

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

Minutes of an online meeting of Ovingham Joint Burial Committee
Held on 19th May 2020 at 7pm

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

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

1. Appointment of Chair

Resolved that in accordance with Government Regulations relating to Coronavirus A Francis will continue as Chair until the next annual meeting of the Committee.

2. Appointment of Vice Chair

Resolved that in accordance with Government Regulations relating to Coronavirus M Senior will continue as Vice Chair until the next annual meeting of the Committee.

3. Quorum

Unfortunately, no representatives of Ovingham Parish Council were able to be involved in the online meeting. However, as three of the four constituent Councils were represented the meeting could still go ahead and decisions made. The minutes would be sent to the Ovingham representatives and they would then have 7 days in which to veto any proposed actions. This would need to be in writing and would need to be appended to the minutes of the meeting. If there was disagreement on an issue the decision would need to be deferred to a quorate meeting.

4. Apologies for Absence

Mr I Campbell and Mrs D Jordon (Ovingham PC), Mr J Joures (Wylam, PC and Mrs L Marshall (Ovington PC))

5. Declarations of Interest in Items on the Agenda

None declared.

6. Minutes

Resolved that the meeting the Minutes held on 18th February 2020 be agreed as a true record of proceedings and signed by the Chair.

7. Insurance Renewal

The Clerk reported that following the receipt of the renewal documentation she had provided further details regarding the Chapels and Lodge to the insurer. She asked whether members were minded to seek a current valuation for the properties. She also advised that she would be making arrangement to have a fire risk assessment of the Lodge carried out.

Resolved that:

- i. The quote received in the sum of £1173.65 be approved
- ii. Arrangements be made for a fire risk assessment to be carried out on the Lodge
- iii. A current market valuation of the properties in the Cemetery was not required.

Signed: Date:
Chairman of Meeting

8. Current Grounds Maintenance Issues

The new contractor began work on 1st April and since then no issues of concern had been reported.

It had been noted that a resident had installed a gate in their fence alongside the cemetery. This situation would be monitored to determine the purpose of the gate.

Some metal items had been removed from older graves along with a piece of metal fencing. This was perhaps down to metal thieves and again the situation would be monitored.

A grave plot had been covered with large white pebbles which looked rather untidy and which contravened the cemetery rules. The Clerk pointed out that there had been a recent interment at this exiting plot and she would therefore write to the deed holder with a copy of the rules highlighting those relating to the decoration of grave spaces.

Resolved that the report be received and the Clerk should write to the deed holders of plot discussed regarding the cemetery rules.

9. Stability Testing

The Clerk reported that the current 'lockdown' had delayed the start of the programme but that she had recently been contacted by the NCC Officer and arrangements were now being made for signage to be installed. This would notify users of the cemetery that a stability testing programme was about to begin and provide contact details in the event of queries and concerns.

The electronic information gathered as a result of the testing programme would be used to enhance a database of burial records that the Clerk had started to develop.

Resolved that the report be received.

10. Burial Administration Update

The Clerk provided a detailed update on the work that had been carried out since she took over the responsibilities of the Cemetery Superintendent in February. She stated that she had not been able to complete all of the required hours since then and outlined the reasons for this. These would however be worked in the coming weeks. She did not anticipate any additional hours being required beyond this and the regular 1.5 hours per week for OJBC duties/burial admin would resume.

Resolved that the report be received

11. Dogs in the Cemetery

Complaints continued to be received on this issue so the NCC Animal Welfare Team had been consulted. Unfortunately, at the current time they were not able to carry out patrols but would do so when normal service resumed. They were to provide adhesive warning signs and had suggested a formal permanent sign at a suitable point in the Cemetery. NCC would provide suggested wording for this.

Resolved the report be received and arrangements be made to install appropriate signage.

12. Finance

The Clerk reported that a significant amount of work had taken place, supported by Accountants involved in the delivery of Wylam Parish Council's financial system, to show the 'split' in the OJBC finances between the four constituent Councils. This was now a requirement of the AGAR process and if not complied with could result in costly audit queries. The cost of the additional work provided by Rialtas Business Systems (RBS) was £100 + VAT and the Clerk asked members to agree that this be split in the same proportion as the Maintenance Grant i.e. Wylam 49%, Ovingham 28%, Ovington 13% and Horsley 10%

Resolved that:

- a) The receipts detailed in appendix A be noted and the payments be approved.
- b) The bank reconciliation to 31st March 2020 be received
- c) The financial accounts for the year ended 31st March 2020 be approved
- d) The format for future financial reporting be approved.
- e) The arrangements for the completion of the AGAR 19-20 be noted and figures be provided to each of the other 3 constituent Parish Councils for inclusion in their end of year reports.
- f) The four constituent Councils should contribute to the RBS invoice on the basis outlined above.

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).

13. Lodge Rent Update

The Clerk provided an update on the current position with regard to the payment of rent by the tenant of Cemetery Lodge, particularly in the light of the Covid-19 lockdown.

Resolved that the report be received and the situation be closely monitored.

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

D Jordon had submitted a written request, in advance of the meeting, that the next meeting should take place at the Cemetery and should include a visual inspection to assess items for future work to improve the overall appearance e.g. refurbishment of the seat, repointing of the Chapels, a new noticeboard etc. This would enable an ongoing programme of work to be developed with associated budgetary provision.

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

Tuesday 21st July 2020 at 7.00pm at Ovingham Cemetery

The meeting closed at 7.45pm

Signed: Date:
Chairman of Meeting