

A MEETING OF THE CEMETERY COMMITTEE,
HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, KINGS HOUSE, THETFORD
ON THURSDAY 12th OCTOBER 2017, STARTING AT 11.30 A.M.

Present:
The Mayor, Councillor D M Crawford

Councillors:
S J Armes (Chairman)
C Harvey
J Hollis

Officers in attendance:

Sarah Lewis	Deputy Town Clerk
Kerry Leeder	Civic Secretary
Nick Thompson	Cemetery Officer
Chris Crimmen	Committee Secretary

Minutes

455/17

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor B Canham.

456/17

MINUTES

RESOLVED: The minutes of the Committee's meeting held on 13th July 2017, received by the Council on 25th July 2017, be confirmed as a true record and signed/initialled by the Committee Chairman.

457/17

REVIEW OF ACTION POINTS

- Investigate other areas for burials - this was no longer pressing item due to Environmental Agency recommendations.
- Washing facilities and memorial testing – washing facilities done, memorial testing outstanding – This can be implemented once staff are in place.
- Review of Exclusive Right of Burial/Memorial Rights – Ongoing item.
- Review fencing requirement – This has been postponed due to the cemetery workplace plans

458/17

HEALTH, SAFETY AND MAINTENANCE PLANS

Grass Cutting – The existing grass cutting contract comes to an end in January 2018. The Deputy Town Clerk reported that the Council are considering extending this contract to 2020 when the other grass cutting contracts come to an end to renegotiate all the grass cutting at once. She asked if the committee agree with this strategy. An extension may include an inflationary rise (minimum wage goes up every year) and some extra duties including leaf clearance. After a discussion Councillor D Crawford proposed and J Hollis seconded:

RESOLVED: That Thetford Town Council obtains quotations from the existing contractor to extend the grass cutting contract and the grave digging contract to 2020 and obtain a price for leaf clearing.

Levelling Graves - There followed a discussion where it was clear that various stone masons and funeral directs dealt with this issue in different

ways. As land owners it was decided that Thetford Town Council should decide the way forward to ensure conformity in the cemetery.

RESOLVED: To communicate with stone masons and funeral directors where relevant on the issues regarding levelling of graves, appointment making for memorial placement and the lawn cemetery rules and report back to the next meeting.

Outstanding maintenance (including fences) – The Deputy Town Clerk had tabled a schedule of outstanding maintenance that the Work Team follow. The list of outstanding items will be completed by spring 2018.

Grave number indicators – The aluminium grave markers that the Council use now cost £3,340 for 200. After a discussion it was decided to write to the stone masons and request that they put the grave number on the stone (they mainly do this anyway). The Council would then place indicators for the row i.e. Plots R1- R20 and place at the end of the rows.

459/17

CORPORATE PLAN

The Deputy Town Clerk had tabled a list of the priorities (see appendix 1) and the committee reviewed the progress that had been made.

- A notice is being placed on the website/noticeboards to repurchase unused plots at a cost of £205.
- The feedback from the Environment Agency (EA) on ground water issues was positive.
- The Cemetery Cottage has now been let at a market value lease.
- An avenue of trees has been planted.
- There is an item later on the agenda to improve toilet facilities at the Cemetery.

460/17

BURIALS MONITORING

The Deputy Town Clerk reported the Council have not turned any burials away or delayed any to date. The pressure has now eased and we are able to accept more than two per month but this still has to be monitored closely. The EA have indicated that if burials overall remain at current levels the burials in the new cemetery could exceed 24 as long as the 70 limit is constant. So as burials drop off in the older parts, burials could increase in the new cemetery.

461/17

RULES & REGULATIONS

The Deputy Town Clerk reported that there had been a recent cycle accident in the Cemetery. The rules of the Cemetery do not allow cycling so the Deputy Town Clerk asked Councillors to consider signs excluding bicycles/skate boards and imposing a speed limit. After a discussion Councillor C Harvey proposed and Councillor J Hollis seconded:

RESOLVED: That Thetford Town Council introduce signage in the cemetery requesting cyclists to dismount while in the cemetery, no skating or skate boards and no smoking. All vehicles, including Motability scooters, to observe the speed limit of 5mph.

462/17

CEMETERY CHAPEL

The Deputy Town Clerk reported the building work on the Chapel is complete and the work finished under budget at £30,650 compared to £33,700 quoted. The work went well and she suggested the Committee move onto the next phase as there are funds available. The estimated cost of the next phase is £8,750 for porch work, internal re-plastering and painting plus professional fees. She will also take advice on the chapel side

door which is rotting away. After a discussion Councillor D Crawford proposed and Councillor C Harvey seconded:

RESOLVED: To request a specification of works for the porch way and bell cote area of the chapel including internal plastering/re-decoration and repair/replacement of door on south side and will go out to tender.

RESOLVED: That Thetford Town Council accept and settle the final certification for the cemetery chapel works (except 2½% agreed retention).

Chapel Charges – The Deputy Town Clerk reported the Council have increased the charges to £95 recently and the use seems to have gone down (but this maybe because of the work being carried out). In order to promote the use of the chapel for funerals the Committee should consider making it cheaper for those who own deed of grants and those that are using the cemetery for burial services. The Council could look at licensing the chapel for weddings and using it as a visitor centre. After a discussion Councillor D Crawford proposed and Councillor J Hollis seconded:

RESOLVED: That Thetford Town Council reduce the charges for chapel use for burials for deed holders who are using the cemetery for burial services to £60 to encourage and promote chapel use.

463/17

CEMETERY COTTAGE

The Deputy Town Clerk reported the cottage is now rented at £650 pcm. There is an opening and closing clause in his contract and the tenant is aware of the need to respect surrounding area regarding noise levels etc. Repairs have recently been carried out on the boiler but the tenant would like the wood burner repaired so it can be used this winter and has intimated he may be willing to contribute towards the cost of repairs. The Deputy Town Clerk will find out how much repairs would cost and how much it would cost to remove it from the cottage.

464/17

LAWN CEMETERY MONITORING

The Deputy Town Clerk reported the lawn cemetery monitoring is going well and it is now noticeable that most are making the effort to conform to the rules. So far the Council have removed items from 18 graves in rows A to D of N plot.

465/17

BUDGET REVIEW (2017-18) AND BUDGET SETTING (2018-19)

The Deputy Town Clerk reported that burials fees are very under budget due to low burial numbers. The Council have not had to turn anyone away so this is not the cause. Burials can vary between 50 and 70 plus a year so she had based the year end projection on fees for the first six months, a negative variance of £24k. Expenses are predicted to be £3,000 under budget so this gives an overall projected variance of £20,000. Budget setting for 2018-19 therefore takes the reduction of burials into account, the increase in water monitoring costs which gives an operating deficit of £16k (without increased proportion of full time cemetery worker).

466/17

REPURCHASE OF UNUSED PLOTS

The Deputy Town Clerk reported this has not been actioned since the EA recommendations. Initial work done identified 29 plots in N, 11 in P and 9 in R that have been pre-purchased but not used. A notice with the plot numbers listed should be put on the notice boards/website etc. to see what is yielded. As previously agreed we would pay £205 and would be re-

allocated for the same price which would be a saving on the current fee of £500. This action was agreed by the Committee.

467/17

WATER MONITORING

The Deputy Town Clerk stated a report based on the April testing is now available and has been forwarded to Committee members. Testing has recently been carried out (Sept 2017) and we have now received a quote for quarterly testing. The cost is high, however in the short term she thought we should accept this so as not to delay the quarterly testing but aim to have 3 quotes by March 2018 to consider. After a discussion Councillor J Hollis proposed and Councillor C Harvey seconded:

RECOMMENDATION: That Thetford Town Council suspend standing orders and accept a revision to the water monitoring contract, in order to facilitate quarterly testing in line with Environment Agency recommendations at a price negotiated without competition, for a period of six months to 31 March 2018.

468/17

CEMETERY VISION

Staffing – The Deputy Town Clerk reported that the Committee should consider providing a full time member of staff dedicated to the cemetery and outlined his/her duties. There followed a discussion where it was agreed that this move would improve the Cemetery and the service given to the public. Councillor J Hollis proposed and Councillor D Crawford seconded:

RECOMMENDATION TO PERSONNEL: To request a full time employee at the cemetery (Cemetery Superintendent) in order to effectively manage and maintain the cemetery to the Council's required standard.

Works Yard – The Works Yard move to the Cemetery:

- Planning permission was unlikely for permanent building but concrete foundation with semi-permanent building would be possible.
- Increase gate/entrance size to allow deliveries.
- Provide toilets for visitors/attendees at funerals (not necessarily public toilets)
- Provide shower, office space and storage space.
- Funding, £45,000 Sweyn Close capital and potentially other capital reserves of £127,000.

Visitor Centre:

- Cheapest option to use chapel, memorial books, histories of those buried in the Cemetery.
- Larger purpose built centre with refreshments, toilets etc.
- Is it needed, is it required, should there be a public consultation?
- Where would the funding come from?

After a discussion Councillor D Crawford proposed and Councillor C Harvey seconded:

RECOMMENDATION: That Thetford Town Council start planning and costing moving the Works Team depot to the Cemetery and to request preliminary funding from the Council's capital reserves to cover the cost.

469/17

IMPROVING COMMUNICATION

The Deputy Town Clerk reported that due to recent events the rules and regulations have been posted everywhere hopefully increasing the public's understanding of why we have rules.

If we have a permanent worker in the cemetery he will be better placed to advise the public on what is allowed and not allowed and this will enable him to build relationships and explain the council's viewpoint less formally.

470/17

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

This item has been covered throughout the meeting but to promote community engagement it was agreed that the Council carry out the following actions:

- Employ full time member of staff to be available at the cemetery and to enable the chapel to be accessed.
- Provide notices and press releases where required to keep the public fully informed (we already do this but need to encourage the public to use our sites rather than others).
- Conduct surveys and public consultations, possible areas to consult, opening of chapel, use of chapel, requirement for visitor centre, toilets, refreshments, memorial trees/walls.

471/17

ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None.

Chairman.

ACTION POINTS	BY WHOM	BY WHEN
To obtain quotations to repair or remove the wood burner at the Cemetery Cottage.	Deputy Town Clerk	ASAP