

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CEMETERY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON WEDNESDAY 24TH SEPTEMBER 2008 AT 7.18PM IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, SIMPSON CENTRE, STOTFOLD

Committee Members present: Mrs J Hyde (Chairman)

B Collier
Mrs M Cooper
Mrs L Wilding

A Cooper
Mrs C Turner

Also in attendance: The Clerk

2064. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received on behalf of Councillors Saunders and Savill.

2065. DISCLOSURE OF MEMBERS INTERESTS

There were no disclosures of Members interests.

2066. TO APPOINT A VICE-CHAIRMAN

Resolved that Councillor Cooper be elected Vice-Chairman of the Cemetery Management Committee.

2067. MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising to report.

2068. CLERK'S REPORT AND CORRESPONDENCE

There were no items of correspondence to report.

The Clerk reported on the following:

- Former Councillor Paul Stoten's memorial tree has been planted and a ceremony held.
- Manor Roofing have carried out the roofing repair works to the Cemetery toilets.
- Two vandal proof push button taps have been purchased as per May 21st meeting, and will be fitted shortly.
- A letter has been sent to the appropriate family regarding an unstable headstone to request that they take action to have it stabilised as it is in a dangerous condition.
- The Clerk has attended the Cemetery Management Course which was extremely useful. Some of the Clerk's notes from the course were previously circulated to Members.
- Repair works to the fence which had fallen down outside the gent's toilet is underway.

2069. CONSIDERATION OF ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN FOLLOWING THE WALKABOUT OF THE CEMETERY BY THE CHAIRMAN, ADMINISTRATION ASSISTANT AND RIK GOLDER

Councillor Mrs Hyde, Julie Barrow and Rik Golder have carried out a walkabout of the Cemetery and have identified the following tree works:

- 1) Take out Sycamore tree by Beech hedge around car park
- 2) Either take out or prune evergreen Oak in the corner

- 3) Either take out or prune Holly in corner behind evergreen Oak
- 4) Cut down Beech saplings in the hedge that are becoming trees by evergreen Oak
- 5) Lift and prune Holly tree in front of evergreen Oak
- 6) Lift Western Red Cedars on right hand side as you walk up from the car park
- 7) Remove Yew bush under one of the Western Red Cedar trees
- 8) Consider lifting Limes in Beacon Section. Tree Contractor to advise
- 9) Rik to cut bush behind Chapel half way up Old Section into ball shape
- 10) Either cut back the bushes and trees up the side of the boundary fence in the New Section, or
- 11) Take out all the bushes between the trees up the side of the boundary fence in the New Section
- 12) Cut back broken hedge in Garden of Rest roadside hedging, and put in temporary fence
- 13) Cut down Beech sapling that is growing in the above hedging
- 14) Take out Laurel bush by the Chapel and grind out roots

Resolved that

- i) Steve Dear Trees be asked to give a quotation to carry out works detailed in numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, 14 above.
- ii) Rik Golder be asked to give a quotation to carry out works detailed in 9, 12 and 13 above.
- iii) Any branches, twigs, etc resulting from the above work are to be chipped and placed on the bark path at the MUGA to reinstate the surface levels.

2070. TO APPROVE EXECUTIVE ACTION TAKEN BY THE CLERK IN PURCHASING THE CEMETERY MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION FOR LOCAL COUNCIL CLERKS CD AT A COST OF £14

The CD was available at the reduced price of £14 at the Cemetery Management Course which the Clerk recently attended. A copy of the CD has been given to the Administration Assistant as she deals with the day to day Cemetery administration.

Resolved that the executive action taken by the Clerk in purchasing the Cemetery Management and Administration for Local Council Clerks CD in the sum of £14 be approved.

2071. TO CONSIDER INSTRUCTING MW CLEANSING LTD TO EMPTY THE CESSPOOL AT THE CEMETERY

MW Cleansing advise that the last time they emptied the cesspool was more than 12 months ago and that it should be emptied regularly to prevent sludge build up. Costs until April 2009 are up to 1000 gallons £110, from 1001 to 2000 gallons £150.

Resolved that MW Cleansing Ltd be advised that we do not require the emptying of the cesspool at the Cemetery at this time, as there is very little use of the Cemetery toilets.

2072. TO RECEIVE A QUOTATION FROM JOHN WISSON TO CLEAR THE BURNING AREA AND DISPOSE OF WASTE, IN THE SUM OF £300 PLUS VAT

Resolved that John Wisson be instructed to clear the burning area and dispose of the waste, in the sum of £300 plus vat and to liaise with Rik Golder as to the timing of the work. Funds to come from the Maintenance and Repairs budget.

2073. TO APPROVE EXECUTIVE ACTION TAKEN BY THE CLERK IN NOT ALLOWING KERBSTONES IN THE BABY SECTION

This action was taken as a request was made by a family to put kerbstones around a baby plot, but after taking advice from the landscape contractor, was not approved due to the increase in maintenance this would cause and the likelihood that this would create a cramped area in the Cemetery.

Resolved that the executive action taken by the Clerk in not allowing kerbstones in the Baby Section be approved, and the Regulations be amended to show that headstones only are permitted in this section.

2074. TO CONSIDER A MAXIMUM HEIGHT AND WIDTH FOR HEADSTONES IN THE BABY SECTION

Although measurements for the largest headstone in the Baby Section have been obtained, it was felt that advice should be sought on whether there are any regulations on the size for baby plots and headstones for those plots.

Resolved that details be obtained on whether there are any regulations on the size for baby plots and the recommended headstone size for those plots.

2075. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATED PLAN OF THE BEACON SECTION OF THE CEMETERY, ALSO SHOWING MEMORIAL TREES AND BENCHES

Members were previously provided with a copy of an outline map of the Beacon Section showing currently sited memorial benches and trees, together with suggested sites for future benches and trees. Copies of a plan, compiled by Councillor Cooper, showing current plot locations and future locations, together with a suggested layout design for the currently empty half of the Beacon Section were also circulated to Members.

With regard to the area adjacent to the Beacon, a proposal was put to move the trees shown on the tree and bench plan towards the burning area to leave an open area for Beacon events, but this was lost on votes.

Resolved that future memorial trees are planted in the vicinity of the Beacon as per the plan circulated and on file, and the plots marked 406 onwards in the same area be removed from the plot layout plans.

Members then went through the rest of the areas shown on the plans, and assuming that you are in the top section of the Cemetery, looking towards Wrayfields, with the Beacon, burning area and mast to your right, it was:

Resolved that

- i) The burial plots shown on the plans in between the burning area and the Orange mast be removed so the area is kept vacant ready for either burials or garden of rest, whichever is required first.
- ii) The remaining planned plots for the top section currently in use are to be as per the plan submitted by Councillor Cooper.
- iii) The plans showing plots numbered 457 to 778 under the hedgerow are to be adopted, including the positions for the trees and benches as per the plans, and are to take headstones and kerbstones.
- iv) The un-numbered section on the plans is to be designated as a lawn section with headstones only. Remove the hedgerow drawn on the plan.

- v) Space allocated for memorial trees in the newly designated lawn section numbered 24, 25, 29 and 30 on the tree and bench plan are to be removed.
- vi) In the same section, four specimen trees are to be planted in the centre, with four plots being removed around them to allow for growth.
- vii) Walkways in the same section are to be removed from the plans.
- viii) The plans showing the 'Councillors Row' to the left of the Beacon section should include space for benches as per plans.

The Clerk advised Members that she had spoken to the Cemetery Maintenance Officer of another Town Council who use concrete strips, just below ground level, on which to mount headstones in their lawn section. The centre of each grave plot is marked out in the concrete while still wet, and also serves as a central marker for the headstone. This ensures no errors in positioning plots as they are needed.

Resolved that the Clerk obtain more information on the use of concrete strips in lawn cemeteries, together with costs involved in installing/constructing them.

With regard to the Garden of Rest section allocated for the area next to the Orange mast, at the bottom of the Beacon section, the Clerk advised that she had made enquiries at Harwood Park Crematorium and Willbury Hills Cemetery as to who designed their layout. Harwood Park did the design in house, and Willbury Hills have provided details of the architects they asked to tender for the work, together with details of who they instructed.

Resolved that the architects who designed Willbury Hills Cemetery be asked to give a presentation to the Committee on the different choices available for design of a Garden of Rest.

Members considered the suggested layout for the Garden of Rest by Councillor Cooper, and this will be kept on hold until after the above presentation has taken place to allow for details on maximum design choice available to be obtained.

2076. TO APPROVE EXECUTIVE ACTION TAKEN BY THE CLERK IN REPLACING, THE BENCH IN MEMORY OF WILLIAM BURN WHICH WAS RECENTLY DAMAGED BEYOND REPAIR, AT THE COUNCIL'S EXPENSE

The Clerk advised that costs would be in the region of £240, and that the bench appeared to have been driven over whilst someone was turning their vehicle at the Beacon hammerhead turning section and was completely destroyed. It is not known who damaged the seat. There is nothing in the Regulations to advise whether the family is responsible for maintenance/replacement of the bench, or the Council, and after what period of time; and to prevent further upset to the family, the decision was taken for the Council to pay for the replacement of the bench. A query had been raised as to whether benches at the Cemetery are covered under the Council's insurance policy; there is no insurance provision for these benches.

Resolved that the executive action taken by the Clerk in replacing the bench at the Cemetery in memory of William Burn which was recently damaged beyond repair, at the Council's expense of approximately £240, be approved.

2077. TO CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING: WHETHER THE TOWN COUNCIL SHOULD REPLACE MEMORIAL BENCHES DAMAGED BEYOND REPAIR; HOW LONG ARE WE RESPONSIBLE FOR MEMORIAL BENCHES; CONSIDER THE ORIENTATION OF BENCHES

Members gave the matter due consideration and it was:

Recommended that the Regulations be amended to show that: the Town Council is responsible for the maintenance and repair of memorial benches, and can dispose of them at their discretion if they are damaged beyond repair, for the first ten years. Thereafter, it is the responsibility of the family to pay for repairs. If the bench is badly damaged or unusable after ten years the Town Council can dispose of it and the family will be given the choice of either purchasing another one, as per the Council's memorial bench policy, or the space will be made vacant for another family's memorial bench. If the family is not contactable we will take appropriate action deemed necessary at the time.

These regulations will apply to benches already in place, starting from this date, and also to future benches placed in the Cemetery.

With regard to the orientation of the benches, this has been queried as one bench sited at the Cemetery faces the burning area and is causing distress to the family concerned.

Resolved that the bench facing the burning area be turned around to face the grave plots. Any similar request regarding orientation will be considered individually at the appropriate time.

2078. TO DISCUSS THE OVERGROWN HEDGE BETWEEN THE BURNING AREA AND THE ORANGE MAST AT THE BACK OF THE CEMETERY

The hedging is now so thick that the landscape contractor is unable to reach over the width of the hedge and it needs cutting back on the field side. The land concerned is owned by the Northern family and it was:

Resolved that the Northern farming family be asked to either cut back the hedge at the rear of the Cemetery on their side after harvest, or to permit us access to instruct a contractor to do the work.

2079. TO CONSIDER AMENDING THE MEMORIAL REGULATIONS TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE NEXT SECTION OF THE BEACON SECTION WHICH WILL TAKE HEADSTONES ONLY WITH JUST A SPACE FOR A VASE, AND NOT KERBING

Resolved that until the plans and layout of the next section of the Beacon section is finalised, this matter be left on the table.

2080. TO DISCUSS THE FUTURE OF THE CEMETERY

A report from Councillor Cooper estimating how much land is needed to cover approximately 50 years of use at the Cemetery was circulated to Members. A copy of a powerpoint presentation giving brief advice on planning a Cemetery was also provided for Members. Further information can be obtained from the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM) at the required time.

With regard to purchase of land adjacent to the Cemetery for future expansion, the Clerk advised that the owner of the land has indicated that he would be reluctant to sell the land at the present time

unless it was at a substantial premium to agricultural value. Louise Ashmore at BRCC has advised that now the landowner is prepared to consider selling the land, compulsory purchase is not an option. She advises that a guide agricultural rate is around £6,000 per acre.

The present Cemetery is just under eight acres, and a previous suggestion has been to obtain at least a further two acres. If we are looking to establish a woodland burial/scattering of ashes area we should look at obtaining four acres, and could run from the car park end up the hill level with the top part of the Cemetery. Entrances to the extension could be via the car park, skip area (which would be re-sited) and top hammerhead turning area. If the wooded area were planted straight away after purchase, the rest of the area wouldn't necessarily be needed at once and could be rented back to the current landowner.

As the need for future Cemetery space is indicated in the Local Development Framework Plan, funding could be sought from Central Beds Authority.

Resolved that the current landowner is advised that we must have more Cemetery space, and the land to the side of the Cemetery is the most obvious area in which to expand. This Committee would actively look at means of acquiring that space.

As any discussions regarding current County Council owned land is to involve the District Council, due to the unitary authority change, it was further:

Recommended that the District Council be approached regarding the possibility of funding or land swap to assist in obtaining land for a Cemetery extension. The owner of the land we are interested in may sell it, but has intimated that he might be interested in some sort of land swap, in particular, the County Council tenanted Boundary Farm area near Radwell.

2081. TO CONSIDER REGULATIONS WITH REGARD TO STABILITY OF HEADSTONES

In 2002 a letter was sent to monumental masons in the area to advise that we would be requiring all headstones that are erected to have long fixing pegs which are embedded sufficiently enough in cement to stabilise the stone. It appears that some masons have not been adhering to the request.

BRAMM (British Register of Accredited Memorial Masons) licenses memorial masons and related businesses to carry out work on memorials. They would have to carry out a test to prove their competency to install memorials in accordance with British Standard 8415 and the NAMM (National Association of Monumental Masons) Code of Practice. The Clerk's Cemetery Management course advised that we should only be allowing accredited masons into the Cemetery to carry out work to install and maintain memorials as we have a duty of care to all those who enter the Cemetery. Masons who carry out work at the Cemetery should be given six months notice to enable them to get accredited if they are not already, and then their work should be monitored with non-compliance being reported to BRAMM. If they break the Codes they can be banned from working as a mason. In the case of a funeral director arranging the mason, if the company is not accredited then suggest that the funeral director uses another company who is accredited, as we will not allow non-accredited monumental masons into our Cemetery. Our forms would therefore need to be adjusted to include construction materials and method of installing, and whether the mason is BRAMM registered.

A copy of the NAMM Code for lawn memorials and kerb sets guidance was provided for Members for information, and is kept on file.

Recommended that it becomes a requirement that all monumental masons wishing to carry out work in our Cemetery must be BRAMM accredited, with the suggested six months notice being given. All local funeral directors must also be advised as such, and our Regulations and forms are to be adjusted accordingly.

With regard to checking the stability of memorials, the Association of Burial Authorities has advised that Councillors are not to carry out wobble tests as they are not covered by insurance. They are able to do a 'neatness' survey, but not comment on matters they have not been trained in. Council staff are able to carry out wobble tests, but only once trained. Tests should be carried out once every five years. Training for staff is available, and there are companies who carry out wobble tests, take appropriate action and complete appropriate documentation.

Members felt that training staff to carry out wobble tests would not be best value as they may leave after being trained and further money would need to be spent to train someone else. It was therefore:

Resolved that the Clerk obtain costs for carrying out wobble tests from appropriate companies. The first wobble test will be carried out in the next financial year, and every fifth year thereafter. Costings are to be presented to the estimates meeting in October to ensuring sufficient funds are included in next financial year's budgets for the work.

2082. TO CONSIDER USING THE DIANA MEMORIAL GARDEN FOR THE SCATTERING OF ASHES

Resolved that the Diana Memorial Garden be authorised for the scattering of ashes. Details of the scattering, including when it will be carried out are to be given to the office prior to it taking place, and appropriate records will be updated.

Consideration of charging for scattering of ashes will be taken at the October estimates meeting of this Committee.

2083. TO CONSIDER PLANTING YEW TREES (MEMORIAL TREE PACKAGE) IN BETWEEN THE LIME TREES AT THE TOP OF THE CEMETERY

This item has been covered in minute 2075 above.

2084. TO CONSIDER CONTENTS TO BE INCLUDED IN THIS COMMITTEE'S TERMS OF REFERENCE

The current Terms of Reference were previously provided for Members.

Resolved that the heading of the draft Terms of Reference template be approved, with points on the current Terms of Reference to be added and duplicated terms deleted. An updated Terms of Reference sheet is to be presented to the next meeting of this Committee for approval.

2085. TO RECEIVE A BUDGET UPDATE AND RESERVES STATUS AND TAKE ANY NECESSARY ACTION

Members were previously provided with a copy of the update document. The budget status for this Committee is fairly healthy at this stage, and it was:

Resolved that the budget update and reserves status report be noted. A review will be carried out in the new year.

2086. ANY ITEMS FOR INFORMATION PURPOSES ONLY
There were no items for information.

There being no further relevant business the meeting was declared closed at 9.34pm

CHAIRMAN

DATED