

**Minutes of the Cemetery Committee meeting held on Thursday 15th September 2016
in the Mechanics Institute, Percy Street, Alnwick at 7.00pm**

Present: Cllrs J Humphries (Chair), P Allcroft, S Allcroft, S Bell, S Mavin, M Swinbank and A Symmonds.

In attendance: J Pibworth, Assistant to the Town Clerk.

CEM 16/20 Apologies

Cllr. K Moore.

CEM 16/21 Declarations of Interest

None.

CEM 16/22 Minutes of Last Meeting – to raise any matters not covered by the agenda

CEM 16/19 The Assistant to the Town Clerk advised that the request for a Wildlife mix hedging pack had been sent to the Woodland Trust.

CEM 16/23 Cemetery Activity and 2016/17 budget update (including consideration of a leaf / grass blower)

ACTIVITY

The Assistant to the Town Clerk circulated the Cemetery year to date activity data as at September 9th. She reported that so far in 2016/17 there had been 25 burials (20 burials and 5 ashes burials) of which 13 had resulted in new plots being purchased (11 in the new part, 1 in the natural burial area. There has been 1 burial in the children's area). 3 plots have been purchased without burial (1 in the new part, 1 in the ashes area and 1 in the natural burial area). The Chapel had been used on 4 occasions and 4 burials had an out of parish surcharge.

Remaining plots – there are 17 plots which can be purchased in the new area and 2 in the old area plus ashes plots. There is also a new row in the old area which will give an additional 20 plots.

BUDGET

The Assistant to the Town Clerk circulated the 2016/17 Cemetery Income and Expenditure sheet as at Sept 9th 2016 which showed expenditure at £21,567.20 and income at £21,914.50. She itemised the following lines:

Wages, PAYE – will have pension contributions added in October

Building repairs – includes £500 for repairs to the chapel

Grounds – small increase for materials. Quotes accepted for the fencing / gates and the plaque rail in the Natural Burial Area.

She asked the committee to give consideration to a budget for a petrol leaf / grass blower which would be used in the cemetery and at the allotments.

Councillor Humphries suggested a budget of £750 which councillors agreed to.

Councillor Swinbank felt it was important to purchase one that was right for the jobs it would be used for.

RESOLVED: (i) To allocate £750 for the purchase of a leaf / grass blower; (ii) To note the update and receive the budget figures.

CEM 16/24 New Cemetery Area (Preparing for Consecration, marker stones etc)

Consecration – The Assistant to the Town Clerk reminded the committee of the date for the consecration by the Bishop of Newcastle as Monday October 10th at 2pm.

She advised councillors that she had started to send out invitations to the consecration and it was agreed that all 9 religious groups be invited to the consecration. It was also agreed to invite the Chairman of Denwick Parish Council and to invite the Gazette.

Marker stones - The Assistant to the Town Clerk reminded councillors that the boundary of the area to be consecrated needs marking with boulder stones marked with the letter 'C'. Six marker stones had been ordered and would be used to mark the edge of the area for consecration and to separate it from the agreed un-consecrated area in the current burial area.

RESOLVED: i) To invite all 9 religious groups to the consecration, ii) To invite the Chairperson of Denwick Parish Council and the Northumberland Gazette to the consecration.

CEM 16/25 Natural burial area progress, including consideration of grave marker stones

The Assistant to the Town Clerk circulated the updated Natural Burial Guidelines for councillors which had been updated with costs. She advised that this had been distributed to the local Funeral Directors and was available on the Town Council's website.

She also advised that Chris Bowden was installing a low fence close to the wall in the natural burial area for memorial plaques and that she had ordered a natural life time wood treatment which Chris would use on the wood.

Councillor Humphries thought it was advisable to remind people with graves in the Natural Burial Area that only warm water should be used to clean grave markers and that no cleaning products should be used.

CEM 16/26 Children Area and Grave Decorations

The Assistant to the Town Clerk advised that a headstone had been installed for Clover Nolan in the children's area and that most of the grave decorations had either been removed or placed inside the grave surround by the family.

She circulated a copy of the proposed letter to be sent out to families of children who had been buried in the last 5 years. The letter would be sent out with a copy of the Guidelines to Alnwick Cemetery document. Councillors

agreed the wording of the letter.

The Assistant to the Town Clerk asked councillors for their comments and suggested amendments to the draft Guidelines to Alnwick Cemetery document she had issued at the last committee meeting.

Councillors felt that a couple of amendments to the wording were needed but that the content of the document were appropriate. The following changes were agreed:

Wreaths and floral tributes - No glass objects are allowed on health & safety grounds.

Other items - Items will be kept safe at the Cemetery Lodge for collection for 2 months after which they will be disposed of.

RESOLVED: (i) To amend and issue the Guidelines for Alnwick Cemetery document with all deeds; (ii) To write to the families of the children buried in the last 5 years enclosing the Guidelines for Alnwick Cemetery.

CEM 16/27 Scattering of Ashes

Councillor Humphries explained that felt Alnwick Cemetery could offer commemorative plaques for people whose ashes were buried elsewhere. He added that the plaques could be attached to the chapel. He also felt that a dedicated area of the cemetery could be set aside for the scattering of ashes.

The Assistant to the Town Clerk advised that there was an area to the left of the cemetery workshop which might be suitable.

Councillors S Allcroft and Symmonds commented that whilst they were keen to offer plaques they were not keen on them being attached to building.

Councillor Swinbank said he was not keen on offering plaques as it might be very cluttered.

Councillor S Allcroft thought the plaques could be attached to a lynch gate.

RESOLVED: To research locations within the cemetery for memorial plaques.

CEM 16/28 Planting on Graves – Individual Case

The Assistant to the Town Clerk advised that they had received a letter from Mr Harrison complaining that his brother's grave was being run over by the lawnmower when mowing took place. He advised that he had previously spoken to the Town Council (many years ago) and that it had been agreed that his brother's grave would be left untouched. She circulated photographs of the grave showing the whole plot left as bare earth with planting and examples of where families wanting plots left undisturbed had installed kerb stones around the whole plot.

She explained that it was more difficult for the Cemetery Superintendent to mow the row of graves if he could not drive over Mr Harrison's brother's grave.

Councillor S Allcroft asked who had given him permission to leave the plot in a bare state. The Assistant to the Town Clerk advised that he had not given any further information.

Councillor Symmonds felt it would be appropriate to write to Mr Harrison saying that the Cemetery Committee are looking sympathetically at the issue but would like to see the advice he was given.

RESOLVED: To write to Mr Harrison requesting further information which would be reviewed at the next Cemetery Committee.

CEM 16/29 Any Other Business

Request for headstone – The Assistant to the Town Clerk advised councillors that the Town Council had received a request to purchase a plot in one of the free areas in the cemetery with a view to erecting a headstone for his mother. She advised that she had done some research and there are three people buried in the plot. The first two burials were in 1870 and 1894 and were both very young babies (2 months and 11 months) and the third burial was in 1964 and is the person for whom the request for a headstone had been made.

Councillors asked if it was likely that the family of either of the babies would make a similar request. The Assistant to the Town Clerk advised that she felt this was unlikely as they were so young when they died.

Councillors agreed that the plot could be purchased and a headstone erected.

Northumbria in Bloom – The Assistant to the Town Clerk advised that Alnwick Cemetery had been awarded a Silver Gilt at the Northumbria in Bloom presentations on September 14th. She also advised that Alnwick had been awarded gold and had also won overall best town.

Councillor Symmonds felt that the committee should engage with the Cemetery Superintendent to set a plan to win a Gold award in 2017. He explained that at his interview the Cemetery Superintendent had shared his ideas for the cemetery.

Councillor S Allcroft felt this was a good idea.

Best of Northumberland - The Assistant to the Town Clerk advised councillors that the Friends of the Cemetery had been shortlisted for the Green Award at the Best of Northumberland Awards.

Meeting closed at 8.40pm