



The Newbury Weekly News is proud to be the independent newspaper at the heart of West Berkshire and North Hampshire. We always welcome your feedback on how we can improve our service to the community.

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# Council funerals for people with no family

## Public health services held to ensure they are treated with respect

By NIKI HINMAN  
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**TWO people died this year in West Berkshire and, because they had no family, they were buried by the council.**

This means the council will have tried to trace relatives and then organised a cremation with a simple service.

Eleven public health cremation enquiries were received by the Public Protection Partnership (PPP) in West Berkshire last year.

Officers were able to locate the next of kin for the other nine and supported them in funeral arrangements.

There is a list called the unclaimed estates list compiled by the government, which lists all the people who have died, but have no traced relatives.

There are 5,962 names on that list currently, and five of them are from Newbury.

One of them, an Austrian lady called Franziska Rettenbacher, died in Thatcham as a spinster in 2023. She would have been 100 this year.

Others are Doris Agnes Butcher, a widow to Sydney, who died in 2011 and was reported to the list by West Berkshire Council.

Gerald Barnard Walsh, a bachelor



The interior of a crematorium chapel set out for a funeral service

from Oxford was reported in 2006, while Robert Chatfield, a bachelor in 2019, died in Clacton-on-Sea.

Frank Readyhoigh was reported by Berkshire NHS Trust.

Radojica Veselinovic, was a widower who died in Newbury in 1996, and Jean Paul Henry Sands also died in Newbury, in 2022.

Where it appears that no suitable arrangements for the disposal of a body have been or are being made, the (PPP) has a duty under section 46 of the Public Health Act 1984 to 'bury or cremate a body of any person who has died or found to be dead' within the district.

Notification of a deceased person may be received from the police, coroner, registrar or a member of the public.

In reality, and unless expressly wished for, a cremation would be carried out.

Details of the individual's home and belongings are passed to the Treasury Solicitor's Bona Vacantia division, which collects information for the purposes of dealing with estates worth more than £500.

'Bona Vacantia' means vacant goods and is the name given to ownerless property, which by law passes to the Crown.

The Treasury Solicitor acts for the Crown to administer the estates of people who die intestate (without a will) and without known kin (entitled blood relatives).

If nobody claims the estate after 12 years, then it passes to the Crown.

Family members aren't legally required to pay for the funeral.

If the person's next of kin refuses to cover funeral costs, the local authority will pay for a public health funeral instead.

But before organising the funeral the local council will try to track down other family members to see if they'll pay for the funeral.

This is because a public health funeral is seen as a last resort.

It's done to make sure that people who pass away without family are still taken care of and treated with respect.

## Residents asked for input over town projects

**THATCHAM Town Council is now going ahead with its Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP).**

And it is asking members of the community for their input.

An NDP offers the chance for residents to have an active say in how to improve the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of the area by influencing the planning process for proposed developments – of which there are multiple planned across the town.

A first meeting was held at the town council chamber in Brownsfield Road earlier this month, and now the council is looking to establish five working groups, which include housing and urban, rural environment, economy, community and transport.

Participation is open to all residents, businesses and stakeholders within and with a significant interest in Thatcham.

Email enquiries@thatchamtown-council.gov.uk if you are interested in joining or for further information.

And remember, West Berkshire Council's eight-week public consultation to feedback on the Main Modifications of its Local Plan runs until January 31, 2025.

Submit your comments to planningpolicy@westberks.gov.uk or by post to Planning Policy Team, Development and Housing, West Berkshire District Council, Market Street, Newbury, RG14 5LD.

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