

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CEMETERY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON WEDNESDAY 17 JANUARY 2024 AT 7.00PM, IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, GREENACRE CENTRE, STOTFOLD

Committee Members present:

Councillors J Hyde (Chairman), S Buck, S Dhaliwal, S Hayes, J Headington

Also present:

Cllr N Venneear

1 Member of the Public (Virtual)

E. Payne, Town Clerk

55/23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllr Mrs Mary Cooper. It was **RESOLVED** to:

Accept apologies.

56/23 DISCLOSURE OF MEMBERS INTERESTS & REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATION

There were no disclosures of interest or requests for dispensation. Members were reminded that if at any time during the meeting they feel they have an interest in an item being discussed, they should declare it at that point.

57/23 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – QUESTIONS, COMMENTS & RESPONSES

No questions raised.

58/23 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Members received the minutes of the Cemetery Management Committee meeting held on 15 November 2023 and it was **RESOLVED** that:

The minutes are a true record of the meeting.

59/23 CLERK'S REPORT, CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED & MATTERS ARISING FOR INFORMATION

59/23.1 Skip Area

Members were advised that the bin for general waste is not sufficient. Members were advised that it was a contracted service, and another bin could be requested. The Clerk will investigate and report to a future meeting.

59/23.2 Lettering on War Memorial

Members queried whether the lettering on the war memorial has been finished. They were advised that this hasn't happened.

59/23.3 Cemetery Visitor

This will be added as a standing item on the agenda.

59/23.4 Correspondence

The Chair reported that they had received an email from a member of the public complaining about a number of items including turning off the water during the winter; 'closing' the cemetery during the Mill Weekends and a drop in standards of maintenance.

The water is turned off at the same time as the allotments. Turning the water off reduces the risk of burst pipes. The cemetery is not closed during the Mill Weekends. The road is closed and there has only been one or two incidents when the cemetery has been closed when there was an aerial display and it had to be shut as it was in the fly over zone.

Regarding the claim that the cemetery is not well maintained, as there are no specifics listed, it is difficult to respond to this comment. The Clerk will respond directly to the member of the public.

59/23.4 Rose Arch

Members were advised that the Rose Arch has been fabricated, it awaits paint and then can be installed. Because of its weight, it needs to be anchored in concrete and the Town Rangers will undertake this.

60/23 REPORTS TO COMMITTEE

60/23.1 Cemetery Chapel and Toilet Block Survey

Members received the chapel and toilet block condition survey, and its contents were noted. Members were pleased to see that the toilets could be refurbished with a partial rebuild.

The Chairman had queried the need for a bat survey and the Clerk had received confirmation from the surveyor that a bat survey was recommended. Members agreed that it would be an opportunity to redesign part of the toilet block, to allow the Town Rangers, and any friends group that is formed, to have storage for tools and equipment. Members considered the installation of solar panels, but this would require a battery pack, and this would be cost prohibitive.

Members queried about the reduction in the beech tree adjacent to the chapel and were advised that this would happen at the end of January.

It was **RESOLVED** to:

- a) Commission an architect to partially redesign the toilet block for additional storage.***
- b) The drawings could then accompany the scheme of works and prices could be sought.***

60/23.2 Cemetery Handbook and Regulations

Members received the cemetery handbook and regulations for review.

On page 5 regarding the responsibility of the undertakers. Members requested that there is a better inspection regime when graves are dug and subsequently

infilled to ensure that the ground is not above ground level. The regulations state that this should be to the satisfaction of the Town Council. The gravediggers are supposed to come back and fill in any depressions at a later date. It was pointed out that the regulations state that the council contractor will infill any subsequent soil sink. This was noted and that the new Cemetery Officer would undertake to monitor this going forward.

Page 14 – A query was raised regarding the opening hours of the office. Members were advised that the office is open from 9-5 for telephone callers, and 10-4 for in person visitors (except Wednesday). The office hours will be removed.

Members were advised that there is no mention of the size of the plots for the interment of ashes that they are double plots, and this should be included in the information. There is no mention of the length of interment which is only mentioned in the deed of the purchase of the plot. It is 75 years. It should be included in the handbook and regulations.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

Amendments as above are included, and the handbook and regulations are updated accordingly.

60/23.3 Exhumation Fees

Members received a report on proposed exhumation fees. It was **RESOLVED** that:

The fee for the exhumation of ashes is set at £100.

60/23.4 Sundial – Lower Garden of Rest

Members considered the request to remove the sundial as it reduces access to the Garden of Rest by wheelchair users. There is an issue at the walled garden of rest, and this will be considered further at the site visit in May 2024. It was **RESOLVED** to:

Repair the sundial and leave it in situ.

60/23.5 Pest Control

Complaints have been received by the adjacent landowner who is losing crops due to rabbits in the cemetery. Members agreed that the Town Council had a duty of care to visitors to the cemetery to maintain a safe environment. It was **RESOLVED** to:

- a) Delegate to the Town Clerk the responsibility of pest control at the cemetery***
- b) Not oppose the reduction in the height of the hedge that is on the adjacent land.***

60/23.6 Cemetery Security

Members considered the current situation regarding the issuing of keys to open the cemetery gates. It was proposed that that the town rangers open/close Monday-Friday and the key holders open/close at the weekends.

The deposit money will then be returned to the members of the public who hold keys, on receipt of the returned key. Members were advised that when the cemetery keys were 'sold', there is no record of who they were sold to. There will be signage installed, asking for anyone who 'brought' a cemetery key to return it to the office, where their money will be refunded.

It was **RESOLVED** to:

- a) Open/close the cemetery using either the town rangers or key holders.***
- b) Return deposits/fees for cemetery keys.***

60/23.7 Work Programme

Members received the Work Programme for this committee, and it was noted that the items discussed at this meeting would be added to this document.

61/23 ITEMS FOR INFORMATION PURPOSES, RELEVANT TO THIS COMMITTEE ONLY

There were no items.

62/23 CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS

To resolve to exclude the press and public for the consideration of the following items under the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960.

62/23.1 Cemetery Chapel Lease

Members received a report regarding the current lease arrangements for the cemetery chapel. It was **RESOLVED** to:

Enter into negotiations with Austins Funeral Directors about a new lease.

62/23.2 Cemetery Complaint

Members received a report regarding the handling of a complaint regarding the purchase of an ashes plot and subsequent issues. It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Chairman and Town Clerk to meet with the family concerned to come to an amicable solution.

63/23 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 20 March 2024

The meeting was closed at 1954.

MINUTES APPROVED (date): _____

SIGNED BY CHAIRMAN: _____

DRAFT