

MEETING OF SHEFFORD AND CAMPTON JOINT BURIAL BOARD

Minutes of the meeting of the Board held via Zoom on Thursday 2nd November 2023, 2pm.

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

Apologies Cllr Ash

18/23 MINUTES FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING, MATTERS ARISING

The minutes of the May 2023 meeting were agreed as a true reflection of the meeting, proposed by Cllr Fowler, seconded by Cllr Mackin.

Matters arising: None.

19/23 RIALTAS:

The Rialtas system has been upgraded to include the cemetery software in the Omega software package.

20/23 STAFFING:

The Clerks carried out a full day's work in June (26th) and July (20th); the Clerks were on leave in August and didn't meet again until October (virtually) due to TM's postponed surgery.

CQ attended an ICCM online seminar in October (including a question-and-answer section).

21/23 CEMETERY FEES:

It was proposed that the fees for the cemetery be reviewed by the Committee for adoption from 1 April 2024 (last reviewed and amended 1 April 2022). It was recommended that an increase of 10% be applied to all fees, which would bring them in line with neighbouring towns (comparison with Stotfold Town Council, who run a cemetery with similar facilities).

22/23 FINANCE:

The income and expenditure for the period 1 April to 31 August 2023 for the expenditure relating to the Campton Burial Ground + Campton and Shefford Cemetery is attached, together with the variance analysis showing explanations for actual expenditure against budgeted costs.

Both Councils have received their external audit report; no recommendations were made for the Joint Burial Board accounting. Therefore, it is proposed to follow the same procedures regarding recording the income and expenditure for the cemetery for 2023/2024 as in previous years. Leena Bains will continue as both Councils' Internal Auditor for 2023/2024.

The Clerks will spend their joint working day in November preparing the JBB draft budget for review by both Councils. It is anticipated that the grass cutting/grounds maintenance will see a sizable increase as the Cemetery grass cutting costs were fixed for two years (the current year being the second year) and fuel, servicing and other costs associated to the works have increased twofold. It is not proposed to include any additional expenditure in the budget, all additional expenditure is expected to be covered by burial income and/or external grant funding. Once Clerks have prepared the budget, it will be emailed to all Cllrs, if necessary, a meeting can be arranged to discuss the budget prior to the budget being presented to both full councils.

23/23 GROUNDS MAINTENANCE:

The crack that appeared in the perimeter wall by the main entrance gates has been repaired.

It was proposed to make another application to Central Bedfordshire Council for a tree planting grant this winter for a replacement Irish Yew tree (one of the trees planted earlier this year have failed to establish) + a specimen oak tree. Proposed by Cllr Pollard, seconded by Cllr Fensome. This oak tree will replace the oak seedling that was planted near the Ampthill Road perimeter by a young resident, which didn't survive the harsh winter. A third Irish Yew tree (a larger specimen) may be planted by the Shefford Branch of the Royal British Legion, together with a small memorial plaque.

FF met with the Facilities Manager at ACO to discuss the company's involvement in the Town, which may include volunteer work parties by their staff on green projects such as tidying up untended graves in the Cemetery.

Approval was sought from the Committee to commission a Tree Safety re-survey (was due in September/October 2023). Proposed by Cllr Mackin, seconded by Cllr Pollard.

24/23 CAMPTON BURIAL GROUND:

The tree works recommended in the Tree Safety Survey Inspection were carried out.

We have provisionally instructed English Building and Restoration to carry out the remedial works to the unsafe perimeter wall as per their quotation totalling £7.8k. The works are scheduled for early 2024 (weather dependent).

Rev Roni Goodman contacted TM regarding repair maintenance works to the pedestrian gates (one being under the ownership of the Joint Burial Board Committee). TM advised RG that any quotations must be approved by the Committee before any works commence.

25/23 FORMAL COMPLAINT:

A resident arranged for the funeral of her daughter in advance of her death. The grave space was purchased in 2013 (Y section) for the charge of £165.00, and the resident contacted CQ when her daughter's health began to decline, to make sure the pre-purchased grave was still in place and was available. CQ confirmed the details of the ownership and ratified that when the time came to inter her daughter, the grave space would be available. When the funeral was booked for the 3rd of November, we had not received the full details of the interment and were not aware that the interment was intended for this grave space.

The funeral directors and ourselves were unaware that the deceased was the aforementioned daughter, and the interment would take place in the Y section. Once the interment form was received on 23rd October, it was discovered that the measurements of the coffin were not able to be interred into the grave space due to the coffin being an American casket with a width of 90cm. This issue only came to light nine working days in advance of the funeral.

It was agreed with the funeral directors that the solution of a new grave space would be purchased and the old space relinquished. The Clerks agreed that the Campton & Shefford Cemetery would buy back the pre-purchased grave for £143.00; with the new grave space costing £500, there would be a charge of £357.00 to the grave owner.

The grave owner met with CQ to choose the new grave location. She was very distressed and requested that this fee of £357.00 be waived, especially as this happened at such a late stage in the process. We are now in the knowledge that the daughter was severely disabled from birth and whose quality of life declined over the latter stage of her life. Although we are within our rights to demand this fee, the Clerks feel that, under the circumstances and to lessen the distress caused to the resident, it would be appropriate to waive the fee. In due of this, the grave in the Y section would then become available for resale. Approval was sought from the Committee to ratify the Clerks' recommendation to waive this fee, all Cllrs agreed to waive the fee.

Although there is nothing specified in legislation to say what size a grave space should be, the guide for a normal grave space is 8ft by 4ft, allowing for a coffin size of 7ft by 2ft 6in. As the Campton & Shefford Cemetery graves do not fit an American casket, this issue has been highlighted (and may be repeated, particularly in respect of different cultures/traditions and the increasing obesity in the population). Therefore, it seems prudent to add a stipulation into the Cemetery's Rules and Regulation that any outsized coffins and caskets (including American) would not fit into our normal grave spaces and contact would need to be made to the Clerks before the funeral can be arranged (and the fees will be reflected accordingly, depending on the size of the grave).

26/23 AOB

None

27/23 NEXT MEETING

Thursday 15th February, 2pm via Zoom.