

jMEETING OF SHEFFORD AND CAMPTON JOINT BURIAL BOARD

Minutes of the meeting of the Board held via Zoom on Monday 21st June 2021 at 10.30am.

Present: Cllr Booton and Cllr Longson for Campton and Cllrs Fensome, Pollard, Fowler, Mackin for Shefford. Clerk for Shefford Francesca Fitch, and Business Admin Apprentice for Shefford Checka Quinlan.

Apologies received from Clerk for Campton and Chicksands, Tammy Medley.

19/21 MINUTES FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING, MATTERS ARISING

The minutes of the 21st of March 2021 meeting were agreed as a true reflection of the meeting, and the deletion of the Zoom recording of the meeting was agreed.

It was reported that Campton & Chicksands Parish Council agreed at their April Full Council meeting to fund a day a month on JBB joint working for TM from the Council budget, and Shefford Town Council have been registered with BRAMM, as registration required a local council organisation.

20/21 NEW COMMITTEE MEMBER

Following Shefford Town Council's Annual Meeting of the Town Council held on the 28th of May 2021, Cllr Den Fensome has replaced Cllr Tony Dawson as one of the members of the JBB Committee and was welcomed to the committee.

21/21 'TOPPLE TESTING' OF MEMORIALS

It was proposed to use a combination of methods to test the memorials in the cemetery: as the risk of injury is significantly greater in the old section, it was suggested to use mechanical testing and for the newer section, to use manual testing, as the risk is lesser. Clerks to investigate into suitable contractors and obtaining quotes

22/21 STAFFING

It was reported that the Clerks carried out joint working one day a month on April 27th, May 21st and 1st June. The work has mainly related to the preparation of the Accounts/AGAR and the Internal Audit.

23/21 RIALTAS CEMETERY SYSTEM

No further work has been carried out on the Rialtas Cemetery System since the last committee meeting. CQ is scheduled to be attending a free webinar hosted by Rialtas on their Cemetery System.

24/21 GROUNDS MAINTENANCE

GD Maintenance & Cleaning are scheduled to paint the railings and kissing gate at the pedestrian entrance from Ampthill Road later in the summer.

Evidence in the form of maps from the Shefford P3 and Shefford Greenspace Conservation Groups has been gathered to support the application for a Definitive Map Modification Order in order that the footpath adjacent to the Cemetery (Ampthill to Campton Road) is added to the Definitive map to better ensure the path always remains in the future. Statements will need to be signed and corroborated before the application can be submitted.

It was reported that with the optimal growth conditions, the grass in the cemetery has been cut the scheduled three times this month and still complaints have been received from the public about the maintenance.

It was resolved to instruct 2 Elms to carry out a fourth grass cut this month, with 3 grass cuts in July if required.

The new memorial bench (paid for by the family) has been received and is stored in the Chapel, awaiting installation facing the Garden of Remembrance.

Following approval from the Committee, an order has been raised to 2 Elms of Shefford to reduce the height of the section of the perimeter hedging (running along the footpath leading from Amphill Road to Campton Road), including around the substation. This will complete the reduction of all the perimeter hedging, to allow unrestricted views into the cemetery.

The topping up of Section R of the full burial grave spaces has been carried out. Further seed needs to be applied to aid the reinstatement of the grass.

Following a presentation from Rachel Macfarlane from the Heritage Lottery Fund at a ParksEast meeting attended by FF, local craftsmen have been contacted to explore options for renovating the Chapel, with a view of making an application for a Heritage Lottery grant (an initial project enquiry form can be submitted to see if the restoration would be considered by the HLB) to fund the works. Works would include an upgrade of electrics/lighting/heating, specialist decoration, restoration/manufacture of furniture and flooring, and the installation of solar panels and a compost toilet to bring the Chapel back into use. The work might also include the resurfacing of the car park, and the creation of three dedicated parking spaces on Campton Road.

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 by Ben, our volunteer, following contact being made with grave owners (if applicable).

25/21 CAMPTON CHURCHYARD

PB reported on his findings when researching through historical records, documents and minutes of Campton Church, and the Joint Burial Board, relating to the responsibility of the churchyard maintenance. to update the Committee on the documentation he has uncovered on the section of the Campton Churchyard being maintained by the Joint Burial Board.

Historical Background

The original burial board was first set up in June 1854. There was then some land purchased in 1855. The burial board then lapsed in 1870. In 1885-1886, they reinstated a burial board. There were many issues, one of which being missing money, and the Home Office had to get involved. There was then a new burial board in March 1887, which was run by the church. The burial board was then separated out from the church, creating separate minutes, in 1896. Where the cemetery is now was contained within in the parish of Campton. It wasn't until after the bypass was built that it became part of Shefford.

Closure of the Churchyard

The minutes of the parish council have been searched, from 1970 up until the most recent minutes. "It was reported that the church was going to close the churchyard. They had had a legal officer from the dioceses explaining the situation, but the church board hadn't made a final decision." On 18th

May 1983, it was resolved that Campton Churchyard would be formally closed. PB also has diocesan letters stating that the entirety of the churchyard was officially closed. In December 1984, Mid Bedfordshire Council were asked to take care of the churchyard. However, on 17th February 1986, Campton Parish Church asked to take back responsibility of the care and maintenance – the implication being that it wasn't being maintained and was just left untended by the local authority. There was no grant mentioned. In May 1986, Mid Beds confirmed that responsibility and the maintenance would be transferred back to Campton. In the same letter, it also says that the War Graves Commission and common graves are located in the section that is the responsibility of the Joint Burial Board Committee. In the same minutes, Mr Thompson reported of having written to the county planning officer requesting a survey to be carried out of both the ancient churchyard and the Joint Burial Board section, on the far side of the church. In 1989, Mr Harris asked about the churchyard adjacent to his property that had been left to grow back to nature. This was providing a nuisance for him and his family, as some of them suffered from hayfever. It was pointed out that this section was part of the Joint Burial Board Committee's section and they had made decisions about how it should be maintained. They had decided that it would function as a conservation area. The complaint was raised to Joint Burial Board and an agreement was reached. This shows that Campton & Chicksands Parish Council and the Joint Burial Board took on the responsibility, but it doesn't show the reasoning behind it. If the churchyard is closed, it should be managed by Central Bedfordshire Council or the parish council, supplemented by a grant. The responsibility was handed down either through custom and practise or through an agreement with the Joint Burial Board from the 1970s. Because of the 1986 formal agreement with Mid Beds Council, legally there must be a record of the change in responsibility to Campton & Chicksands Parish Council and the Joint Burial Board. There is also no evidence of any maps stating the exact sections of the churchyard.

Responsibility of Maintenance

Because the cost of maintaining the churchyard is not necessary for the Joint Burial Board, there may be an option of either obtaining a grant from Central Bedfordshire Council or returning the responsibility to them entirely. It was mentioned that the Joint Burial Board could hand the responsibility of the churchyard management back to Central Bedfordshire Council but there would need to be a discussion before making this decision. PB will continue to examine the more recent minutes to explore the options the Joint Burial Board have about the churchyard.

Insurance

Campton & Chicksands Parish Council had to ensure the side nearest the road in the churchyard was insured. However, there is no evidence of any insurance of the Joint Burial Board. FF mentioned that because it was Diocesan land, there should be no responsibility for either Campton & Chicksands Parish Council or the Joint Burial Board to insure it. FF will contact other clerks or authorities who maintain closed churchyards about whether they have insurance on the land.

The Joint Burial Board land was purchased for what was stated as £700; however, that is a extremely large amount of money for the 1880s. Additionally, the maps are quite contradictory with the original maps, before the additional purchase of land, showing the churchyards boundaries as they are now.

26/21 FINANCE

FF reported the income and expenditure for the year to 31st March 2021, including the split 80.5:19.5 between STC and CCPC as shown in the Councils' respective Financial Statements. The total expenditure was £21,751.26 and the total income was £13,084.49 :this was split between

burials (£5,600), exclusive right burials (£3,800), ashes (£2,550), memorial permits (£515), other income (£119.49), and grant & donations (£500). FF explained that occasionally there is no charge for transfer of deeds, as the mistake was the fault of the burial clerk at the time. It was also reported that the cemetery had received 27 interments, with the vast majority being re-openers. The cost of Campton churchyard maintenance was reported as £1,290. The bank balance @ 16.06.2021 is £13,896.86 in credit.

27/21 NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held via Zoom at 10:30am on the 20th of September 2021.