

**PONTELAND TOWN COUNCIL
CEMETERY COMMITTEE
25 NOVEMBER 2022**

Present – Councillors C Caisley, C Greenwell, A Hall and A Varley.

1. Appointment of Chair for 2022-23

RESOLVED – Councillor C Greenwell be appointed Chair of the Committee for 2022-23.

2. Appointment of Vice Chair for 2022-23

RESOLVED – Councillor A Varley be appointed Vice Chair of the Committee for 2022-23.

3. Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was received from Councillor L Darwin.

4. Minutes of last meeting held on 26 March 2019

A copy of the minutes had been circulated.

There was a brief discussion on the Minutes however most issues were covered in the update report which had been circulated to the Committee.

RESOLVED – The minutes be approved.

5. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

6. Update on Cemetery issues

The Clerk had circulated an update report covering various issues for discussion with the Committee.

(a) Budget and income

It was reported that the cemetery reserve was currently £35,788.17. Current annual running costs were £12,248.

(b) Cemetery fees

The fees had not been revised since 2019. The Committee were minded to increase the fees in 2023-24. The Clerk was asked to look at other comparable Councils and submit a report including suggested new fees to a future meeting.

(iii) Hedge cutting

The Clerk reported that she had been advised the hedges would be cut in week commencing 31 October. An order had been placed for cutting with a flail at the beginning of September.

(iv) Parking

The Clerk reported that parking continued to be a problem at the Cemetery. Various complaints were received but it was unclear what else the Town Council could do to alleviate this issue. Additional signage had been erected and the Town Council contractors regularly asked people to move their vehicles as well as putting notices on cars parked there. Councillor Caisley mentioned she had visited the cemetery the previous day and had asked someone to move their vehicle

Parking was a problem due to the proximity to the airport and the Town Council received regular reports of vehicles parked in and around Ponteland.

The situation was noted but Members agreed that there did not appear to be any further action that could be taken.

(v) Additional burial and cremated remains space

The Clerk had written to the Cemetery Committee on 2 August asking for their views on installing some new burial plots in the far end of the woodland burial site. The cemetery was nearly at capacity for burial plots and if this work did not proceed it would limit the range of availability to clients.

The Clerk had been advised by NCC that there was nothing to stop this work being done. Once the plinths were installed, NCC would advise on the appropriate location to plant hedging to screen off the new area from the woodland site.

The Clerk suggested asking NCC to manage the pre-booking of plots in this location. If they went from right to left then this would reduce the problem for operatives digging graves to access the area with their machinery which was a regular complaint made by those carrying out the task. The Clerk did not know if this was possible however the Committee agreed to ask NCC if they could do this.

The Council's contractors would be installing a new row for cremated remains during the winter months.

Councillor Varley mentioned the land at the cemetery that was retained for the installation of a new by-pass. This would have been ideal for new cemetery plots. The Clerk felt that there would need to be some discussion/agreement with NCC if PTC were to use this land.

Councillor Caisley suggested making contact again with the adjacent landowner to see if he would be willing to sell some land to the Town Council. Discussions had

taken place in 2017 but the landowner had decided he didn't want to sell as he had other plans for the land.

The Clerk was asked to get an idea of costs from local land agents and report back about re-opening discussions with the adjacent landowner.

(vi) Seats and trees

The majority if not all of the allocated sites for seats and trees had been filled. At least two seats had been identified for replacement. Due to the age of the seats, it could be difficult to locate the donors.

It was suggested that if the owners could not be located or if they did not wish to renew the seat then the Town Council should replace them, and they could be made available as memorial seats.

The Chair suggested renewing the seats and if the donors could not be found putting the old plaques on the back of the new seats. If they came forward they could be moved to the front.

It was felt that the woodland area would benefit from a couple of seats being installed.

The Clerk was planning to visit the cemetery to find out if there were any other locations for memorial trees. All sites for trees were included on a map that was inherited from NCC and were now full. The Council received regular requests for memorial trees but donors always want to site them near where their relatives were buried which was not possible.

(vi) Shelter

It was the Council's intention to carry out some work to the shelter in the Cemetery. This was referred to in the minutes from March 2019 as well as work to the tarmac footpaths in the main part of the cemetery. The footpaths work had been carried out in 2019.

The fascia boards and gutters on the shelter were in need of replacement and it was agreed that the Clerk should obtain quotes to replace them with UPVC boards. It was proving difficult to obtain quotes at the moment, but efforts would be made to find suppliers who would provide prices for the work.

It was noted that there were watering cans in the shelter and the notice was missing from the compound door saying that watering cans were available inside the compound area. This would be replaced. The watering cans were usually kept inside but visitors to the cemetery usually left them in the shelter.

The Chair suggested painting the floor of the shelter with garage floor paint. There were concerns this would wear off and require regular replacement. Members

agreed that a site visit should be held to the cemetery and this suggestion could be discussed then.

The Chair asked if a copy of the regulations could be included in the shelter including the current fees.

There were concerns that the fees would be regularly changed so members were unsure that this should be agreed.

(vii) Other issues raised at the meeting

Councillors Greenwell and Caisley had both made separate visits to the cemetery before the meeting. Councillor Greenwell mentioned the memorial wall which only had 7 plaques on it and did not look good. She felt that it was difficult to work out what it was there for.

The Clerk reported that when decisions were made regarding the landscaping of the cemetery it was the intention to have a stone memorial wall installed however, it was felt to be too expensive when prices were received.

It was suggested that prices should be obtained for stone cladding the wall and installing coping stones on the top of it to make it look more attractive.

It was also felt that the woodland area would benefit from more trees and/or shrubs. Sites for trees and seats would be discussed when a site visit was held.

Councillor Caisley mentioned she had attended two funerals recently at the Belsay woodland burial site which she felt was very attractive. She asked if the Town Council could promote their woodland burial area. It was felt that it needed some improvement before that could happen, but publicity could be produced once some improvements were carried out.

It was agreed that the Chair and the Clerk would visit the Belsay site prior to the site visit.

Councillor Hall also asked if he could visit the Prestwick site with the Clerk in the near future. This would be arranged.

Councillor Caisley also mentioned that the installation of toilets had been previously discussed. She referred to the eco-toilet that had been installed at the Holy Saviour church at Milbourne which worked well. Members thought that this would encourage more parking at the site.

Members asked if the leaflet that had been produced some time ago could be updated.

RESOLVED –

- (i) The Clerk carry out some comparison work in relation to fees charged by other similar parish and town councils and report back on suggested fees for 2023-24.

- (ii) The Clerk be requested to obtain prices from local land agents for reopening discussions with the adjacent landowner re the possible purchase of some of his land adjacent to the cemetery.
- (iii) The Clerk be asked to arrange a site visit to the cemetery to discuss various issues including possible sites for seats and trees/shrubs at the woodland area.
- (iv) It was agreed to replace the memorial seats at the cemetery which were in a poor state of repair. Attempts would be made to contact the donors and if unsuccessful, the existing plaques would be placed on the back of the seats.
- (v) The Clerk be asked to obtain prices for covering the memorial wall with stone cladding with coping on the top.
- (vi) The Clerk be asked to obtain quotes for replacement of the fascias and gutters on the shelter. The Committee would make a decision regarding painting the shelter floor at the site visit.
- (vii) The Clerk arrange to place a copy of the cemetery regulations inside of the shelter.
- (viii) The Chair and the Clerk arrange to visit the Belsay woodland burial site and report back with any ideas for improvements that could be made the Prestwick area.
- (ix) The Clerk be asked to update the cemetery leaflet. This would be done once improvements had been made to the cemetery.

7. Correspondence

No correspondence had been received.

8. Any other business

The Clerk advised members that she had been asked by NCC to discuss a memorial headstone request with the Committee. The request met the regulations in terms of size etc, but it involved a large amount of wording on the reverse of the memorial. The Committee were shown the wording and whilst they felt it was unusual there were no reasons to reject the request.

RESOLVED – The Clerk be requested to advise NCC that they had no comments relating to the memorial application.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING.

To be arranged.