

**Minutes of the Cemetery Committee meeting held on Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> March 2016  
in the Mechanics Institute, Percy Street, Alnwick at 7.00pm**

**Present:** Cllrs K Moore (Vice Chair), P Allcroft, S Allcroft, J Humphries, M Swinbank and A Symmonds.

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

**CEM 15/65 Apologies**

Councillor S Mavin.

**CEM 15/66 Declarations of Interest**

None.

**CEM 15/67 Cemetery Activity, 2015/16 budget update**

ACTIVITY

The Town Clerk circulated the Cemetery year to date activity data as at March 17<sup>th</sup>. He reported that there had been 13 burials since January 20<sup>th</sup> and several recent burials had been re-openings of existing graves. So far in 2015/16 there have been 57 burials of which 26 had resulted in new plots being purchased (20 in the new part, 5 in the ashes area and 1 in the children's area). 9 new plots have been purchased without burial (5 in the new part and 4 on the old part). The Chapel had been used on 5 occasions and 4 burials had an out of parish surcharge. He advised that the year-end figure should be around 57 burials (of which 26 will have purchased plots).

Remaining plots – there are 28 plots which can be purchased in the new burial area and 2 in the old area. In addition a new row of 19 is being prepared in the old area

BUDGET

The Town Clerk circulated the 2015/16 Cemetery Income and Expenditure sheet as at March 20<sup>th</sup> 2016 which showed expenditure at £57,593 and income at £37,114.

Expenditure:

Rates – council tax was paid for one month whilst Cemetery Lodge was empty.

Sundries – expenditure for recruitment advert and mini digger training.

Grounds – some additional tree work added as trees / branches came down in the high winds. Tree works quote accepted for £3,300 plus approximately £600 to cut up and chip fallen down trees.

Income:

Current income at £37,114 and is expected to be £38k by the end of the financial year.

Councillor Swinbank asked if the budget for the new tractor was in 2015/16. The Town Clerk advised that it was in the 2016/17 budget.

Councillor Symmonds advised looking for a more powerful tractor to cope with the additional area.

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

**CEM 15/68 New Cemetery Area (Ground water audit, design update, gate provision and delivery plan)**

**Consecration** – The Assistant to the Town Clerk advised that the last consecrations were in 1992 and 1911 and that the first step was to send Proof of Ownership, Planning Approval and a Plan of the Area with dimensions plus evidence of Ground Water Audit to the Registrar of the Diocese for approval of behalf of the Bishop. She also explained that the area to be consecrated must be properly drained and fenced and separated from the remainder of the ground by boulder stones marked with the letter 'C'.

She explained that usual procedure was that the local parish vicar is charged with the duty of making such arrangements as may be necessary for the service and she advised that she would contact Revd Scott at St Michaels.

She also explained that no date can be fixed for the consecration until the applicant receives the Registrar's Certificate that all preliminary legal formalities have been complied with and fees of around £2,500 will be payable.

She added that the area defined for natural burials had been consecrated as part of the last consecration in 1992.

Councillor Symonds felt it was sensible to go for this financial year with good weather.

**Ground water audit** - The Town Clerk advised that the test done on March 17<sup>th</sup> had shown TP02 and TP04 suitable for single burials. TP04 is the area to be use next for burials (this is the area between area 38A and Willowburn Sports Centre). He advised that he would do another reading in another month and send all the data to Bold Environmental for their comments.

Councillor Swinbank asked if there were field drains in the area currently being used for burials. The Town Clerk advised that he thought there were and they came across them sometimes when digging graves.

**Design update**

Hedging – the Town Clerk advised that the hedging was currently being turned around and that some of the hedging may need replacing.

Councillor Moore asked that images of the saplings provided by the Woodland Trust be sent to them as they grow.

**CEM 15/69 Natural burial area update**

The Assistant to the Town Clerk advised the committee that there were three items in the natural burial policy which needed decisions:

**PLOT SIZE** – Councillors felt that plot sizes should be the same size as in the main burial area.

**MARKING PLOTS** – Councillors felt that a standard memorial stone with plot number on it which people can inscribe or leave just with number on it should be provided as part of cost of each burial.

Councillor Swinbank asked what material the memorial stones would be made from. The Assistant to the Town Clerk advised that they would either be York stone, limestone or sandstone.

**MEMORIAL PLAQUES** - Councillors felt that families should be offered the opportunity to place a commemorative plaque on a low fence in front of the wall in the natural burial area and to plant a shrub along the wall.

**RESOLVED: To note the information and update the Natural Burial document with Standard Plot size, Standard stone Memorial stones and Memorial Plaques.**

#### **CEM 15/70 Tree Works Update**

The Town Clerk confirmed that he had only received one quote for the works to 11 trees, with traffic management, for £3,300. He also advised that three trees had blown down in the recent strong winds and these needed to be cut up and chipped. Three headstones had been hit but only one had been damaged.

Councillor Moore asked if the Town Council's insurance would cover any claim. The Town Clerk confirmed that it would.

**RESOLVED: To accept the quote received including for the additional work to the storm damaged trees.**

#### **CEM 15/71 Staffing Update**

##### **Handyperson / Cemetery Operative**

The Town Clerk confirmed that a new Handyperson / Cemetery Operative Cemetery had been appointed. He reported that they had over 60 applications and had interviewed four people. The interview panel had appointed Ian Richardson who had previously been a seasonal operative for NCC.

Councillor Swinbank asked if Ian had any certificates. The Town Clerk advised that he had spraying certificates and has driven a digger and used a chainsaw but has no qualifications. He advised that the chainsaw training he had looked at was very expensive and he would look for other chainsaw trainers.

**RESOLVED: To note the update and look for chainsaw training.**

#### **CEM 15/72 Building Works (path, fencing, soakaway, replacement bins)**

Cemetery Lodge works – this has been done.

Pointing – the next section of the cemetery wall has been done.

Soakaway – being programmed for week beginning March 21<sup>st</sup>.

**RESOLVED: To note the update.**

### **CEM 15/73 Wildlife Policy**

Owls - The Assistant Town Clerk advised that she had met with someone from Alnwick Wildlife Group and he had agreed that the cemetery would be a suitable site for and Tawny Owl box. This would cost £30 and he would install and monitor it.

Moles – The Assistant to the Town Clerk updated councillors on the issue of moles in the cemetery and the use of humane mole traps. Whilst these were suitable they must be checked every few hours. The Protection of Wildlife Act states that any moles caught must be humanely dispatched. Moles cannot be released elsewhere as this would cause them to starve or fight.

Councillor Symonds felt it was preferable if the moles were caught in traps which killed them.

Councillor Swinbank asked if there were any recommended mole traps.

The Town Clerk advised that either traps could be put in place to kill the moles or someone could come in and catch / kill them.

Rabbits – Councillor Swinbank felt that rabbits could be a bigger problem than moles.

Councillor Symonds advised contacting a 'rabbit catcher' with the relevant qualifications and equipment. Councillor Swinbank advised that they there were rabbits in the cemetery and that they were breeding.

Hedgehogs – Councillor Symonds suggested siting hedgehog boxes in the cemetery.

**RESOLVED: i) To find out the cost of a mole catcher or to invest in mole traps if the costs are felt to be prohibitive; ii) To give delegated authority to the Town Clerk and Vice Chair to make a decision about rabbit control iii) To look at hedgehog boxes for the cemetery.**

### **CEM 15/74 Any Other Business**

Councillor Humphries commented that the amount of grave decorations in the children's area. This would be considered again at the next meeting.

Councillor Swinbank asked if there were dates for the Friends of the Cemetery. The Town Clerk advised that a new programme of activities needed to be done.

Councillor Moore asked that the committee's thanks be recorded to former Councillor Farrar for his time as Chair of the Cemetery Committee and for his hard work and support. He asked that the committee formally write to former Councillor Farrar.

Meeting closed at 8.25pm