

MEETING OF SHEFFORD AND CAMPTON JOINT BURIAL BOARD

Minutes of the meeting of the Council held via Zoom on Wednesday 6th January 2021 at 10.30am.

Present: Cllr Booton and Cllr Longson for Campton and Cllrs Dawson, Pollard, Fowler, Mackin for Shefford. Clerk for Shefford Francesca Fitch, Clerk for Campton and Chicksands Tammy Medley.

1/21 Minutes from previous meeting, matters arising:

Signing of the Minutes of the 9th September 2020 meeting were deferred till the next meeting.

2/21 RULES AND REGULATIONS:

These have been displayed in the new cemetery noticeboard. They will be uploaded onto the Campton and Chicksands Parish Council website and they will be uploaded onto the new Shefford Town Council website once it is live (the current website is not fit for purpose and this additional information cannot be uploaded).

3/21 STAFFING:

STC work and the day to day running of the cemetery has taken precedence over the joint working for FF, with FF and TM working one day in November, and no days in December. An extra day will be allocated in January/February/March (in addition to the one day each month).

CQ continues to spend a large proportion of her time working on the cemetery database. Under supervision, she now carries out the administration of the burials (collating the documentation beforehand, jointly attending funerals and then sending the paperwork to the Registrar, once any burials have taken place)

STC have included funding for additional payroll costs for FF in their 2021/22 budget to be allocated to cemetery work, as it has been recognised that the day to day running of the cemetery together with joint working cannot be wholly absorbed into FF's normal 37 hour working week. It is also recognised that any income from the cemetery cannot fund these additional hours, as the income is not guaranteed, and it is felt that all income needs to be directed to fund/build up a reserve pot for infrastructure repairs/improvements.

4/21 Rialtas Cemetery system:

CQ has created an excel spreadsheet for all the grave information (hard copy documents cross referenced with the burial record books, together with photos of the graves/memorials in situ) for sections Q, R,T,V,W,Y,X,U and ashes plots A-L. Work is in progress on the old section of the cemetery, following help from TD on deciphering the script writing on documents/burial records. The burial records have been transposed onto the spreadsheet, they now need to be cross referenced to the hard copy death/cremation certificates and interment documents, and then mapped.

CQ has input all the historical data for section U (the children's section consisting of eight graves), as this is the End Point Assessment project for her Business Admin Apprenticeship. It is noted that the inputting of the new interment in grave space U9 is outstanding.

The time spent on inputting the information for each grave varies, dependent on the type of grave, how many interments per grave space, any memorials, the amount of information that has been recorded (or lack of it!) and what decisions the Clerks must make to ensure compliance (or at least to ensure we are as compliant as possible) to the Local Authority Cemetery Order 1977 (LACO). The Clerks would like to note that had previous Burial Clerks complied with the LACO, together with collating all the necessary data, the inputting of historical data would have been a simple administration process.

To understand the complexity, the issues and what decisions are being made by the Clerks to follow the LCO, FF & TM invite Members of the JBB and any other STC/CCPC Members to join the Zoom inputting meetings.

5/21 GROUNDS MAINTENANCE/CHAPEL:

The removal of pine needles at the main entrance gates is being carried out on a regular basis (funded by STC as part of the contractor hours owed resulting from the closure of the public toilets).

The main entrance/car park hard standing has been added to the list of areas that are weeded (by hand or sprayed off) as part of the STC weed clearance contract with GD Maintenance and Cleaning Services. This is funded by STC.

The Grounds Maintenance contractor will concentrate on path edging and clearance of graves (including edging up around the ashes plaques in the Garden of Remembrance) now grass cutting has finished for the season.

Since being awarded the grass and hedge cutting contract in the cemetery, Gary and Robert Dear of 2 Elms of Shefford, have taken it upon themselves to regularly litter pick the cemetery, remove spent flowers/wreaths from graves, and empty the litter bin, all at no additional charge. This is purely due to their work ethic; the pride they take in their work, taking ownership of the site, as being local lads, they see it as a reflection on them personally and the performance of the grass and hedge cutting contract. They also provide a regular presence on site, monitoring and reporting any issues. This has helped FF tremendously in the day to day running of the cemetery. Chairman of the JBB will write to 2 Elms thanking them for their hard work and commitment, they could also be considered for an Annual award.

The new lockable trade waste bin has effectively prevented any further fly tipping; however, it has highlighted another issue: over the years, the 'tending/gardening' of full burial plots and around ashes graves has been permitted, which results in green waste and debris being generated. With the trade waste bin out of bounds, the families are now disposing of this green waste and debris in the litter bin; the bin had to be emptied three times in the week leading up to and after Christmas, and was so heavy (filled with soil), it required two people to lift it up to empty it out into the trade waste bin on one occasion. The litter bin should only be used for normal litter and spent flowers/wreaths, however, until such a time that all the graves are being maintained by our Grounds Maintenance Team, green waste and debris will continue to be disposed of in the litter bin by families.

Approval was sought from the Committee to purchase a second litter bin for installation adjacent to the new noticeboard (in reach of the trade waste bin for ease of emptying) @ £550 including installation (based on previous costs from Glasdon UK Ltd & CPM Playgrounds Ltd). Unfortunately, we are unable to apply to the Ward Councillor Grant Scheme for match-funding. All agreed.

One way to lessen this need for families to 'tend/garden; grave spaces would be to reinstate the burial plots to grass, and to regularly edge up around the ashes memorial plaques in the Garden of Remembrance. Approval was sought from the Committee for this reinstatement work to commence in the spring, starting with the EA section, and some graves in the X & Y sections. All agreed.

Approval was sought from the Committee for the following works identified (in priority) to be carried out in the spring: the levelling of two areas of the car park (filling in holes and the removal of a large hump, possibly a tree root, which is a trip hazard); the painting of the railings/kissing gate at the Ampthill Road entrances to prevent further deterioration/corroding (quotation dated 31.12.20 for £750); the cleaning of the chapel by GD Maintenance and Cleaning; and the repair the hole in the chapel roof/soffit (quotation dated 29.1.20 of £295 + VAT). All agreed. Additional work identified when funding allows is to refurbish three benches and the repair and painting of the main entrance gates to the car park (one gate is now catching on the ground – either the gate or the post has dropped). All agreed as future projects.

Although unauthorised memorials and/or loose chippings in the Garden of Remembrance were planned to be removed when the lockdown restrictions were lifted (collected and catalogued for the grave owner to collect), this still hasn't been possible, and it is hoped this can be carried out in late spring.

A new memorial bench is due to be installed (paid for by the family) adjacent to the Garden of Remembrance in the new year.

All hedges on site have now been reduced/cut. There are now unrestricted views into the cemetery from Campton Road and (to a certain extent) Ampthill Road which improve the safety and security of the site. A request has been made to Cllr Mark Liddiard for CBC to edge up the grass along the Highways footpath in Campton Road, leading to the cemetery main entrance.

Lockdown restrictions, together with parental illness has resulted in Ben, our young volunteer, only being able to clear a few graves in the old section in 2020. It is hoped that once restrictions are lifted, he will continue to volunteer with his family to clear more graves.

Neville Funerals have agreed to donate a dumpy bag of granite chippings for topping up of the untended kerbed graves in the old section of the cemetery. This will be carried out following contact being made with grave owners (if applicable).

6/21 finance:

The Unity Trust account @ 31 December is showing a credit balance of £14,197.05.

The income and expenditure report for the nine months to 31 December as attached.

As mentioned in Agenda item 3, STC feels that all cemetery income needs to be directed to fund/build up a reserve pot for infrastructure repairs/improvements therefore, to reflect this, they

have increased their budgeted figure for the Cemetery Precept to £12,500. This has been calculated on 80.5% of the estimated day to day running costs based on 2020/21 expenditure as follows: -

	£
Internal audit	150
Insurance	250
Bank charges	100
ICCM membership	100
Grass cutting	12,000.
Water	100
Software support	300
Hedge cutting	1,000
Additional grounds maintenance	900
Trade waste	600
<i>Total</i>	<u>£15,500</u>

It was discussed whether CACS would be willing to budget to contribute the remaining 19.5% outstanding? CACS Cllrs felt that the decision had been made without any prior discussion and they requested further clarification regarding the actual expenses involved in a burial, including staffing costs. They broken down into 4 areas:

- Burials, they required clarification of the total costs involved in an interment and whether the charges covered these costs?
- Maintenance and ongoing costs, lots of ongoing expenditure.
- Data backlog, they sought clarification on how long the Clerks anticipated the data inputting to take? And suggested that maybe the JBB should budget for it taking 3 years?
- Long term projects, what long term projects?

There was some discussion over the management of the cemetery and staffing commitments and costs, it was discussed that the JBB employing their own ICCM qualified burial clerk would cost in the region of £25-33K pro rata. It was also suggested by PM that perhaps Campton could sever their rights within the JBB and Shefford could take over total management? This would mean CACS no longer paying into the JBB via the precept, but residents would also lose their right to burial and would need to pay non-resident fees. This will be discussed further at a future meeting.

The precept proposal will be presented to the CACS Council this evening for consideration.

7/1 Permission to reserve a grave space adjacent to a family plot:

We have been contacted by a resident, Apparently, she had discussed this with Dick Hardwick, following the removal of a holly bush on the corner of the 'T' Section, immediately adjacent to her parent's grave space T3 (the last grave in the row). Although we no longer offer the option of reserving/pre-purchasing grave spaces, this appears to have been agreed in principle by Dick Hardwick and there is enough space for the burial plot. Therefore, approval is sought for the Committee to honour the verbal agreement, and to make the offer for the space to either be reserved at the rates at the time of interment or pre-purchased at the current non-resident rate for purchasing Deed of Exclusive Right of Burial (£1,200). Agreed to offer the resident the option of pre-purchasing the deed of exclusive right of burial, this would be a one-off special arrangement to honour a previous agreement.

8/1 next meeting:

The next meeting will be held via Zoom in February unless a further finance meeting is required prior to this.