

**Minutes of the Cemetery Committee meeting held on Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> November 2015  
in the Mechanics Institute, Percy Street, Alnwick at 7.00pm**

**Present:** Cllrs D Farrar (Chairman), J Humphries, S Mavin, K Moore, M Swinbank and A Symmonds.

**In attendance:** W Batey, Chief Officer and Town Clerk; J Pibworth, Assistant to the Town Clerk.

**CEM 15/39 Apologies**

Cllrs P Allcroft, S Allcroft.

**CEM 15/40 Declarations of Interest**

None.

**CEM 15/41 Questions from the public**

None.

**CEM 15/42 Cemetery Activity, 2015/16 budget update**

ACTIVITY

**BURIALS:** Town Clerk circulated the Cemetery year to date activity data as at November 18th. He reported that the cemetery has been very quiet over the last few weeks. So far in 2015/16 there have been 30 burials and 7 ashes interred. Out of these 21 had resulted in new plots being purchased (17 in the new part, 3 in the ashes area and 1 in the children's area). 7 new plots have been purchased without burial (5 in the new part and 2 on the old part). The Chapel had been used on 4 occasions and 4 burials had an out of parish surcharge.

**PLOTS:** The Town Clerk advised that there were currently 30 plots available in the new area and 8 in the old area. He also advised that a new area has been made available in the old part of the cemetery giving a further 20 plots.

Councillor Moore asked how long it would be before the new area would need to be used. The Town Clerk advised this would be about two years.

Councillor Symmonds asked how long the new area would last. The Assistant to the Town Clerk advised that it would last about ten years.

BUDGET

The Town Clerk circulated the 2015/16 Cemetery Income and Expenditure sheet as at November 18th 2015 which showed expenditure at £39,768.82 and income at £27,930.

Expenditure:

Wages - slightly over budget due to summer workings.

Fuel – will be under budget as not much more to buy.

Stationery – will be over budget as new stock of deed and cemetery fees books have been bought.

Machine repairs – well over budget due to tractor repairs.

Build repairs - will be about £1,000 under budget.

Grounds – will be under budget at about £12,000. Some tree work still to do.

New area – no expenditure to date. New path still to do at around £2,500.

Income:

Currently £27,930 at this point and will be around £40,000 by the year end.

Councillor Symmonds asked if a more powerful tractor was needed to better cope with the other work being carried out. The Town Clerk advised that a lot of the work is on uneven ground and includes work at the allotments. There are 2 tractors, one is nearly 5 years old and is used for mainly for grass cutting, the other is 9 years old and used for other jobs as well as grass cutting.

Councillor Swinbank asked how many hours each tractor had done. The Town Clerk replied that they had done 1400 and 1600. Councillor Swinbank felt this was not particularly high.

Councillor Moore asked if tractors could be leased. The Town Clerk advised that they could but that the general view was to buy if you could afford it.

Councillor Symmonds advised the committee that he had come across other locations who had used the same kind of tractors and that these had been replaced as they were not very effective. The Town Clerk advised that the Cemetery Superintendent felt that one tractor should be replaced next year as it is normal to replace every five years to get the best trade-in value. A new version of the tractor which is 5 years old is around £13,000 with a £3,000 to £5,000 trade in.

Councillor Swinbank reported that there is a dripping tap half way up the path. The Town Clerk confirmed that he would check it.

**RESOLVED: To receive the budget figures and update.**

**CEM 15/43 New Cemetery Area (Ground water audit, design update, gate provision and delivery plan)**

**Ground water audit** - The Town Clerk gave an update. The ground is very wet at present so the measurements for all areas are red. This is due to the very high rainfall with 17mm the previous week and 12mm this week.

**Design update and delivery plan**

Path – the Town Clerk informed the committee that work on the path could be carried out after Christmas.

Councillor Farrar suggested that the best time would be February to give time for the trees to be put in

Lime trees - Councillor Moore felt that they should be left as they are. Councillors Farrar and Swinbank agreed.

Gate (Cawledge View) – Councillor Moore asked if NCC is going to replace the fence. The Town Clerk advised that he had not had any confirmation.

Councillor Swinbank suggested that a gate be put in but left open.

Councillor Moore said that it would provide access for future visitors.

Councillor Farrar suggested that money be allocated in the 2016/17 budget.

#### **CEM 15/44 Natural burial area update**

Councillor Farrar informed the committee that the term Natural Burial Area would now be used. He also confirmed that it would be legal for the Town Council to sell coffins directly to families to organise a funeral.

Wildflowers - Councillor Farrar informed the committee that it might be necessary to rake off the grass to be able to plant wildflowers on graves.

Councillor Swinbank confirmed that it could be hand raked quite easily.

Councillor Moore said he felt the area was too small to plant trees.

Councillor Humphries asked if families would be able to identify their plot. Councillor Farrar replied that there would be nothing showing above ground but that marker stones could be used.

Councillor Moore asked if there were any examples of marker stones.

Councillor Mavin liked the idea of offering plaques. She advised that North Shields council offered something similar which were mounted on pillars set on a gravel walkway.

The Assistant to the Town Clerk suggested that the area in front of the stone wall could be used to plant small trees or shrubs and a stone placed by them or a plaque on a low wooden rail.

Councillor Symmonds felt that some people would want to visit the grave so offering a marker was advisable. The Assistant to the Town Clerk confirmed that someone had enquired about natural burials and that she could ask them for their thoughts on markers, trees and shrubs.

Councillor Farrar asked if the spacing of the graves was standard.

The Assistant to the Town Clerk confirmed that the plots in the natural burial area would be 1.2m x 2.4m which was the same as other plots minus the headstone area.

**RESOLVED: To note the update and obtain more information on standard plot sizes, spaces between them and memorial stones.**

#### **CEM 15/45 Cemetery Superintendent Post**

The Town Clerk advised the Committee that the Cemetery Superintendent had confirmed that his last working day would be 31st December 2015. He has

indicated that he would be willing to help with burials after this date. He is in the process of moving out of the Cemetery Lodge.

### **Job description**

Person specification - The Town Clerk had at first thought that it was essential that applicants should have previously worked in a cemetery but now felt that it was desirable and not essential. Councillor comments were requested, prior to the post being advertised the following week.

Interviewing Panel - The Town Clerk confirmed that interviews would be held on Friday 11th December 2015. Councillor Farrar asked if Councillor Symmonds would be on the panel along with himself and the Town Clerk. Councillor Symmonds confirmed that he would.

**RESOLVED: To note the update.**

### **CEM 15/46 Tree Works Update**

The Town Clerk confirmed that at the request of the committee he had met with Barry Wilson, NCC Tree and Woodland Officer, to get his views on the need to pollard some of the lime trees in the cemetery that had been identified in the latest tree survey. He confirmed that, in his opinion, he did not feel that pollarding was necessary and the trees looked healthy. His suggested tree works would be to inspect and clean each crown and remove any deadwood; remove the northern most branch on lime tree T15; undertake a crown lift of some lower branches giving a road clearance of 5.2m and cut back branches adjacent to the bus stop.

Councillor Moore asked who would do the suggested works. The Town Clerk suggested that quotes be obtained from Town & Country and NCC.

**RESOLVED: Councillor Farrar and The Town Clerk to obtain quotes and take a decision about the contractor.**

### **CEM 15/47 Building Works (path, fencing, soakaway, replacement bins)**

Soakaway – hopefully the work will be done by the end of December.

Bins – replacement covers have been obtained from Chris Bowden including one in the new burial area.

Pointing – one contractor will undertake £1,000 of work this year.

**RESOLVED: To note the update.**

### **CEM 15/48 Wildlife Policy**

Councillor Farrar gave an overview of the wildlife policy which had been circulated. The general policy includes: Maintenance and chemical controls covered in statements 1-9; Wildlife Patches covered in statements 10-13 and Public access and involvement covered in statements 19-20. Statements 14 to 18 cover Specific species and include Bats; Birds and Ivy.

Councillor Symmonds asked if the Chair thought the number of moles in the cemetery was acceptable. Councillor Farrar commented that in areas of the cemetery which were unused castor oil could be used as a deterrent.

Councillor Farrar thought that the number of rabbits in the cemetery did need to be controlled. Councillor Symmonds advised the committee that he had seen an eagle owl in use but it wasn't very humane. Councillor Moore asked about using ferrets. Councillor Farrar was not sure it was very humane.

The Town Clerk reported that rabbits are becoming more of a nuisance especially near to the children's area.

The Town Clerk also reported that some areas with a lot of mole hills were causing issues with the mowing.

Councillor Farrar informed the Committee that there were more rabbits than in the past and suggested owls might help with this. At present moles were not causing too much of a problem.

Councillor Swinbank thought that the ground was good for both rabbits and moles and that a risk assessment would be needed for any equipment used.

Councillor Symmonds thought that the Town Council should consider using professional pest controllers.

Councillor Swinbank thought rabbits needed to be controlled not eradicated.

Councillor S Mavin asked if there were hedgehogs in the cemetery and if so, felt it would be beneficial if an areas could be left for them. Councillor Farrar suggested that areas which have not been used for burials for 50 years could be left to grow wild.

Councillor S Mavin thought that water could also be left out for animals.

Councillor Farrar felt that some areas could be left less well kept which would be wildlife friendly and also lessen the maintenance work.

**RESOLVED: i) To use mole repellent in new area; ii) To not mow areas C1, C2, C5 and C6.**

#### **CEM 15/49 Update on Glyphosate trial**

Glyphosate - The Town Clerk had circulated an update on the Glyphosate trial which had been run between April and October 2015. The trial had been in areas 38A, 39A and 40A (the current areas being used for burials). He confirmed that the trial areas had been strimmed 13 times during that period costing in the region of £685. This compares to a cost of £100 to Glyphosate the same area during the same period.

Councillor Farrar confirmed that he felt it was too expensive to do in other areas but that it should continue in the current areas.

**RESOLVED: To accept the update.**

### **CEM 15/50 Recommendation of fees for 2016/17**

The Town Clerk reminded councillors that the aim was to get the cemetery to breakeven point within around 5 years. Councillors reviewed the proposed fees for 2016/17 which had been circulated giving a comparison with other cemeteries in Northumberland including those operated by NCC.

He suggested an additional fee be added for Transfer of Deeds at £50 and that the wording in the Public Holidays statement be changed.

He advised that Amble show their fees as a standard charge with a reduction for residents. Councillor Farrar said he liked the idea of setting a standard fee then having a reduction for residents.

**RESOLVED: To accept the proposed cemetery fees for 2016/17 (attached to these minutes) with the wording amendment and additional fee for Deed Transfer and to recommend to the Full Council for approval.**

### **CEM 15/51 Proposed budget for 2016/17**

The Town Clerk advised that the budget sheet included a column with suggested budget figures for 2016/17. He reminded councillors that some of the items might have carry forward figures to add. He highlighted the following: Wages - this had been budgeted at the top salary scale for the new cemetery superintendent.

Fuel - based on a reduced cost.

Machine repairs - included the cost of servicing equipment and the new tractor.

Grounds - budgeted at £7k (incl tree works, trade waste and new strimmer).

Building repairs - includes budget of £2k for pointing.

New Area - will be carried forward from 2015/16.

Councillor Farrar asked if the income figure was a too ambitious. The Town Clerk advised that the figure was realistic as it had been worked out based on the average activity over the last 5 years and the proposed fees for 2016/17.

**RESOLVED: i) To recommend the net cemetery budget of £28,450 for 2016/17 to Full Council for approval; ii) To delegate authority to the Chair and Town Clerk to add an additional £1k, if required for machine equipment, after speaking to the cemetery superintendent.**

### **CEM 15/52 Any Other Business**

The Town Clerk suggested that, as the Cemetery Superintendent was leaving at the end of December, and he had worked for the Town Council for a number of years that a gift would be appropriate. Councillors agreed to allocate a budget of £100 and invite him to a presentation at the Council meeting in January 2016.

Meeting closed at 9.18pm

<b>COSTS FOR RESIDENTS</b>	<b>ATC Proposed 2016/17</b>
<b>BURIALS</b>	
Burial Rights for up to 100 years incl. right to erect headstone	£515
Burial of person over 12 years old	
- Depth 4ft	£300
- Depth 5ft	£450
Burial of child (1 month old up to 12 years old)	
- Depth 4ft	Nil
- Depth 5ft	Nil
Burial of child (stillborn or child up to 1 month old)	Nil
<b>CREMATED REMAINS</b>	
Burial Rights for up to 100 years incl right to erect headstone	£275
Burial Charge	£155
Scattering of Ashes	£95
<b>MEMORIALS ETC</b>	
Right to erect headstone for graves prior to 1/4/12	£130
Right to place vase/shield/cross etc.	£65
Extra Inscriptions	£35
Headstone foundation	£105
Search of Cemetery records (by post)	£30
Search of records with superintendent in attendance	£30
Transfer of a Deed	£50
Use of Chapel	£145
Non residents of Alnwick & Denwick parishes (%increase)	+100%
Saturday % increase	+100%
Bank Holidays % increase	+100%