

Minutes of the Cemetery Committee meeting held on Thursday 18th September 2014 in the Embleton Room, St James Centre, Pottergate, Alnwick at 7.00pm

Present: Cllrs D Farrar (Chairman), S Mavin, M Swinbank and A Symmonds.

In attendance: W Batey, Chief Officer and Town Clerk, J Pibworth, Administration Assistant.

CEM 14/18 Apologies

Cllr S Allcroft, P Allcroft, J Humphries and K Moore.

CEM 14/19 Declarations of Interest

None.

CEM 14/20 Cemetery Activity, 2014/15 budget update

The Clerk circulated the Cemetery year to date activity data as at September 18th 2014. So far in 2014/15 there have been 20 burials and 6 ashes interred. Out of the 20 burials, 10 had resulted in new plots being purchased whilst 3 new plots had been purchased without burial all in the old part of the cemetery. The Chapel had been used on 4 occasions and 3 burials had an out of parish surcharge. These compare with the 2013/14 outturn figures of 42 burials and 6 ashes interred. The expected outturn figures are predicted to be roughly the same as last year.

The Town Clerk circulated the 2014/15 Cemetery Income, Expenditure and Estimates sheet as at September 18th with the expenditure at £26,439 and income at £13,310. He commented on certain items of expenditure within the budget: The figure for Wages appears higher than expected but this is due to more overtime in the summer and will flatten out in winter. Rates / Water rates will be the year end figure; Building repairs includes cost of the 5 year electrical checks and Grounds includes materials for pointing works and cement for headstone bases. The income figure includes £200 contribution from Denwick Parish Council for 2014/15 and there is another £800 to add for this week. The year end figure is expected to be about as budgeted.

Councillor Farrar asked if there had been any problems with the soakaway. The Town Clerk said there hadn't been.

RESOLVED: To receive the budget figures and update

CEM 14/21 New Cemetery Area, Ground water audit, design update and delivery plan, tipping from Cawledge View

Ground water audit - The Town Clerk gave an update on the recent monitoring that has been carried out on the four monitoring test pits. The recent monitoring showed that TP2 and TP4 remain ok for double burials, TP3 had improved and was also ok for double burials. The water level remains the same in TP1, possibly making it unsuitable for burials but suitable for cremation burials.

The Town Clerk said that the data collected will be sent to Bold Environmental at the end of September to interpret the results. Councillor Farrar asked if we could ask if they felt any further test pits were needed.

Councillor Farrar also said he had read Cemetery Guidance that suggests shallower depth burials may be appropriate in the right type of ground.

Design update and delivery plan - a further site visit took place on September 12th at which some of the committee had looked at the new area and how this might connect into the existing cemetery. Exact measurements were taken and a revised plan drawn up incorporating the comments from councillors. The final draft plan was presented to the committee by the Administration Assistant who gave an update on the revised elements of the design. This included a Remembrance Garden that councillors had requested; a woodland burial area at the top of the main avenue to the right of the current 'new' cemetery area; wider paths and burial areas, cinder paths and trees between the new area and Cawledge View houses.

Councillor Symmonds was not keen on using cinder for paths. Councillor Farrar said research was needed on possible materials for paths. He also felt that adding more trees/shrubs needed to be considered to soften grave areas.

Councillor Farrar covered the approximate timescales for the main elements of work needed:

- ground levelled in September- November 2014
- hole in hedge made in November 2014
- beech hedge moved between November 2014 and January 2015
- new hedgerows planted between November 2014 and January 2015
- hard landscaped paths laid in Spring 2015
- other landscaping undertaken in early 2016 in including benches

Trees - the Administration Assistant issued a list of trees indicating whether native and non-native, evergreen or deciduous and full grown height. She also handed round some images and it was suggested that each member of the Cemetery committee, and Town Council staff, choose a tree for the new cemetery area. The list and images will be emailed with the minutes and councillors should indicate their preferred tree by the November meeting.

Arches - the Administration Assistant issued images of different types of arches which could feature as part of the new area design. This would link the current cemetery area to the new area and would be sited at the new opening in the existing beech hedge. Councillors reviewed the images and thought that the gothic arch was most suitable as it pulls together the design of the original cemetery and also the style of the Chapel. More information to be obtained from three local blacksmiths/craftsmen for the November meeting.

Tipping from Cawledge View - the Town Clerk informed councillors that he had written to all the houses in Cawledge View asking them not to tip waste over into the planned cemetery area.

RESOLVED: i) To send water monitoring findings to Bold Environmental for analysis, ii) to accept the revised overall design for the new cemetery area.

CEM 14/22 Update on Denwick Parish Council meeting

The Town Clerk reported that the meeting with Denwick Parish Council will take place in October. Councillor Swinbank asked if the Denwick churchyard was still in use. The Administration Assistant confirmed that there was no cemetery at Denwick and funerals took place at St Michael's, Alnwick.

RESOLVED: To accept the update.

CEM 14/23 Friends of the Cemetery (FOTC)

The Town Clerk reported that there was an article in the Northumberland Gazette today about the new planting being done and the Friends of the Cemetery scheme. The next programmed date for FOTC volunteers was 20th September at 9.30am. As part of the work schedule they will check and tidy the hedging at Cawledge View. The Town Clerk reported that he had been contacted by the RAF to ask about helping in the community. It has been arranged for volunteers to help in the cemetery on Wednesday September 24th.

RESOLVED: To accept the update.

CEM 14/24 Building Works: pointing, path, fencing, soak away, replacement bins, tree survey

Pointing - The Town Clerk showed councillors a colour coded plan of the cemetery, which he had produced following an inspection of the stone walls. Each section was colour coded to identify when it would need further pointing work to be undertaken. The first area needing work was 50sq m on the front wall and he then reported that over the next 5 years approximately 750sq m of wall would need work. He felt the Town Council should plan for 150sq m to be done each year. He also said that some of the Sawmill end wall was covered with ivy so could not be assessed. The Administrative Assistant had done some research on removing ivy which was given to the chair.

Councillor Symmonds felt that the Town Council should budget £2,500 for the pointing work in 2015/16 and £3,000 in subsequent years.

Path - Town Clerk reported that the path by the Chapel had not yet been done but would be undertaken when less grass cutting was needed.

Fencing - Town Clerk confirmed he had received two quotes but one needed updating. He reported that 21metres of fencing was needed plus new gates and that it would cost approximately £1,000.

Soakaway - The Town Clerk reported that this would be done during the autumn.

Replacement bins - The Town Clerk would get costs for wooden structures outside the bins from the contractors who were quoting for the replacement fencing / gates. He will report back at the November committee meeting.

Tree survey - The Town Clerk confirmed that quotes were needed but these would be obtained and the work carried out in time for the November meeting.

RESOLVED: To accept the updates.

CEM 14/25 Glyphosate free area update

Councillor Farrar reported that he had complaints from people about the untidy patches of grass around some of the graves in the Cemetery. The Town Clerk explained that a defined Glyphosate free area had been identified but had not as yet been strimmed and had led to some complaints. Councillor Swinbank asked if this area could now be strimmed. The Town Clerk confirmed it would be.

Councillor Symmonds asked why the council shouldn't spray. Councillor Farrar explained that people don't like the dead grass it creates and it is also not good for the land. The Town Clerk explained that if Glyphosate was not used the grass would need strimming throughout the season. Councillor Symmonds asked if this was cost effective as it is extra work for the Cemetery staff. Councillor Farrar said no-one was asking for extra work to be done but perhaps less mowing could be done instead. Councillor Symmonds felt that a strict log of the work done and the time involved needed to be kept. The Town Clerk said that an analysis of the time taken to do each headstone would give a good indication. Councillor Farrar felt that the council could set a height the grass could reach before strimming was needed.

Councillor Farrar also felt that using Glyphosate had perhaps become a tradition. The Town Clerk confirmed that there are about six graves where the relatives have asked the Town Council not to Glyphosate and they tend the graves themselves.

Councillor Symmonds had also spoken to an ex resident who had notice that weeds were blowing from the non Glyphosate area into other areas.

RESOLVED: To strim the Glyphosate free area then agree with the Cemetery Superintendent how long the grass should be before trimming.

CEM 14/26 Commonwealth War Graves - proposal to erect a plaque

The Town Clerk explained that he had received an enquiry from Neil and Joyce Brison of the Western Front Association. They had been to Amble Cemetery and seen a green plaque denoting Commonwealth Graves in the cemetery. They wondered if Alnwick cemetery could have one. Councillor Farrar asked if we have Commonwealth Graves in the cemetery. The Town Clerk confirmed that we do.

RESOLVED: Town Clerk to contact Commonwealth Graves Commission to enquire about the green plaque.

CEM 14/27 Any Other Business

The Town Clerk brought to the attention of the committee the need to review the extras charges payable for burials in certain circumstances and make these clearer giving examples as to when these additional charges apply.

Meeting closed at 8.58pm