting to compare these changes in growth areas against those areas of service provision which may need to be reduced.

Where do you see future decreases in work for the service?

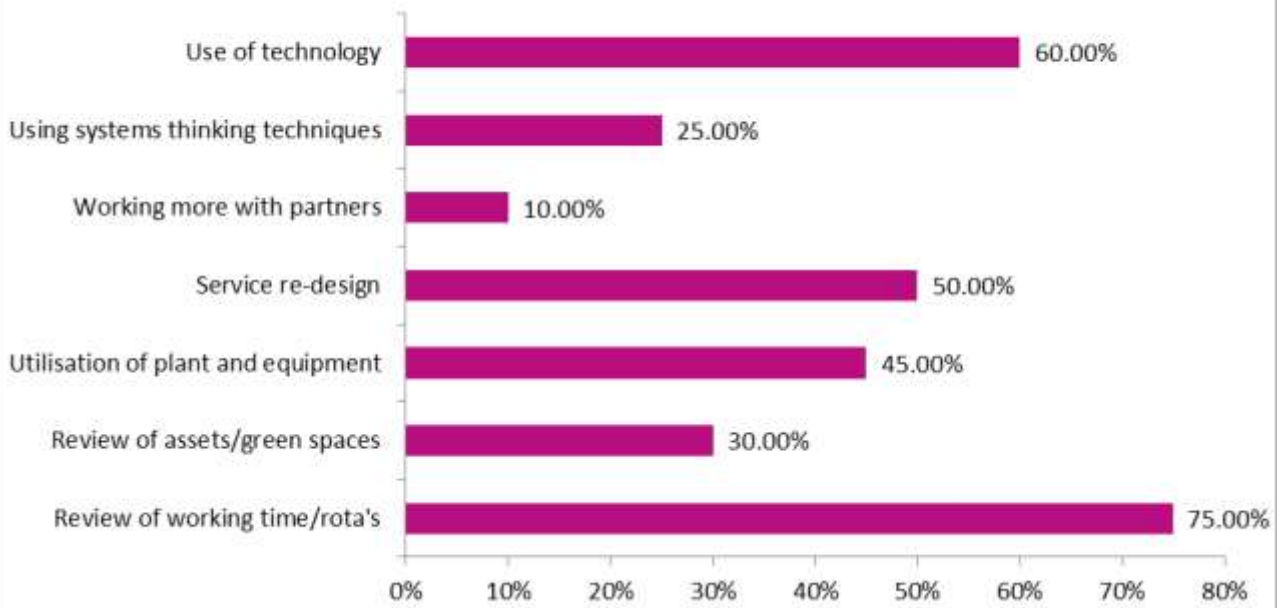


Anticipated reductions in maintenance and service standards have increased in 2022 but surprisingly the number of respondents expecting reductions in bedding displays has again fallen, perhaps a reflection that as land is moved over to less intensive management there is an ability to focus on floral displays and bedding displays in the more frequently used areas of the cemetery

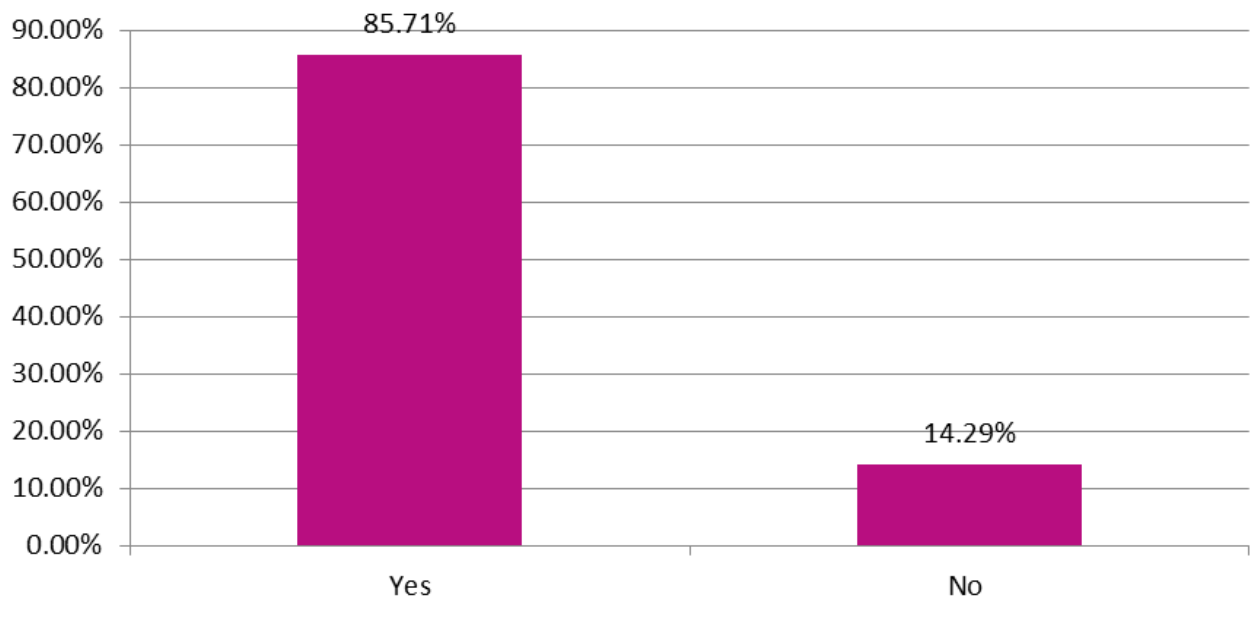
Have you undertaken a review of your service recently?



Will this review involve any of the following:

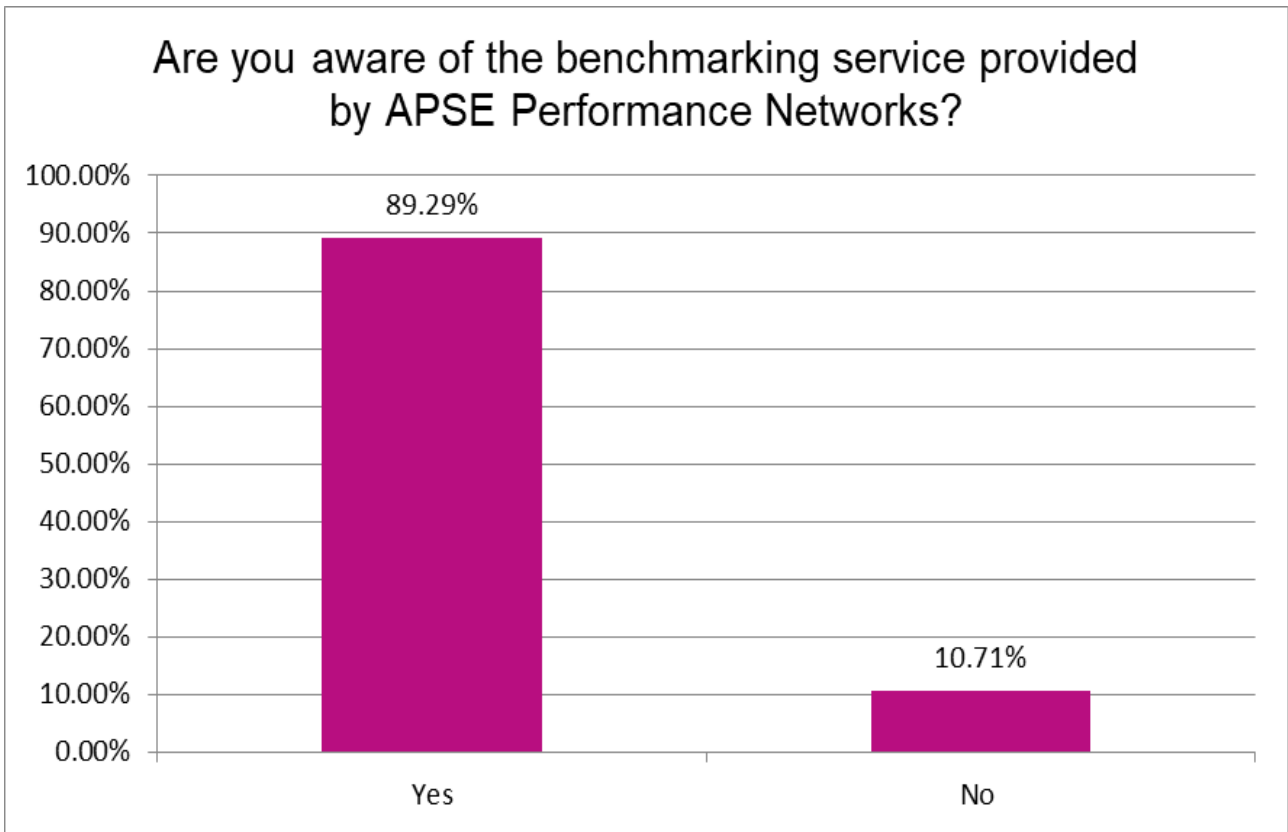


Are you aware of support for service reviews from APSE Solutions?



If you require further details about the services APSE Solution can provide please access the following link.

[APSE Solutions](#)



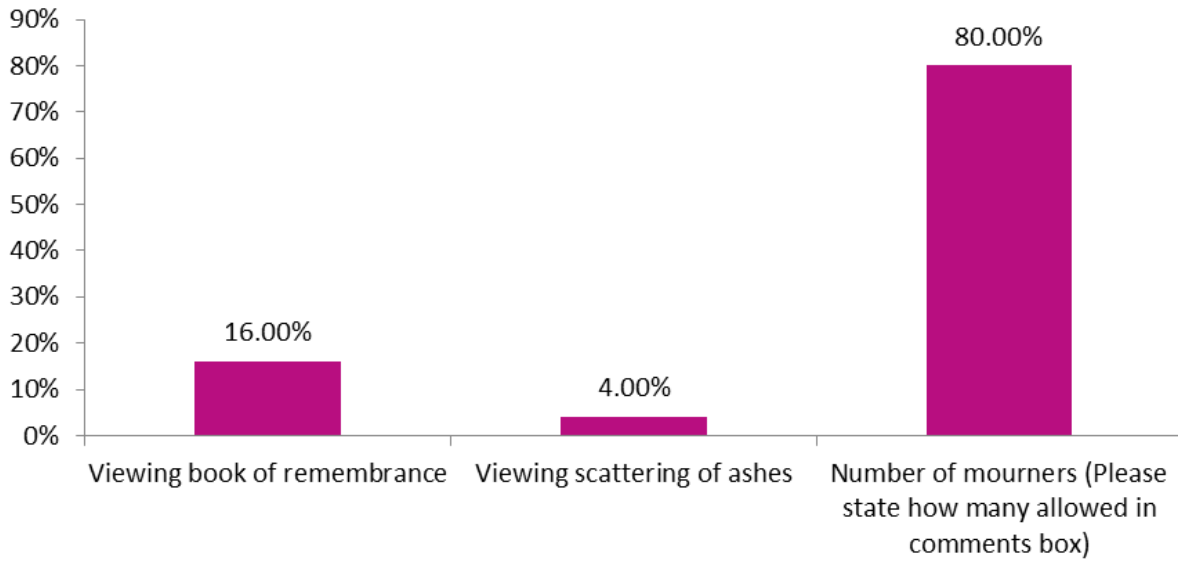
If you require further details about the services APSE Solution can provide, then please access the following link

[Performance Networks](#)

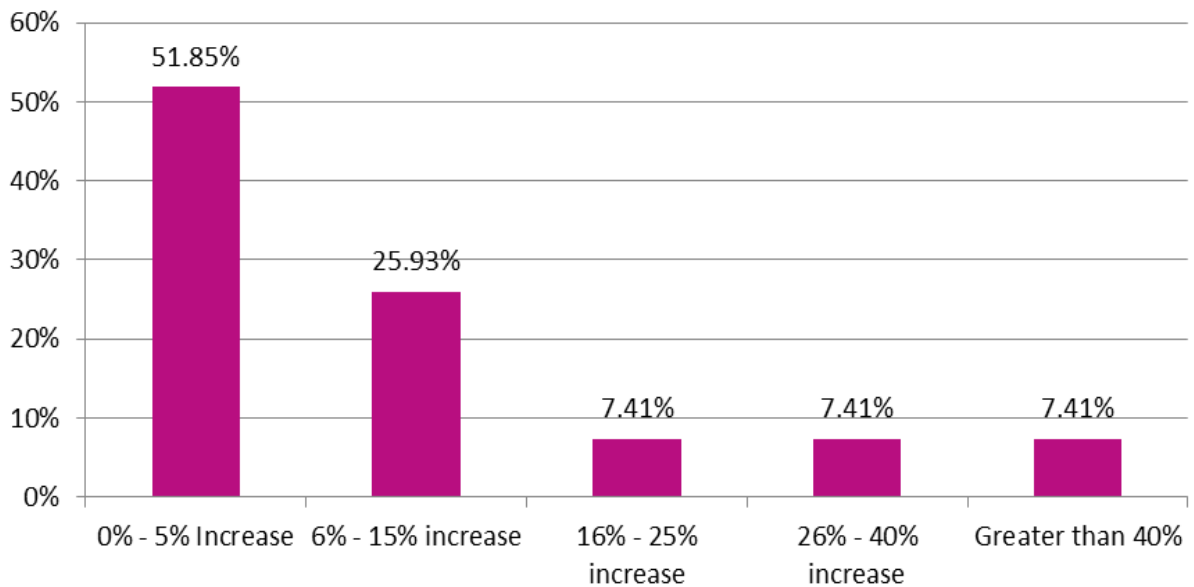
The Impact of Covid-19

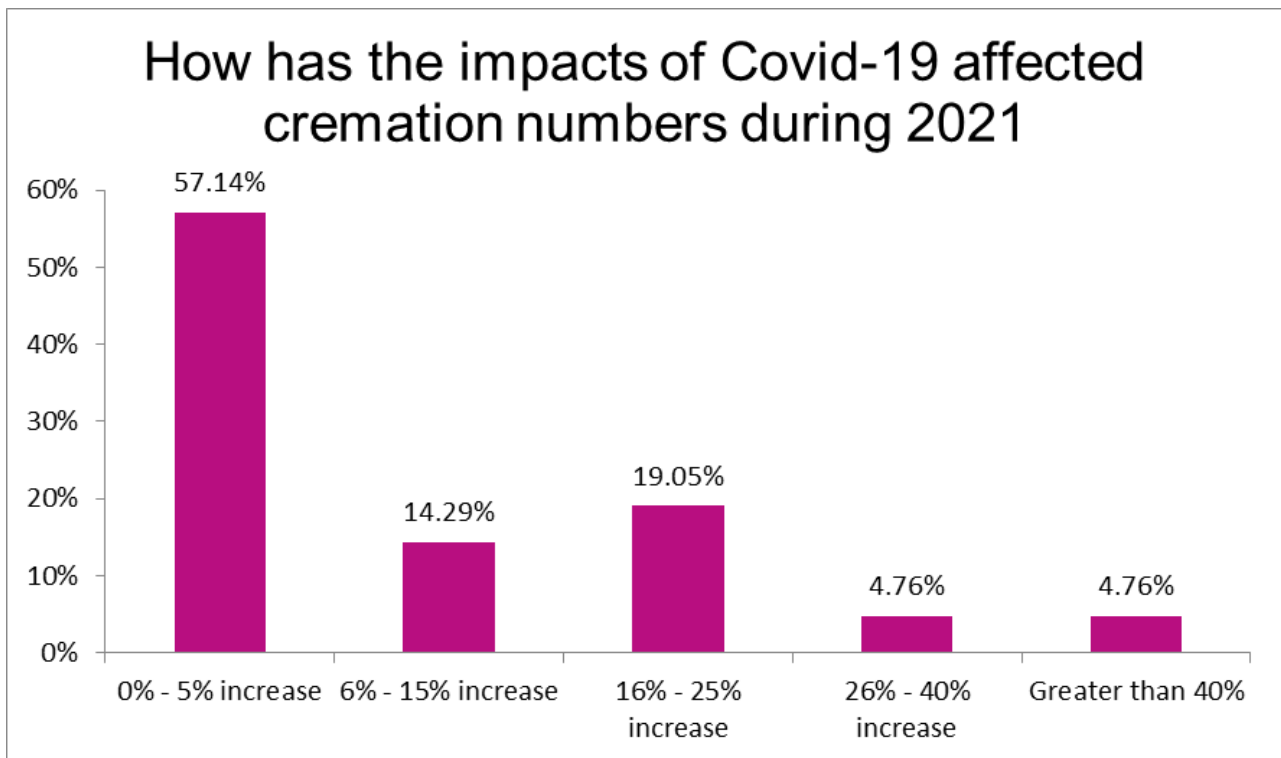
In light of the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic APSE included several additional questions to this year's survey which the results of which members may find useful.

Were any services suspended/revised during 2021



How has the impacts of Covid-19 affected burial numbers during 2021





Staff absence Levels

With regards to staff absences between March 2021 and December 2021 the average level of absence was between 0-10% for over 85 percent of respondents. Only during August to December were there levels of over 10% recorded and these were relatively few in numbers.

It appears that despite the ravages of the pandemic Bereavement Service across the UK coped well with the extra demands although often having to be supported from other services such as street cleansing, parks and grounds maintenance.

However it is testament to all concerned that the increase in burials and cremations was handled efficiently and with empathy.

APSE provides a regular Cemeteries and Crematoria Advisory Group that members may attend for free. We asked what cemeteries and crematoria related topics APSE members would you find most valuable in the near future?

- Impacts of the Coronavirus on Bereavement Services
- Management of unauthorised memorials / Memorial Enforcement Issues
- Work scheduling: balance burial work v grounds maintenance requirement
- Technology - poor software options,
- Digitisation of burial and cremation forms, computer management systems which would handle the former, data protection / privacy notices and MOJ forms, Medical Examiner.
- Multi faith burials

- Improving use of crematoria & cemetery buildings
- Woodland burials and memorial structures
- Medical Examiners
- Use of Volunteers
- Best practice examples; councils as funeral directors
- Natural Burial and integrated funeral directors
- Funding green initiatives/environmental impacts of cremation and burials
- Opportunities for rewilding/biodiversity
- Electric cremators/Resomation process.
- Opportunities for apprenticeships
- Memorial Headstone Inspections and Repairs
- Income generating schemes
- Grey Water/ground water pollution
- Municipal Funeral Services
- Establishing Cemeteries Friends Group
- Regulations of cremation
- Practical solutions for dealing with memorials in closed churchyards/ petitioning for a simplified system to manage safety in churchyards including waving of faculty fees to local authorities
- Identifying, acquiring and opening new burial areas
- Use of Columbaria
- How other authorities are planning for the future in terms of limited space/ grave re-use.
- Business planning/modelling and implementation from ideas to services and products.
- Maintenance benchmarking.
- Surrounds versus lawn cemeteries
- Service reviews and outcomes / alternative ways of working / service configuration
- Managing historic churchyards
- Burial related topics
- Identifying new sites for cemeteries
- Maximising income from public health funerals

APSE Comment

This being APSE's sixth State of the Market Survey the ongoing data collected is now allowing some real trends to be identified within the local authority Bereavement services sector. As time progresses more meaningful comparisons will be able to be made and more detailed trend analysis to be carried out. It is hoped that this State of the Market Survey will be a document to which Bereavement services managers and other interested parties can refer to when considering the key issues for local authority Bereavement services across the UK. The document will continue to provide access to new ideas and service innovations as well as the opportunity to receive performance data which will help service planners and managers to readily understand the bereavement sector and its key issues more accurately.

With the advent of the Coronavirus pandemic, there has clearly been significant impacts on the service and these impacts will undoubtedly affect some of the progress made with regards to balancing budgets and service improvements, but this is only to be expected. Bereavement services and their staff have been at the forefront of local authority response to the pandemic and have had to deal with the distress this virus has caused. Therefore, there will be a need for reflection and reviewing how future services may need to be delivered in the short, medium and longer term.

However, from the pandemic related survey results, it is clear that Bereavement services across the UK have coped well with the added stresses and strains this virus has brought.

Although the service has still not been subjected to the same level of budget cuts that other local authority services have suffered, this fact has not led to complacency, with respondents highlighting excellent examples of service improvement, income generation and improved user experiences. Notably in this report there does appear to be some improvements in budgets for the forthcoming year, with few reporting cuts or loss of capital and revenue budgets, indeed quite a few respondents have reported anticipated increases in budget levels.

Although income generation is pursued by many and is gaining wider support, it is clear that it is not pursued with the same vigour as in other local authority services, but considering the sensitivities surrounding the service and its users, this is perhaps not unexpected. This year has seen the further issue of increased political and public resistance to increasing or adding new income generating schemes.

What has become more apparent when considering the results from both the 2020 and 2021 surveys, was the growing importance of Friends of Cemeteries Groups and the multiple benefits they brought, most notably additional funding. This is an area which has been particularly hard hit, where due to social distancing and several lockdowns, the interaction needed to gain the benefits from these groups has not been possible.

The survey has also shown that there are common problems shared throughout the UK, with reducing availability of burial space, funeral poverty and changing cultural need regularly being referenced in the responses. Such issues and their solutions are regularly discussed via the network query service APSE provides.

The need to address environmental impact has also been raised within the survey and from results received from the surveys to date, is the importance now being given to mitigating the environmental impact bereavement services operations have and highlighting the ways in which managers are addressing these issues. Reduced cremator emissions, natural burial options, environmentally friendly grounds maintenance regimes and increasing the opportunities for re-wilding and biodiversity within cemetery grounds quoted by respondents are all clear examples of good environmental practice. APSE is also working with the Environmental Stewardship Group who are looking to identify the environmental impact of the Bereavement industry in totality and ways to improve the environmental performance of all those concerned. Recently a report has been produced by the Environmental Stewardship Group which highlights some of the environmental improvements which can be made to help mitigate the impacts of climate change thereby making the Bereavement Sector more environmentally sustainable. A copy of the Group's report can be downloaded using [this link](#).

The only note of concern is the clear indication that the quality and maintenance of cemetery grounds may be suffering at the hands of wider local authority cuts, but again Bereavement professionals are looking at alternative and perhaps more environmentally sustainable grounds maintenance methods, as a way to combat any cuts which may affect the quality of cemetery and crematoria grounds.

The information gathered from the survey will be used by APSE to inform the services it offers to its members, in order to ensure its briefing papers, advisory groups and seminars reflect these key issues in the future.

The State of the Market survey has now become an important tool in allowing trend analysis to be carried out and to ensure APSE's members are kept up to date with the latest Bereavement service issues and innovations.

The Association for Public Service Excellence

APSE member authorities have access to a wide range of membership resources to assist in delivering council services. This includes our regular advisory groups, specifically designed to bring together elected members, directors, managers and heads of service, together with trade union representatives to discuss service specific issues, innovation and new ways of delivering continuous improvement. The advisory groups are an excellent forum for sharing ideas and discussing topical service issues with colleagues from other councils throughout the UK.

Advisory groups are a free service included as part of your authority's membership of APSE and all end with an informal lunch to facilitate networking with peers in other councils. If you do not currently receive details about APSE advisory group meetings and would like to be added to our list of contacts for your service area, please email enquiries@apse.org.uk.

Our national advisory groups include:

- Facilities Management and Building cleaning
- Catering
- Climate change and renewable energy network
- Cemeteries and Crematoria
- Environmental Health / Trading Standards
- Housing, construction and building maintenance
- Local authority commercialisation, income and trading network
- Parks, horticultural and ground maintenance
- Roads, highways and street lighting
- Sports and leisure management
- Vehicle maintenance and transport
- Waste management, refuse collection and street cleansing

If you require any further information on the findings of this State of the Market survey 2022 please contact Wayne Priestley, APSE Principal Advisor for Environmental Services at wpriestley@apse.org.uk