

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

Minutes of an online meeting of Ovingham Joint Burial Committee
Held on 7th October 2020 at 7pm

Councillors present: Mrs A Francis (Wylam PC) Chair, Mr I Campbell (Ovingham PC), Mrs S Glover (Horsley PC) and Mr. P. Pescod (Ovington PC)

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

1. Quorum
One representative of each of the members Councils was in attendance therefore the meeting was quorate.

2. Apologies for Absence
Mrs D Jordon (Ovingham PC) and Mr M Senior (Horsley PC)

3. Declarations of Interest in Items on the Agenda
None declared.

4. Minutes
Resolved that the Minutes of the meeting held on 19th May be agreed as a true record of proceedings and signed by the Chair.

5. Notes of the inquorate meeting held on 21st July 2020
Resolved that the notes of this meeting be received.

6. Covid-19 Implications for Burial Management
The Clerk reported that current Government guidance in relation to funerals stated that the maximum number of people who could attend should not exceed 30 and that all social distancing guidelines should be followed. She had however seen that Northumberland County Council (NCC) were recommending only a maximum of 10 mourners at the graveside for burials and asked members to consider whether they wished to follow the NCC guidance.

Following discussion it was:

Resolved that the Cemetery and all burials within it should continue to be arranged in accordance with Government guidance current at the time.

7. Current Grounds Maintenance Issues
In commenting upon the very good overall appearance of the cemetery Members noted that the contractor was continuing in his efforts to remove the stump of the fallen tree. Graves were also being infilled as required.

Consent had not yet been obtained for the work required to the large lime tree on the drive but it was hoped that this work would be carried out in the near future.

Resolved that the report be noted.

Signed: Date:
Chairman of Meeting

8. Stability Testing
The Clerk outlined the report she had prepared which gave details of the results of the stability testing carried out by NCC in August 2020. Of the 978 memorials tested 87 had failed. 1 urgent repair had already been completed. If the remaining 86, 4 were in the 'red' category (with a further 2 since the testing was completed) with the remainder in the amber category. The inspector had identified 16 memorials that required work to be carried out by a memorial mason. The remainder could be 'made safe' by him if the Committee so wished. This would ensure that the Committee fulfilled its duty of care in terms of health and safety of the burial ground.

The approximate costs of this make safe work were set out in the report. Cost estimates for the memorial mason work would need to be obtained and this should be on the basis of only essential work being carried out. Costs were likely to be significant so burial fees were an important source of income to help fund ongoing costs.

The report also set out a methodology for undertaking the repair work based on carrying out work to the 'red' memorials first then those is the newest parts of the cemetery and those in Zone 1 of the six sections i.e. those closest to the access road/paths.

Work would be needed to match the stability testing report information to existing burial records. This may then make it possible to identify grave owners so that they could be contacted with regard to permanent repairs. It was however acknowledged that for the vast majority of cases this would not be possible as some investigation already carried out had shown most of the related interments to have been over 30 years ago.

Once the make safe work was completed the memorials would then be tested on an annual basis by NCC with the Committee being advised of any work being required.

With regard to the overall testing programme members were asked to consider whether they wished this to be every 5 years or 4 years. A four year programme would allow for some slippage meaning that the testing could still be carried out within the recommended maximum of 5 years.

Following further discussion of the testing results, particularly the ongoing financial implications it was:

- Resolved** that
- i. The report be received.
 - ii. NCC be commissioned to carry out the temporary make safe work as identified in the report findings, as soon as possible.
 - iii. Work be carried out to identify the 'owners' of the 6 memorials in the 'red' category and a report be prepared as a matter of urgency on proposed action, costs etc.
 - iv. Attempts be made to contact grave owners going back 30 years with a 3 month time limit being imposed on necessary permanent repairs being carried out. Once this time period has elapsed a further report be brought back to the committee identifying the number of memorials involved, category of repair required and approximate cost implications.
 - v. The required programme of work be ordered to take account of risk so that the newer sections of the cemetery i.e. 3 & 6, with more visitors, are tackled first followed by 2 & 5 then 1 & 4 and that within the sections work is ordered from Zone 1 to Zone 3.

Signed: Date:
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- vi. NCC be advised that the overall testing programme should be carried out on a 4 yearly basis.
- vii. Further consideration of the ongoing budget implications of the repair work and ongoing testing be deferred to a future meeting once the financial implications of the current works are better understood.

9. Burial Administration Update

Resolved that the Clerk's report on burial administration matters be received.

10. Finance

Resolved that:

- a) The receipts detailed in appendix C be noted and the payments be approved.
- b) The bank reconciliation to 30th September 2020 be received
- c) The financial accounts to 30th September 2020 be approved
- d) The quote provided by Wylam Painting and Decorating, for the Cemetery Gates, be approved.
- e) The quotes for signage be noted and further work be carried out to clarify the exact requirements and associated costs with an alternative quote being obtained for installation.

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 (sensitive information).

11. Rent Update

The Clerk provided an update on the current position with regard to the payment of rent by the tenant of Cemetery Lodge and the South Chapel.

Resolved that the report be received and the Clerk to monitor and follow up where necessary.

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

Cemetery Rules – Decoration of Grave Plots

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

Tuesday 1st December 2020 at 7.00pm.

The meeting closed at 8.40pm

Signed: Date:
Chairman of Meeting