

**Minutes of the Cemetery Committee meeting held on Thursday 17th November 2016
in the Mechanics Institute, Percy Street, Alnwick at 7.00pm**

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

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

CEM 16/30 Apologies

None.

CEM 16/31 Declarations of Interest

None.

CEM 16/32 Minutes of Last Meeting – to raise any matters not covered by the agenda

Councillor Humphries formally thanked the Assistant to the Town Clerk for her work on the consecration of the new area.

CEM 16/33 Cemetery Activity and 2016/17 budget update

ACTIVITY

The Town Clerk circulated the Cemetery year to date activity data as at November 11th. He reported that so far in 2016/17 there had been 30 burials (24 burials and 6 ashes burials) of which 15 had resulted in new plots being purchased (13 in the new part, 1 in the natural burial area plus 1 free plot in the children's area). 8 plots have been purchased without burial (1 in the current burial area, 2 in the old part, 1 in the ashes area, 3 in the natural burial area and 1 plot in the area left un-consecrated in the new consecrated area). The Chapel had been used on 6 occasions and 7 burials had an out of parish surcharge.

Remaining plots – there are 15 plots which can be purchased in the current burial area (excluding the new consecrated area) 1 in the old part plus ashes plots. There is also a new row in the old part which will give an additional 20 plots. 32 plots have been purchased in 38A which have not been used yet.

BUDGET

The Town Clerk circulated the 2016/17 Cemetery Income and Expenditure sheet as at November 11th 2016 which showed expenditure at £33,177.66 and income at £28,775.06. He itemised the following lines:

Wages, PAYE – includes backdated employer pension contributions.

Rates / Water Rates – currently valued at £5,300 but increasing to £10,200 in 2017/18. The Town Council have been awarded a back dated refund of business rates (small business rate relief) for the last 6 years of £17,005.84, of this, £14,343.84 relates to previous years.

Machine Repairs – the new tractor will be purchased in June 2017 as this is

when the new model will be available. £800 of the budget will be used for a service of the JCB mini digger.

Grounds – under budget due to the reduced cost of the works identified in the tree survey.

Electricity – reduced bills so far due to turning off the heating in the chapel when not in use.

New Area – budget used so far is for consecration. Path not done yet.

Councillor Moore asked if staff training had been completed. The Town Clerk confirmed that the Cemetery Superintendent had undertaken digger training and the Town Handyman would also undertake this. Spaying training is completed for the Cemetery Superintendent and chainsaw training is still outstanding for both staff.

RESOLVED: a) To note the update and receive the budget figures and b) recommend to the Council that the refunded business rates be ring fenced for future cemetery machine replacements.

CEM 16/34 Scattering of Ashes

Councillor Humphries reminded councillors that he felt Alnwick Cemetery could offer commemorative plaques for people whose ashes were buried elsewhere and also to have an area to scatter ashes

The Assistant to the Town Clerk issued a plan and images showing a suggested location, between the Cemetery Office and the Workshop which would be suitable. Plaques would be attached to a low fence and that planting shrubs, such as roses, could also be undertaken. She reported that at other cemeteries she had seen memorial trees under which ashes were scattered.

Councillor S Allcroft thought the area could be planted then ashes scattered. Councillor Swinbank felt that it may not be possible to plant large number of roses due to space but liked the idea of trees or shrubs being planted.

RESOLVED: To decide on the layout for the ashes scattering area.

CEM 16/35 Planting on Graves

The Town Clerk reminded councillors about the complaint received from Mr Harrison that his brother's grave was being run over by the tractor cutting grass. A letter had been written to Mr Harrison asking for further details and a copy of any correspondence he had. Mr Harrison's reply was read out to the committee. Mr Harrison confirmed that he had nothing in writing but that it had been agreed with the Town Council some years before. Councillors agreed to Mr Harrison's request that his brother's grave be left untouched. They also requested that Mr Harrison be asked to maintain the small piece of grass in front of the grave.

RESOLVED: To write to Mr Harrison acknowledging his request.

CEM 16/36 Recommended fees for 2017/18

The Town Clerk issued a comparison sheet showing Alnwick Cemetery fees against other cemetery fees across the county, these showed the current fees to be below other councils. He advised councillors that the suggested figures for 2017/18 would enable the Town Council to breakeven point in 5 years' time.

Councillor Swinbank acknowledged that there were increased fixed costs due to the larger area of the cemetery. Currently everyone pays the same amount for burials and he wondered whether the Town Council should look at the ability to pay. Councillor S Allcroft did not feel that means testing would work. Councillor Symmonds said he felt it would be difficult to look at ability to pay.

RESOLVED: i) To recommend for approval by Full Council the Cemetery Fees 2017/18 (as shown on page 4 of these minutes), ii) To ask Funeral Directors about the ability to pay burials.

CEM 16/37 Proposed budget for 2017/18

The Town Clerk took councillors through the proposed budget figures for 2017/18:

Wages – left as 2016/17.

Grounds - £10,000 included for new equipment.

New Area – budget of £6,000 including £5,000 for the new arch.

Expected income around £48,000.

The net budget requirement figure was £17,560 which is lower than 2016/17 due to increased fees, lower capital costs, small business rate relief and one off costs associated with the consecration of the new area.

RESOLVED: To recommend the proposed Cemetery Budget for 2017/18 to Full Council for approval.

CEM 16/38 Any Other Business

Councillor Moore reported that the request for more hedging made to the Woodland Trust had been successful. The Assistant to the Town Clerk advised that, as the hedging requested was for wildlife friendly packs, these would be sent out in March 2017.

Meeting closed at 8.40pm

Proposed 2017/18 Cemetery Fees from 1st April 2017

COSTS FOR RESIDENTS	Proposed 2017/18 fees
BURIALS	
Burial Rights for up to 100 years incl. right to erect headstone	£570
Burial of person over 12 years old	
- Depth 4ft	£330
- Depth 5ft	£500
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
Natural/Woodland Burial	£1070 (plus stone)
CREMATED REMAINS	
Burial Rights for up to 100 years incl right to erect headstone	£310
Burial Charge	£180
Scattering of Ashes	£100
MEMORIALS ETC	
Right to erect headstone for graves prior to 1/4/12	£140
Right to place vase/shield/cross etc.	£65
Extra Inscriptions	£35
Headstone foundation	£115
Search of Cemetery records (by post)	£30
Search of records with superintendent in attendance	£30
Transfer of a Deed	£50
Use of Chapel	£160
Non residents	+100%
Saturday increase and Public Holiday increase	+100%