

**Minutes of the Cemetery Committee meeting held on Thursday 19th March 2015
in the Mechanics Institute, Percy Street, Alnwick at 7.00pm**

Present: Cllrs D Farrar (Chairman), K Moore, M Swinbank and A Symmonds.

In attendance: W Batey, Chief Officer and Town Clerk, J Pibworth, Administration Assistant.
Tommy Stewart, member of the public

CEM 14/55 Apologies

Councillors S Allcroft, P Allcroft and S Mavin.

CEM 14/56 Declarations of Interest

None.

CEM 14/57 Question from the public

Mr Stewart handed in written questions from a resident concerning rabbits in the cemetery. The Town Clerk advised that he would get answers from the Cemetery Superintendent and write back to the enquirer.

Councillors discussed the potential methods for deterring or reducing the number of rabbits in the cemetery. Councillor Moore asked if information could be gathered from other councils. The Town Clerk advised that he would collate information about methods of control and deterrents used by other local councils and give feedback at the next meeting.

CEM 14/58 Cemetery Activity, 2014/15 budget update

The Clerk circulated the Cemetery year to date activity data as at March 20th 2015. So far in 2014/15 there have been 50 burials (37 in January) and 9 ashes interred (9 in January). Out of the 50 burials, 28 had resulted in new plots being purchased whilst 16 new plots (6 in January) had been purchased without burial (3 in the old part of the cemetery, 11 in the new part (1 in January) and 2 in the ashes area). The Chapel had been used on 13 occasions (10 in January) and 15 burials had an out of parish surcharge (10 in January). There had also been 3 burials for children.

The outturn figure for 2014/15 is expected to be 61 (27% up on last year). The outturn figures for 2013/14 was 48 (42 burials and 6 ashes interred).

Councillor Swinbank asked if the number of people who had bought a plot but who hadn't used it yet was known. The Town Clerk advised that this data was available and he would bring to the next meeting.

Councillor Farrar asked if any resident who had bought a plot in advance had also asked if they could pay for the burial fee as well. The Town Clerk advised that he had not been asked for so far.

The Town Clerk circulated the 2014/15 Cemetery Income, Expenditure and Estimates sheet as at March 18th 2015 which showed expenditure at £46,837.73 and income at £41,500.81. He commented on certain items:

Expenditure: Machinery repairs - the figure is higher than budgeted due to an additional repair bill; New Area - currently down on budget but costs will increase close to budget once the paths are done. Any budget not spent this year in this area will be carried forward into 2015/16.

Income: The figure of £41,500 includes 2 payments from Denwick Parish Council (£200 for 2013/14 and £400 for 2014/15).

The Town Clerk advised that although there would be a deficit of around £16,800 this included £7,500 of capital expenditure during the year.

RESOLVED: To receive the budget figures and update.

CEM 14/59 New Cemetery Area (Ground water audit, design update & delivery plan)

Ground water audit - The Town Clerk gave an update. He issued the latest monitoring data and reminded councillors of the colour coding:

- White - suitable for double burials
- Yellow - suitable for single burials
- Green - unsuitable for any burials

The latest monitoring data from the test pits done on March 18th, following 7mm of rain on March 12th and 13th, showed two White areas, one Yellow area and one Green area. Councillor Moore commented that this would be monitored for at least a year. The Town Clerk advised that area TP04 will be the area to be used next and this area was fine. He also advised that the rest of the new area would not be needed for about three year monitoring would continue as long as needed.

Councillor Swinbank asked if rainfall figures for the last few years could be added to be used as benchmarks.

Design update and delivery plan

Trees - The Town Clerk advised that some trees had been planted in their final locations in the new area and that the rest had been heeled in against the Sainsbury wall to await planting. He also advised that three trees had been removed from the current burial area before the path was done. Councillor Edge had checked the remainder of the trees and they were fine to be left.

Paths - the Town Clerk confirmed that Sanders had started the new paths with an eco-friendly product called Green Pave. They had done some damage to the grass in the Cawledge field and would be asked to make good. Councillor Moore asked if the path came with a guarantee. The Town Clerk advised that it didn't but Sanders would come back to redo any work the Town Council were unhappy with.

Hedging - the Town Clerk confirmed that the Cemetery Superintendent had made the 2.4m gap in the existing beech hedge though to the new area. He will move the hedge across to Willowburn later in the season. The area to the

left of the current burial area will be made ready for use by building up the level, flattening and reseeding if necessary.

Arches - the Town Clerk reminded councillors that a budget has been set for 2016/17 and that designs will be produced for review by the committee later in the year.

Green burial area - the Town Clerk advised the committee that one of the cherry trees had been taken down and that the remaining three would be taken down in due course. The beech shrubs taken out to make the gap in the main hedge had been replanted around this area to form screening.

Councillor Farrar asked if more research could be done on how other council's operate their green / woodland burial areas.

Councillor Symmonds advised that Bockenfield planted a tree after each burial.

Councillor Moore advised that at Morpeth trees were planted then removed when too big for the site. He also advised that Morpeth also have plaques in their green burial area. The Administration Assistant explained that the Town Council may offer plaques on a wooden rail in front of the old cemetery wall.

RESOLVED: To note the update.

CEM 14/60 Update on Denwick Parish Council contribution and NCC contribution

The Town Clerk reported that, further to the meeting with Denwick Parish Council, they had paid the Town Council £200 for 2013/14 and £400 for 2014/15. The repayment from NCC to Alnwick Town Council would be £3,029 for 2009-2014 and would go into the Full Council accounts. A repayment would also be made in 2015/16 and 2016/17. He also advised that the repayment from NCC to Denwick would also be paid to the Town Council.

RESOLVED: To note the update.

CEM 14/61 Update on Tree Works

The Town Clerk issued a summary sheet and accompanying map showing the trees identified as needing work in the tree survey. He also informed the committee of the quotes that had been received and advised that most of the cost were in the pollarding work as this involved traffic management.

The Town Clerk also advised that he had discussed the need for pollarding with Woodsman, the company who carried out the tree survey, who advised that they had recommended pollarding for safety reasons. He also informed the committee that the pollarding could either be done at this time of year or wait until the Autumn. The quote from Town & Country was the cheapest at £9,555 with the non pollard work costing approximately £1,500.

Councillor Farrar informed the committee that if anyone hadn't seen trees which had been pollarded they could see some in Swansfield Park Road.

Councillor Swinbank asked if the trees identified for pollarding had been pollarded before. The Town Clerk advised that they had.

Councillor Moore felt the Town Council needed a second opinion to ensure the work were necessary. The Town Clerk advised that NCC might give an opinion. Councillor Farrar asked if they would indemnify the Town Council in case of any subsequent accident. The Town Clerk advised that they wouldn't.

Councillor Moore felt it was important that the Town Council ensured that they took a second opinion so that any potential safety issues were highlighted.

Councillor Symmonds agreed with Councillor Moore as the Town Council could have a problem with the insurance company paying any claim made due to the trees.

RESOLVED: To note the update on the tree survey and accept the quote from Town & Country.

CEM 14/62 Building Works (path, fencing, soakaway, replacement bins)

Replacement bins - the Town Clerk had spoken to Chris Bowden, who had previously done work in the cemetery, and he was building surrounds for the existing bins in the main avenue. These would have an opening door and a place for empty water containers. He also advised that the large bin at the top of the avenue would be replaced with two smaller bins.

Drive - the Town Clerk advised that the work would take place when the weather got drier. The main areas to be done were patching on the main driveway and around the roundabout at the entrance to the cemetery. Councillor Farrar asked if Green Pave would be used in these areas. The Town Clerk said the quote was unclear on the materials but he would ask.

Path/Soakaway - The Town Clerk reported that the path by the Chapel and the soakaway were now urgent and would be done shortly.

RESOLVED: To accept the updates.

CEM 14/63 Waste Contract

The Town Clerk reminded councillors that the Town Council would reduce the number of bins to one 1100L bin in the next financial year. He explained that the current waste contract was with Max recycle and had written to asking to terminate the contract but had been told that the current contract runs on a rolling contract basis until 2016. The contract can be broken but a termination fee is payable which he has requested and will then take a decision. He had also asked Max recycle to review their costs as NCC were cheaper.

RESOLVED: To delegate powers to the Town Clerk and Committee Chair to take decision on the waste contract.

CEM 14/64 Friends of the Cemetery (FOTC)

The Town Clerk confirmed that the next meeting of the Friends of the Cemetery would be on Saturday March 21st. Jobs would include general tidying and raking up leaves especially on and around the roundabout.

CEM 14/65 Any Other Business

The Town Clerk advised that he had received a complaint about the amount of leaves in the children's burial area and advised that these had been cleared. The children's burial area and the adjacent ashes area are areas where leaves collected as they were close to a number of large trees.

Councillor Swinbank asked if more tidying could be done in the areas where leaves collect. The Town Clerk advised that it could.

Councillor Symmonds asked if there was any equipment to pick up leaves.

The Town Clerk commented that with over 400 trees in the cemetery this created a lot of leaves. He also advised that once mowing started the leaves would be picked up and shredded with the grass.

The Town Clerk advised that there was some graves, especially in the children's area that had a lot of items on them including lights and that people had also started to put items in the trees. Councillor Swinbank asked if the committee needed to take a view on what was allowed on graves.

Minutes of Items considered in private

RESOLVED: That pursuant to Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business, on the grounds that if members of the public were present during the discussion of these items there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in Section 100 1 and paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

- C14/66** Request for consideration of a reduction in burial fees & review of policy
C14/67 Consideration of future staffing

Meeting closed at 9.25pm