

CEMETERY AND WAR MEMORIAL SUB-COMMITTEE MEETING
Thursday 3rd May 2018

PRESENT

Cllr Andy Gill (Chair), Cllr Jennifer McGee, Cllr Duncan Couchman, Sarah Eden

Apologies received from Cllr Angie Scott

1. Report of the meeting held on 6th March 2018

It was noted that the report was received by the Planning, Contract and Works Committee on 6th March 2018. **It was AGREED** to receive the report as a true record.

2. Urgent Item

The Town Council received a complaint from [REDACTED] regarding the state of her husband's grave when she visited the cemetery on 28th April. [REDACTED] found grass-arising all over the headstone of her husband's and her brother's headstone and the fresh floral tributes which were dead as a result.

[REDACTED] described extreme distress and advised that she had purchased a hand cutter so she and her son could tend the graves themselves as they were not happy with the maintenance carried out by the council, something they have complained about previously.

The Administrator advised that although grass arising could not be collected, the policy was to cut two rows and then blow the arising away from the headstones. [REDACTED] advised that her son had visited the following day to clear the headstones and had witnessed another woman who was extremely upset at the state of her grave (no other complaints have been received). [REDACTED] was also concerned about the cutting procedure in the old cemetery as her parents graves were strimmed around but the main expanse of grass was uncut. The administrator explained that this may have been work in progress but appreciated that it was not satisfactory that it be left like that for the weekend when most people visit.

The Administrator visited the cemetery following the complaint and there was no issue, however it was a very windy weekend and any arising would have been blown away. It was obvious that a great deal of time had been spent on the grave in question, they had been cleaned and the grass cut by the family.

A report was made to Northumberland County Council who confirmed that the proper procedure of cutting two rows and then blowing was carried out. With regards the old cemetery, the strimming was carried out in preparation for the ride-on mower that was being brought in on the Monday, after the weekend.

It was AGREED to respond to [REDACTED] with an apology for the distress caused and to ask that in the unlikely event of this happening again she could take pictures.

3. Matters Arising

Cemetery Memorial Seats No work has been carried out on these as yet. The Administrator advised that the seats tender would be on the June Planning, Contract and Works Meeting so the window of opportunity to include them would soon pass. NCC promised that they would be done before the end of the summer; the work is now urgent.

Scattering of Ashes Notice The Administrator advised that a poster warning against the unlawful scattering of ashes was still outstanding.

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Use of Cemetery Chapel The Administrator advised that presently she did not have the time available to visit the cemetery to sort through files, this was not being prioritised.

Promoting the availability of the Cemetery Books The Administrator advised that this has been carried out and there was a Cemeteries Day being held in the library in 15th May that would also promote their existence. Cllr Angie Scott was periodically sharing on social media.

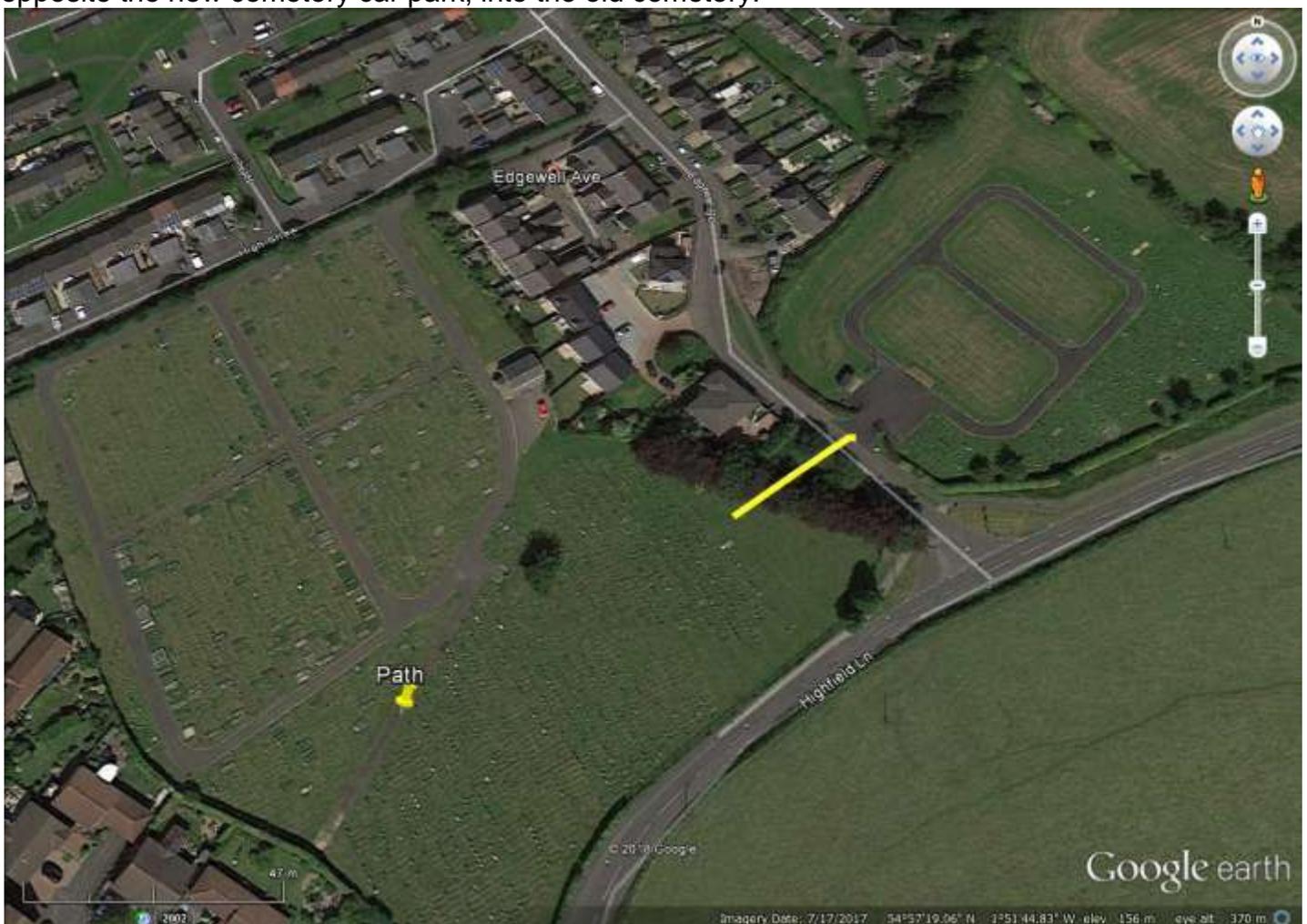
Memorial Work Post-Install Checks There has been no feedback of any issues in relation to memorial work, but neither have any forms been received since. **It was AGREED** to request that post-install forms are sent to the office immediately following installation.

4. Unauthorised items on graves

Follow up checks on unauthorised items on graves has now been carried out by Cllr Andy Gill and Cllr Angie Scott and an updated list given to the office. Cllr Gill advised that some additional items had been removed but there were some new items also.

5. New Entrance into Old Cemetery

Indicative costs from Northumberland County Council were presented for a new pathway from opposite the new cemetery car park, into the old cemetery.



The Administrator advised that the council would need to agree to seek tenders for this work and that in the meantime it would be a good idea to complete a pre-planning enquiry in case any permission is needed. The Administrator recommended a thorough check of the tender specification prior to it going out to mitigate against the problems experienced with the new roadway

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in the new cemetery. **It was AGREED** that the proposal to seek tenders for a new path as indicated above should be added to the Planning, Contract and Works Committee Meeting in June and that pre-planning advice should be sought.

6. Edgewell Cemetery SLA

The meeting received the following charges from David Hunt in relation to the Service Level Agreement (SLA) for the Maintenance of Edgewell Cemeteries moving forward (2019/20). The SLA presently is charged at £32,859 but the council has been made aware over the last couple of years that NCC is not covering their costs.

2019/20 Cemetery SLA (no changes)	<u>£43,549</u>
2019/20 Cemetery SLA (with gates opening and closing removed but service levels maintained)	<u>£36,020</u>
2019/20 Cemetery SLA (with gates opening and closing removed and reduced service levels over winter)	<u>£31,924</u>
2019/20 Cemetery SLA (with gates opening and closing retained and reduced service levels over winter)	<u>£39,453</u>

It was AGREED to RECOMMEND to the Council that the locking and opening of the three cemetery gates be removed from the Cemetery SLA from 2019/20 onwards.

It was discussed that no other cemetery in Northumberland is locked, likewise public spaces like parks. It was acknowledged that this would impact on Highfield Park as presently the jobs are combined, however it was noted that Highfield Park is seldom locked as during the winter there are parked cars from school pick up and during the summer the same can be said for members of the public being in the park. Therefore, the Town Council is paying for the gates to be locked as part of the cemetery SLA but this isn't being carried out. It was discussed that the situation could be monitored over a period of time and if it was necessary to reintroduce locking the gates, another person or person(s) could be sourced.

It was AGREED to invite David Hunt to the next meeting of the Cemetery Committee (July) to clarify what *reduced service levels over winter* would look like.

The meeting ended.