

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

Minutes of meeting of Ovingham Joint Burial Committee
Held on 3rd September 2019 at 7pm at Wylam Institute

Councillors present: Mr. I Campbell (Ovingham PC), Mrs A Francis (Wylam PC), Mrs S Glover (Horsley PC), Mrs. D. Jordon (Ovingham PC); Mr J Joures (Wylam PC), Mr. P. Pescod (Ovington PC) Mr. M. Senior (Horsley 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

There were no apologies for absence.

3. Declarations of Interest in Items on the Agenda

None declared.

4. Election of Chairman of Ovingham Joint Burial Committee

Resolved that A Francis be elected as Chairman, proposed by M Senior and seconded by J Joures.

5. Minutes of the Meeting of the Ovingham Joint Burial Committee held on 17th June 2019

Resolved that the meeting the Minutes held on 17th June 2019 be agreed as a true record of proceedings and signed by the Chairman subject to the correction of the spelling of 'Campbell' to 'Cambell' in the attendance list.

6. Clerk's Report

The Clerk reported that she was continuing the process of ensuring that all of the Committee's documents and arrangements were changed over to Wylam Parish Council and also that online banking arrangements were being set up.

Resolved that the report be noted.

7. Superintendent's Report (J. Hornsby)

J. Hornsby was not in attendance at the meeting but had submitted a pro-forma report detailing activity since the last meeting.

There had been a couple of occasions recently where members of the public had been unable to contact the Superintendent so contact had been made with the Clerk and D Jordan.

Resolved that the report be noted and the situation with contact from members of the public be monitored.

8. Maintenance Fund 1919/20 & 1920/21

Signed: Date:
Chairman of Meeting

The Clerk reported that the constitution of the Committee stated that the Annual Maintenance Grant for each of the constituent Parish Councils should be based on the number on the electoral list for each Parish on the 1st September each year. Figures for the 1919/20 had not been obtained in September 2018 however figures obtained in July 2019 showed a slight change in the split of the grant i.e.:

- Wylam 49% (+1%)
- Horsley 10% (no change)
- Ovingham 28% (- 0.5%)
- Ovington 13% (-0.5%)

As these figures had not been available at the time the budgets were set by each Parish Council it was suggested that the status quo should be retained for this year with the revised figures being used for the 2020/21 grant allocation.

Resolved that the report be received and the Maintenance Grant arrangements for 2019/20 be based on the percentage split used in 2018/19.

9. Review of Cemetery Rules

As agreed at the last meeting the Clerk submitted a draft of the revised Cemetery Rules for consideration. This had been amended taking account of the rules operated by other local cemeteries in the area.

Members discussed the suggested changes and agreed some further amendments.

With regard to the rules on 'Residency' it was suggested that the person to be interred should have been a resident of any of the four Parish Council areas before and within 12 months of his or her death. No restrictions would apply to former residents now living in residential care or a hospital/hospice outside of the Parish Council areas.

Resolved that:

- a) The rules be amended further as discussed and a final draft be brought before the next meeting.
- b) Once finalised a copy of the rules be provided to the family of each person to be interred.

10. Review of Cemetery Fees

The Clerk reported that during the review of the Cemetery Rules it had been noted that the fees for Ovingham Cemetery were significantly lower than those for Northumberland County Council and neighbouring cemeteries and also that the current fees had been in place since at least 2012 without an increase. A comparison of fees had therefore been carried out and this was presented in table format to members for consideration.

A number of key costs were highlighted to demonstrate the differences in fees charged with the cost of an adult single grave at £300 being almost half of the next lowest cost of £575 for Prudhoe. There were also a number of charges where OJBC had not set an agreed fee and this should be addressed.

During the discussion which followed members questioned whether the Committee should be aiming to recover a reasonable proportion of its costs from burial charges? There was also a

Signed: Date:
Chairman of Meeting

view that there was a duty to all Council Tax payers in the four Parish areas to set appropriate fees for the people using the cemetery facilities. This could potentially have the effect of reducing the Annual Maintenance Grant for each of the constituent Councils and would not therefore result in a surplus of funds. Whilst the majority of Members were of the view that charges should increase there was a counter view that charges should not increase.

A number of options were discussed in relation to fee increases e.g. incremental either by a percentage or amount, immediate increase to next lowest fee and also what the fees should be for non-residents. There were also suggestions for those fees where the Committee had not previously set a charge.

In line with the other cemeteries locally it was noted that fees for interments on a weekend/bank holiday should be higher.

In conclusion, it was not possible to reach a consensus on the way forward and a member indicated that they wished to take the matter back to their respective Parish Council for consideration and to gauge its view. The other members agreed that they would do the same.

Resolved that:

- a) The report be noted.
- b) The matter be referred back to each of the four constituent Parish Councils to enable them to come to a view on whether charges should be increased.
- c) The matter be discussed again at the next meeting of this Committee when the views of the Parish Councils are known.

11. Review of Grounds Maintenance

It was reported that grass cutting had been carried out satisfactorily. There was however epicormics growth from the trees on the drive which needed to be addressed as regularly as possible.

Resolved that the report be noted and the contractor be contacted with regard to the epicormics growth.

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

The Clerk submitted a draft tender document which she had prepared taking account of the comments raised in relation to the existing contract and also other similar documents issued by Parish and Town Councils.

Members reviewed the content and agreed that it should be as straightforward as possible so as not to deter smaller local contractors from bidding for the work. It should however include all relevant legal information and protections and also make a link to the Tree Warden’s report on the Cemetery. A timetable by which the tender would be advertised, considered and awarded should also be included.

Resolved that the report be received and a final draft document be prepared for consideration at the next meeting of the Committee.

13. Topple Testing

Signed: Date:
Chairman of Meeting

The Clerk submitted information that had been obtained from Northumberland County Council in relation to the costs of carrying out memorial safety inspections which were based on the number of memorials to be inspected. Although the Committee had commissioned a plan of the Cemetery the exact number of memorials was not clear from this. D Jordan therefore agreed to visit the cemetery to count the memorials.

Resolved that the information be noted and Northumberland County Council be commissioned to carry out this work.

14. Finance

Resolved that:

- a) The following payment be approved

Inv. Date	Payee	Supply details	Amount
8.08.19	G Sloan Landscaping	Levelling of 10 graves	400.00

- b) Receipts since the last meeting on 17th June 2019 be noted.
 c) The financial accounts to 29th August 2019 be approved

15. To consider any urgent items and items for a future agenda.

- i. D Jordan reported that she had carried out an inspection of the Lodge property and whilst in general everything was in good order there were some minor works that needed to be carried out. Prices would be obtained for the work and submitted for approval.
- ii. Repointing of the Chapels be considered at the next meeting.

16. To agree the date of the next meeting of the Committee

Tuesday 26th November 2019 at 7.00pm

The meeting closed at 9.15pm

Signed: Date:
 Chairman of Meeting