

OVINGHAM JOINT BURIAL COMMITTEE
(WYLAM, HORSLEY, OVINGHAM AND OVINGTON PARISH COUNCILS)

Minutes of meeting of Ovingham Joint Burial Committee
Held on 19th February 2019 at 7pm at Wylam Institute

Councillors present: Mr. K. Trobe (Wylam PC - Chairman); Mr. M. Senior (Horsley PC) (Vice-Chairman); Mrs. D. Jordon (Ovingham PC); Mr. I Campbell (Ovingham PC); Mr. P. Pescod (Ovington PC) and Mrs P Bailey (Ovington PC)

Also present: Mrs M Moore (Clerk to the Committee)

1. Quorum

There being one representative from the four constituent Parish Council present, the meeting was declared quorate.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies received from J. Jours and S. Glover.

3. Declarations of Interest in Items on the Agenda

P. Pescod declared an interest in item No 16 – Future use of the Cemetery Chapels.

4. Questions from Members Of The Public On Items On The Agenda

No members of the public were present and no questions were put.

5. Minutes of the Meeting of the Ovingham Joint Burial Committee held on 27th November 2018

It was **Resolved** that the meeting the Minutes held on 27th November 2018 be agreed as a true record of proceedings and signed by the Chairman.

6. Clerk's Report

- a. Cemetery Asset Register – Work on this had not yet begun. In the last separately compiled Annual Return, the assets were listed as having a value of £4.00.

It was **Resolved** that this should be considered at the next meeting but in the meantime model frameworks and examples of good practice for the asset register should be investigated.

- 6.2 Superintendent's report pro-forma – K. Trobe had drafted a proforma which he outlined to the Committee.

It was **Resolved** that 'planned absences' should be added to the pro-forma so that the Committee would be aware when she would not be available. The document would then

Signed: Date:
Chairman of Meeting

be sent to J Hornsby with her Committee agenda with a request that it be completed and returned to the Clerk in advance of the meeting, so that it could be circulated to Members.

- 6.3 Licence to Occupy Agreement – North Chapel – P. Pescod now had a key to the North Chapel.
- 6.4 Replacement of gas meter box – Although British Gas had been contacted with a request that the meter and boxing be checked this had not been done.
- It was **Resolved** that a further approach should be made to British Gas with regard to this.
- 6.5 Tree felling work – The additional conifer on the southern boundary had been removed and neighbouring residents were pleased that this had been done.
- 6.6 Superintendent's Salary – The standing order had been amended and a cheque for back pay had been sent to J. Hornsby.
- 6.7 Notice of Interment for Ovingham Cemetery – This had been circulated to all relevant funeral directors.

7. Superintendent's Report (J. Hornsby)

J. Hornsby was not in attendance at the meeting.

8. Code of Conduct for Members of the Committee

The Code of Conduct, which was based upon Wylam Parish Council's Code had been circulated to Members of the Committee.

It was **Resolved** that the Contents of the Code be noted.

9. Ornamentation and Planting on Grave Spaces

Draft letters, to families of those interred in the Cemetery, had been prepared with a view to highlighting to them, the Cemetery Rules with regard to features such as decorations and kerbstones on burial plots. Such features were having an impact on the ability of the grounds maintenance contractor to carry out his duties effectively.

It was also noted that there had been a Judicial Review regarding grave surrounds. The case involved the legality of a policy which precluded individuals from erecting raised edging around the grave of a deceased person. In this case, the burial authority had widely consulted before introducing the policy. The review was dismissed by the Judge.

Considerable discussion followed in relation to the wording and order of the letters, particularly in view of the highly sensitive nature of the matter. It was stressed that the wording should exactly mirror the Cemetery Rules document on this issue.

Signed: Date:
Chairman of Meeting

It was **Resolved** that:

- a. The matter be deferred to a future meeting to enable members of the Committee to visit the cemetery to identify the areas of concern, and
- b. The wording of the letters be reviewed to ensure consistency with the Cemetery Rules document and any other standard wording in relation to this issue.

10. Update on contract for pointing work at the Cemetery Chapels

It was reported that pointing work on the South facing walls of both chapels would start the following week as part of an ongoing programme of improvement to the fabric of the buildings.

It was **Resolved** that the report be noted.

11. Progress report on Grounds Maintenance at the Cemetery.

It was reported that Members of the Committee had met with Jake Sloan, the Grounds Maintenance Contractor, at the Cemetery on 14th January. A copy of the notes of this meeting had been provided to Members. A programme for levelling sunken graves had been discussed and a quotation for this work had been provided by Geoff Sloan Landscaping.

It was **Resolved** that the report be noted and the quotation be approved.

12. New Grounds Maintenance Tender Document for 1 April 2020 – 31 March 2023

The current grounds maintenance contract would end on 31st March 2020. It was therefore vital to begin preparation of the new contract documentation as soon as possible so that the invitation to tender could be issued approximately 8 months in advance of this i.e. August 2019.

All agreed that the existing contract should be reviewed to ensure it was comprehensive and robust. It should also cover issues associated with seasonality. To support this process the Clerk would try to identify examples of good practice. The advertising requirements would also be clarified.

It was **Resolved** that further information be collated on this issue and brought to the next meeting of the committee to enable a full discussion to take place.

13. Burial Register and repair of Old Cemetery Map

It was reported that the Burial Register has been copied onto a CD and the old map had been repaired and framed. A strong paper copy of the map had been given to J. Hornsby to use to fill in details of grave spaces.

It was **Resolved** that the report be noted.

14. Mapping of Older Graves at the Cemetery

It was reported that the survey has been completed.

Signed: Date:
Chairman of Meeting

It was **Resolved** that the report be noted.

15. Review of Cemetery Mapping Process

It was reported that the work on mapping the Cemetery needed to be concluded to enable Northumberland County Council to carry out tople-testing on the gravestones.

Members acknowledged the need to progress this issue as a priority and take all reasonable steps to ensure the work was completed. This should include a review of the public liability insurance implications of the work not being completed.

It was **Resolved** that:

- a) The report be noted,
- b) Northumberland County Council be contacted for further information on this issue, including their costs for carrying out this work; and
- c) The wording of the OJBC Public Liability Insurance be reviewed in relation to this issue.

16. Future use of the Cemetery Chapels

This item had been brought before the Committee for discussion given the issues with the condition of the buildings and the costs associated with keeping them in good order, particularly when income from their use was minimal.

It was agreed that exact ownership and insurance information in relation to the Chapels should be clarified.

P Pescod had a Licence to Occupy for the North Chapel as a workshop and commented that in his opinion it was not too bad structurally although drainage around the building would always be an issue. He had carried out work to replace and make good the flooring and had screened off an area that could still be used by the public attending funerals in inclement weather.

In terms of alternative uses this would require significant financial investment and no budget existed for this.

Further discussion followed during which it was acknowledged that whilst the buildings did represent a future financial liability there would be a public outcry if the Committee were to decide that they were no longer required. Such a decision would also require further consultation and discussion.

It was therefore **Resolved** that:

- a) The report be noted and the future use of the Chapels be continued as at present; and
- b) A review of ownership and insurance arrangements with regard to the Chapels be carried out.

Signed: Date:
Chairman of Meeting

17. CONFIDENTIAL ITEM: Update regarding the Licence to Occupy for the South Chapel

The Committee passed a Resolution excluding the press and public from the meeting in accordance with Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted (commercial/sensitive information).

The Committee were advised of financial issues relating to the Licence to Occupy for the South Chapel, which required further action.

It was **Resolved** that the Clerk should liaise with Councillor Jordon on this matter and the occupier should be contacted as a matter of urgency.

18. CONFIDENTIAL ITEM: Financial Arrangements in Respect of the Lodge Tenancy

The Committee passed a Resolution excluding the press and public from the meeting in accordance with Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted (commercial/sensitive information).

The Committee were advised of the current financial position with regard to the Lodge Tenancy.

It was **Resolved** that the report be noted and the matter be reviewed again at the next meeting

19. Financial Matters

After considering the information submitted it was **Resolved** that:

- a) The financial reports to 31st January 2019 be approved,
- b) The following schedule of payments be approved and the cheques duly signed

Inv. Date	Payee	Supply details	Amount
24/01/19	Best Electricians	Lodge- new fuse board, Electrical survey & certificate	£600.00
07/01/19	Scripti	DVD (Copy Register); repair cemetery map	£360.00
16/01/19	Scripti	Framed Cemetery Map; printed map	£228.00
29/01/19	Robson Survey	Survey of existing monuments in Western half of cemetery	£372.60

- c) The following schedule of receipts be noted

Date	Supplier	Details	Amount
23/01/19	NCC	Cemetery double charge recompense	£209.00
17/12/18	NCC	Housing Benefit (Lodge)	£169.68
14/01/19	NCC	Housing Benefit (Lodge)	£169.68

Signed: Date:
Chairman of Meeting

d) The quotation received from G Sloan for levelling graves at a cost of £400 be approved.

20. Urgent items and items for a future agenda

- a) It was reported that a number of the notices on the Cemetery Noticeboard were out of date. It was **Resolved** that arrangements be made to address this.
- b) New headstones had been erected on the war graves within the Cemetery but it was not clear if the Committee had been notified of this or whether the Superintendent had been notified. It was **Resolved** to further investigate this matter.
- c) A request had been received for further information about a Wylam resident who had died during WW1 and who was interred in the Cemetery. It was **Resolved** that this should be referred to J Hornsby to see what records exist.
- d) Councillor Bailey reported that she was resigning from Ovington Parish Council and would therefore no longer be representing the Council at OJBC meetings. It was **Resolved** that the Committees thanks be placed on record for her service to the Committee.

21. Date of the next meeting of the Committee

Tuesday 14th May 2019 at 7.00 pm Wylam Institute.

Signed: Date:
Chairman of Meeting