

Prudhoe Town Council: Cemetery & Memorial Sub-Committee

December 2016 Combined Meeting — **Agenda Item 10**

Report of Meeting

Meeting held at the Spetchells Centre, on Thursday 1 December 2016 at 10.00am

Present: Cllr A Gill (Chair), Cllr Mrs E Burt, Cllr A Piper, Cllr Mrs J McGee; R Whinney (Clerk)

1. Apologies for absence—Cllr Mrs J McGee.

2. Reports from previous meetings

- The fees / charges document had been uploaded to the Council's website, and this information was in the process of being sent to the funeral directors in the area
- The new regulations and the notice regarding the removal of existing kerbstones, ornaments, plantings etc, had been uploaded to the Council's website, and this information was in the process of being sent to the funeral directors in the area
- Notices regarding both of the above should be posted in the Cemeteries to alert visitors to the changes
- The hedging at the junction of Highfield Lane and Beaumont Way was being maintained this week
- The Clerk advised that, in relation to an enquiry by a resident, NCC had stated they 'mounded' earth on top of new burials and left it there for 12 months to allow for settling, before levelling and seeding. This information was received, and it was agreed to check with NCC as to the amount of soil that was mounded in such cases.

3. Cemetery Contractor

- Cllr Gill reported that NCC were using a hedging 'flail' in the New Cemetery, and he mentioned the need for work to the hedge boundary below the former chapel in the Old Cemetery
- The Clerk stated that a response had yet to be received regarding the damp issue in the former chapel. He also stated that the damp problem could be connected to the state of the flashing at the join of the porch roof with the west wall of the building
- Noting that there had been issues with the opening and closing of the cemeteries in recent weeks, and with NCC cover during staff absence, these were discussed
- Cllr Gill stated that, in relation to the issue of headstones being covered with grass arisings resulting from strimming, strimmers with a larger 'guard' were available: these would reduce the spraying-around of strimmings. He suggested that there a reluctance to use such a guard because this reduced the length of cutting cord that could be used, and therefore the area that could be cut at any one time
- A discussion took place regarding the quality of the work being done by the contractor, in relation to the hours worked at the cemeteries by the contractor's staff, and the money being paid for the services required under the contract. The question was asked whether the council was getting what it was paying for, and it was also suggested that NCC were struggling with poor quality equipment as well as having manpower issues. The Clerk noted the following (1) the contract was for the provision of services, not directly for the provision of staff (2) that the Council could consider splitting the contract up (so that, for instance, grass cutting was done by a separate contractor) (3) the Council needed to be aware that in the event of major changes in the service contract for the cemeteries, which had an impact on the contractor, the Council must have regard to TUPE law affecting the retention / transfer of staff. Councillors agreed that they would prefer there to be a single contract for the cemeteries, and said that their principal concern was that staff were present on site. Cllr Mrs Burt stated that she was not aware of current 'major cuts' in Neighbourhood Services provision, but said that she would check.

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It was agreed to seek a meeting with NCC Neighbourhood Services (Stephen Wardle and David Robson) with regard to the fulfilment of the cemetery contract. The Clerk stated that he would supply the existing contract to the members of the group.

4. **Work record sheets**— these were received.

5. **Proposed Works**

- *Fencing* at the north-east boundary of the New Cemetery: quotes had been sought and it was hoped to have obtained these in time for them to be considered at the Council's December meeting
- Works to the *roadways* in the New Cemetery: the requests for expressions of interest in this work would be issued by the end of the week. The Clerk explained that the approach being followed was to ascertain from contractors what options they would suggest, given their assessment of the current condition of the roadways. This approach was approved.

6. **Cemetery Budget 2017-18**—Cllr Gill suggested that the cost of the fencing was thought likely to amount to around £3,000, leaving around £19,000 in this year's budget, while the roadways works could cost in the region of £20-£30,000. The Clerk noted that the costs of the work to the roadways was an unknown at this point, and would depend on contractors' assessment of the work required.

It was AGREED that the figure requested in the budget for capital investment in the Cemeteries for 2017-18 be set at £10,000.

Proposed: Cllr A Gill Seconded: Cllr Mrs E Burt

7. **Date of next meeting** — Thursday 5 January 2017, starting at 10.00am.

RW 9/12/2016