

MEETING OF SHEFFORD AND CAMPTON JOINT BURIAL BOARD

Minutes of the meeting of the Board held via Zoom on Monday 29th November 2021 at 10.30am.

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

37/21 MINUTES FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING, MATTERS ARISING

The minutes of the 20th September 2021 meeting were agreed as a true reflection of the meeting, and the Zoom recording was agreed to be deleted.

No matters arising.

38/21 'TOPPLE TESTING' OF MEMORIALS

FF & CQ have received instruction from Keith Green (who retired from Neville Memorial Masons in 2019) on the different types of memorials, how they are constructed and how to carry out the manual inspection of the memorials in the new part of the cemetery. Part of this inspection was carried out under Keith's guidance. Following the inspection, six memorials were laid flat as they posed an immediate health and safety risk. There are a further eight memorials that are deemed a very high health and safety risk, and thirteen that need further inspection as the memorial needs repairing or is very wobbly.

FF met a Memorial Mason recommended by Keith on Sunday 28 November to inspect all these memorials; the work will cost approximately a third of what Neville's will charge as the work will be carried out on site. FF is awaiting a formal quote, but it is expected that the cost for 25 to be made safe will be in the region of £2,500. Of the six currently lying flat 3 families have been contacted, one memorial remains under warranty and the other two families have asked for quotes. The 3 other families have not been traced. All Cllrs agreed to this expenditure.

If the burial records were complete, it would be a simple job of contacting the grave owner to advise them of their responsibility in ensuring the memorial is fixed safely or will be laid flat to be made safe. However, as the burial records are incomplete and past Burial Clerks have failed to record the grave ownership, if a grave owner cannot be identified, then the Clerks feel it falls to the JBB to carry out the refixing/repair to the memorial. It should be noted that the JBB is liable if any of the memorials fail and cause injury, or worse, death. A notice has also been posted on Shefford Town Council's social media on the Campton and Chicksands Parish Council website, and it is due to be included in the next Campton and Chicksands Parish Council newsletter.

Keith has given this advice and guidance at no charge to the Joint Burial Board. The JBB may wish to send a letter/card of thanks + token gift, all Cllrs agreed to this. Keith will be assisting the Clerks in carrying out the manual inspection of the old part of the Cemetery, and the Campton Burial Ground in the New Year.

39/21 STAFFING

The Clerks carried out two days working together in November.

40/21 RIALTAS CEMETERY SYSTEM

The inputting of the recent interments has been progressing. The interments from July 2018 to August 2019 have now been input onto the system, including any historical information where the interment was to reopen a grave, memorial permits. The Deed of Grant of Exclusive Right of Burial

has been issued for these grave spaces, and where applicable, a signed copy has been sent to the grave owner. Clerks will continue the work in the new year.

41/21 REVIEW OF FEES

There are four main factors that impact the cemetery's fee structure: the fee structures for the other cemeteries in the locality; the standard of grounds maintenance; the site facilities; and the cost of maintaining the cemetery. A further factor may also be of impact - the proposed DEFRA Environmental Permitting Regulations. The impact of these proposed regulation for the Campton and Shefford Cemetery will be to reduce the density of burials due to the increased meterage required for each grave space.

A review of the fee structures for the other cemeteries in the locality show their charges are much higher, considerably so for some services. Visits have been made to these cemeteries (Amptill, Flitwick, Stotfold and Langford) to evaluate what facilities they provide and the standard of grounds maintenance, to ensure that the comparison of their fees to ours is a fair one.

Whilst we have improved our grounds maintenance immensely and are on a par (if not better regarding the old section of the cemetery, the hedges and the trees) with the other cemeteries, the marked differences are the edging up of the grass along the hard standing areas, the edging up of the memorial plaques in the Garden of Remembrance, the unevenness of the car park surface, the kerb appeal as you enter the cemetery i.e. the gates and threshold, an area of contemplation, and more 'wonky' memorials. More details of these for improvements are shown in Agenda item 8. 'Grounds Maintenance'.

The Clerks recommend that by improving on these areas, which is achievable by 31 March 2022 funded by income received this financial year to date, the cemetery's fee structure can be brought more in line with the other cemeteries in the locality from the 1 April 2022. This will ensure that longer-term aim of the cemetery being self-supporting is achievable. FF will send out the current fees to remind Cllrs and Clerks will prepare a proposal for the next meeting, to be agreed.

43/21 FINANCE

The expenditure for the period 1 April to 25 November 2021 is shown as attached.

The actual expenditure against budgeted precept for the same period, with explanations of the variances is shown as attached.

The income for the period (not including the Precept) is £9,742.

The bank balance as at 25.11.2021 is £23.5k in credit.

Shefford Cllr Tony Dawson, PB and the Clerks met on 12 November 2021 to review the draft budget for 2022/2023, in order that the figures would be available to be presented to the Campton and Chicksands Parish Council for inclusion in their budget/Precept figures for the same year. The draft budget is shown as attached. Approval is sought from the Committee to finalise this budget, All Cllrs approved this, it will be agreed at each Full Council meeting.

44/21 GROUNDS MAINTENANCE

A quotation from GD Maintenance and Cleaning for the painting of the entrance gates totalling £235 plus a small additional cost for painting the width railing/bollards immediately outside the gates. All Cllrs agreed to this expenditure.

A quotation from 2 Elms of Shefford Gardening Services for the edging of the grass along the hard surfaced pathways throughout the cemetery (new + old part) totalling £1.3k. A verbal quotation was received from another contractor that far exceeded this figure and was only for the new part of the cemetery. All Cllrs agreed

A quotation from Reynolds Landscaping Services totalling £1.2k has been received to supply, lay, roll and level of a fine layer of crushed aggregate over the car park and chapel, including removing any debris on the car park surface + repairing the grass edges at the back of the chapel. This Contractor was recommended by Lyndsey Bignell, the Countryside Officer at Central Bedfordshire Council; they have just completed a similar job at one of her sites. A report has been made by a regular visitor to the cemetery regarding an older visitor tripping over in the car park. All Cllrs agreed.

A quotation from Reynolds Landscaping Services totalling £320 has been received, the quotation is to create a set of two steps to allow safe access to the raised grass area. It is proposed to use this raised grass area as an area of contemplation, with the installation of two refurbished benches (currently stored in the Chapel) and the planting of bulbs and a/some standard rose/s. All Cllrs agreed.

A third litter bin has been installed, located on the corner nearest to the children's section of graves. A weed and feed to the grass in the 'R' section has been carried out, and several graves in the cemetery have been topped up. More graves need topping up in the spring when the weather warms up enough for the grass seed to germinate.

Evidence in the form of maps and statements from the Shefford P3 and Shefford Greenspace Conservation Groups has been gathered to support the application for a Definitive Map Modification Order in order to secure that the footpath adjacent to the Cemetery (Amphill to Campton Road) is added to the Definitive map to better ensure the path always remains in the future. The statements have now been signed, and the application is in the process of be submitted.

Two grass cuts were carried out in September, October and November. It is hoped that the grass cutting will soon cease for the season, freeing up the contractor to concentrate on clearing graves and carry out other winter works.

The hedge cutting, including the reduction of the section adjacent to the public footpath, has been completed. The growth this year on the hedges was phenomenal, and the work and time involved is reflected in next year's hedge cutting quotation. 2 Elms of Shefford Gardening Services have given quotations for two options for the hedge cutting for the next two years (a fixed price for a two-year contract) for the Committee to review: to cut the hedges once between September to November (£855); or to cut the hedges twice a year, the first cut in July and the second in October (£1,580). The first option has been including in the draft budget for the year 2022/3.

A quotation from 2 Elms of Shefford Gardening Services for the ground maintenance work in the cemetery for the next two years (a fixed price for a two-year contract) totalling £940 per month has been received. The contractor was asked to quote for all the grounds maintenance tasks (including

emptying litter bins, removal of spent wreaths and flowers, strimming inside graves where necessary, weed killing hard standing areas once a month during the growing season, edging up the memorial plaques, and raking up the pine needles) that are necessary in the cemetery, rather than just the grass cutting. This will formalise all the 'freebie' tasks they carry out as gestures of goodwill, and ensure transparency, allowing residents and Members to see the value for money given + an explanation for the increase in monthly costs. This has been included in the draft budget for the year 2022/3.

A quotation from 2 Elms of Shefford Gardening Services for each additional grass cut from 1 April 2022 totalling £395 has been received. This is slight reduction on the cost of a cut in the current year. All Cllrs agreed to the three quotations above from 2 Elms of Shefford Gardening Services; hedge cutting, grounds maintenance and additional cut for the next two years.

A quotation from Maydencroft Ltd totalling £390 has been received for the Committee to review. This quotation is for a Lantra-qualified Professional Tree Inspector to undertake a Tree Safety Inspection of all the trees within Campton and Shefford Cemetery. All the survey information will be compiled in a detailed report containing methodology, key findings/conclusions, a schedule of trees required remedial works, and a programme of re-inspections. As part of Shefford Town Council's Risk Assessment, a Tree Safety Inspection Survey is required to be carried out on all Council-owned (in this case, jointly owned) land (every two years, although some trees identified as high risk are surveyed more often) to satisfy the Council's insurance provider. All Cllrs agreed.

An email has been received from a regular visitor to the cemetery and reads as follows: -

"Dear Sir or Madam.

I would like to say that the cemetery is a lovely peaceful place and that it is always well cared for, regularly trimmed and mowed. Your team seem to put a lot of effort into this and are always friendly and helpful.

Thank you"

Over three thousand purple crocuses were planted in the cemetery (the area behind the noticeboard, and around the base of the recently installed bench in the Garden of Remembrance) by the Shefford Greenspace Conservation Group. The crocuses were donated by the Biggleswade Ivel Rotary Club to bring awareness to the fight against Polio.

Following a presentation from Rachel Macfarlane from the Heritage Lottery Fund at the last Parks East meeting, 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 will 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. We are also looking at including 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.

45/21 CAMPTON BURIAL GROUND

The Clerks have contacted St Albans Diocese, the Ministry of Justice and Central Bedfordshire Council to establish the ownership, plans, and closing of the burial ground at Campton Church. To avoid any confusion, the Clerks are now referring to this land as the Campton Burial Ground.

Central Bedfordshire Council have no information on the ownership, plans or closing of Campton Burial Ground.

The Ministry of Justice have failed to reply to the enquiries.

St Albans Diocese have confirmed that they only have information to show the closed churchyard as the area immediately surrounding the Church. However, they do not have a copy of the original closure notice submitted to or confirmed by the Ministry of Justice.

Shefford Town Councillor Tony Dawson has discovered that the Bedfordshire Archives is showing many archived documents relating to the Joint Burial Board Committee, with some of the listed items appearing to relate to Campton Burial Ground, as well as Campton and Shefford Cemetery. As the allotted time when a fee is incurred has expired, approval was sought from the Committee to retrieve all the documents from the Archive. All Cllrs agreed. Cllr Booton was able to confirm that he has been to the archives and the Deeds had already been removed, there was no record of when or by whom. Cllr Booton looked through minutes, which were very vague and offered no useful information. Until more information has been found, Campton Burial Ground has been included in Campton and Chicksands Parish Council's Insurance Policy (at no additional charge to the Council).

46/21 NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held via Zoom at 10:30am on the 21st February 2022.