

MEETING OF SHEFFORD AND CAMPTON JOINT BURIAL BOARD

Minutes of the meeting of the Board held via Zoom on Wednesday 22nd June 2022 at 10.30am.

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

13/22 MINUTES FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING, MATTERS ARISING

The minutes of the 22nd March 2022 meeting were agreed as a true reflection of the meeting, and the Zoom recording was agreed to be deleted.

Matters arising:

Cllr Booton confirmed that in Minute 9/22 he requested closure of the burial ground rather than confirmation of ownership.

Topple testing will be carried out quarterly, further details to follow in this meeting under the relevant Agenda item.

14/22 TOPPLE TESTING OF MEMORIALS

Following the safety inspection (topple test), where twenty-seven memorials in the new part of the cemetery were found to need repairing/refixing, repairs/refixing of eight unsafe memorials has been completed by a local NAMM registered Memorial Mason, and a further two memorials have been attended to by other local Memorial Masons (under warranty). A further seventeen still need repairing/refixing once the grave ownership details have been identified. An initial eight memorials were laid flat as they posed an immediate health and safety risk. As another headstone (in the Q section) had to be laid flat at the SGCG working party as it was deemed dangerous, the Clerks/Admin Assistant will be carrying out another topple testing on the memorials in the next six weeks. Additional tests will be carried out when members of the JBB are at the cemetery, particularly those that are unstable to monitor for deterioration.

Keith Green 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 spring.

15/22 STAFFING

The Clerks have carried a full day's work in May on the Financial Statements + a further day in June preparing/clerking the Joint Burial Board meeting. TM to seek approval from CCPC to work one day a month at Shefford House to review the archived documents + inputting + topple testing for the next six months (not including August). This was agreed in principle but will need to be financially assessed and agreed at the next full council meeting of Campton and Chicksands PC.

Francesca and Checka are the main contacts for relatives and funeral directors for funerals. This can be very time consuming, and they are finding it an increasing demand on time to attend as the 'official representative' at every funeral. The Clerks therefore propose that members of the Joint Burial Board Committee distribute the representation at funerals among all members (currently only Shefford Town Councillors attend funerals). Funerals mainly take place between 10.00-15.00hrs on weekdays and the attendee would need to be in place 15 minutes prior to the funeral to confirm everything is in order. It is proposed that Francesca contact members via a WhatsApp group with notice of the funeral, and for members to confirm attendance. Cllr Booton confirmed that he has

offered to assist and will happily attend, Francesca thanked him. All agreed to the Whats App group, Francesca will set it up.

Despite publicising the event in Campton and Chicksands, attendance at the two working parties was only from Shefford Town Councillors and Shefford Residents. A provisional date for the next working party has been set for Saturday 17th September 10:00 – 12:00hrs. Cllr Booton confirmed that a group of Campton residents have been running a similar working party in Campton for the burial ground and the group have now met four times. It was agreed that the next working party should be well advertised within both Parish and Town.

16/22 Burial Survey 2022

The Clerks have completed an Annual Burial Survey for 2022 from Central Bedfordshire Council. Survey questions included: how many new burial spaces have you identified for future use that can accommodate two persons (double depth)? (A. 600); under normal circumstances, how many of those identified spaces would you expect to use of the next 12 months? (A. 20); do you have a separate area for cremated remains? (A. yes); roughly how many years would you expect those spaces to last? (A. 20); have you identified land for future burial spaces when your current site is at full capacity? (A. yes); if yes, what stage have you reached in securing that identified land? (A. the landowner has been identified; however, no approach has been made, nor any funding sought to purchase the land); do you have any concerns about your ability to identify or deliver available land for future burial provision in the local area? (A. yes); if yes, please outline your concerns. (A. the land is owned by St Albans Diocese, and being immediately adjacent to a section of single land A507, the land may have been earmarked by Central Bedfordshire Council for widening the carriageway); please outline any issues in relation to burial planning or the delivery of burial services in your area that you think the Council should be aware of, or provide support to you on (A. The Chapel within the Cemetery is closed to the public, and will require refurbishment/upgrading in order for the building to be fit for services).

17/22 Green Form

The legislation relating to the Electronic Transfer of Documents, which was introduced at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, was made permanent in December 2021. This means that the form of burial or cremation (known as the Green) is transferred electronically; however, it must be noted that there is a requirement for specific permission to have been given by the informant for the transmission of the green to us and that separate permission must be given before a funeral director may be copied in.

18/22 FINANCE

The expenditure for the year to 31 March 2022 is shown as attached.

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

The income for the year ended 31 March 2022 (not including the Precept) is £14,892.

The bank balance as at 16.0.2022 is £19.6k in credit.

Clerks have completed the Financial Statements and AGAR including the proportional figures for the Joint Burial Board for each Council, and these have been approved by the internal auditor. Campton and Chicksands Parish Council have had to restate their accounts to reflect an amended opening balance.

The new fee structure was introduced from 1 April 2022.

A resident who pre-purchased a grave space in 2008 has contacted us as he wishes to relinquish his burial rights. The Clerks calculated that he should be reimbursed £87 of the original purchase price – approval was sought from the Committee to refund him this amount. All agreed.

19/22 Grounds Maintenance

The drop-down posts on the entrance gates have been reconfigured and the left-hand side gate is padlocked shut to prevent unauthorised vehicle access. Keys have been issued to the grave diggers, Tom and Jim O'Brien, and two keys have been issued to Neville Funeral Services (one for funerals and one for memorials). The gates have been painted black and the silver finials will be painted when the weather becomes a bit cooler. Any memorial masons requiring access now have to go through the JBB, so when will be aware of any work being carried out.

The litter bin that was installed by the main entrance gates was not being used, so it has been relocated to the corner of the 'R' section of the Cemetery, where it will get more use. Approval is sought from the Committee to purchase and install a fourth litter bin following the Clerks receiving a request for a litter bin to be installed by the Ampthill Road kissing gate entrance. All agreed.

The tarmac path surface is starting to deteriorate in several areas (see photos below), which will need repairs/resurfacing in the short/medium term. This will be assessed in the autumn and after winter.



When funding allows, a quotation will be obtained from LEF Paving and Landscaping to replace the red engineering bricks at the main entrance at Campton Road with granite sets, which will marry up with the tarmac and new car park surfacing and be installed at a slightly lower level to allow the right-hand side gate to swing shut. All agreed.

Grass cutting is ongoing. A third cut was carried out in May, and it is expected that a third cut may be required in June and/or July. Approval was sought from the Committee for the Clerks to authorise these additional cuts if required, the Councillors agreed in principle but only if another cut is definitely required, the recent hot weather has meant a reduction in growth. Clerks will email Cllrs if they feel a further cut is required. The edging up of the grass along the hard surfaced pathways in the old section of the cemetery is currently outstanding. This will be completed once the ground is more workable (it is rock solid following the prolonged dry spell of weather).

Central Bedfordshire Council have confirmed receipt of our application for a Definitive Map Modification Order, in order to secure 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. Notices of the application have been displayed at both ends of the footpath. The application process can be lengthy, so we do not expect to hear the outcome of the application for some time.

The Tree Safety Survey inspection of the Cemetery was carried out by Maydencroft on 7th March 2022 (see attached). Approval was sought from the Committee for Branching Out Tree and Garden Services to carry out the recommendation, to completely remove wire and stakes from the base of a wild cherry tree ref T1. Approval was also sought to remove tree suckers and old stakes from where the row of trees was removed along the top of the X to Y sections. The next Tree Safety Survey is due in September/October 2023. All agreed.

The galvanised bow top fencing, to block the gap from the corner pillar to the hedgerow, has been installed. The fencing will be painted black to match other gates/railings later in the year.

Following topping up and seeding, the grass in the 'R' section has established well and the area is looking great. As funding allows, another section/row of the cemetery will be topped up, together with individual graves as and when weather conditions allow.

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 to create three dedicated parking spaces on Campton Road.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission sign to indicate that there are Commonwealth War Graves contained within the cemetery has been installed on the brickwork to the right-hand side of the main entrance gates. The sign will be maintained by the Commission on a permanent basis.

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.

There have been two working parties to tend to the neglected graves in the Q section. The first working party was on Saturday 9th April and the second, which coincided with a visit from the Community Payback Team (four young men on Community Service), was on Friday 20th May; the Community Payback Team worked from 9.30am to 2.30pm while the volunteers worked from 1.30 – 3pm. KP donated some silk flower posies, funded from his Mayoral allowance, which were laid on the newly tended graves. We received a lot of positive feedback on social media (the post on Facebook reached over 7k people, and as far away as Canada and America), with a request for the next working party to be on a Saturday again. Thanks, have been made to Matthew Stafford, a local stonemason, for cleaning a marble headstone in the old section of the Cemetery at no cost, following a request on Facebook from the grave owner who now resides in America.

Staff and volunteers are watering the newly planted yew trees and standard rose, and they are thriving. Approval was sought from the Committee to plant more standard roses in the autumn/winter, either funded by the Joint Burial Board or donations from residents/families. All

Cllrs agreed to families to choose to plant a rose, costs need to be agreed for the JBB to plant subsequent roses.

All the reserved grave markers have been removed.

The Clerks registered an expression of interest to Solar Together Bedfordshire for the installation of solar panels on the Chapel. This is without commitment

20/22 CAMPTON BURIAL GROUND

As it has been confirmed that the Joint Burial Board Committee are responsible for the management and maintenance of the Campton Burial Grounds, the initial health and safety priorities are to carry out a Tree Safety Survey inspection, and to carry out a condition survey on the walls/gate. A quotation has been received from Maydencroft to carry out a Tree Safety Survey inspection totalling £330.00 for review by the Committee. This survey covers the Campton Burial Ground and the Churchyard. The cost of including the Churchyard was minimal, and a copy of the survey will be passed to Rev Roni Goodman for action as necessary. Approval was sought from the Committee to instruct FE Surveying Solutions (they surveyed the Cemetery Chapel, wall and gates) to survey the perimeter walls/gate, this will only be in the JBB burial ground area as the Diocese will be responsible for the remainder. All agreed.

The Clerks have retrieved all Joint Burial Boards lodged papers/maps/documents from Bedfordshire Archives. These have been permanently removed; however, we do have the option to resubmit these documents once we have reviewed them. The retrieved documents/burial registers are already proving to be beneficial in dealing with enquiries from the public. The first burial register also includes information on burials in Campton Burial Ground that were carried out from 1903 through to the 1950's. Cllr Booton commented that he would like to see any documents no longer in use returned to the archives.

The Clerks have been in contact with Rev Roni Goodman about the management and maintenance in Campton Burial Ground and the Clerks have agreed to consult with and keep her informed of any works/developments etc within the site.

21/22 AOB

Cllr Pollard reminded the JBB that the Anniversary of Robert Bloomfield is August 2023, he is buried in the Church part of the burial ground in Campton, Cllr Booton has spoken to the Rev Roni Goodman regarding this.

22/22 NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be at 10:30am on the Thursday 15th September 2022, via Zoom.