

CEMETERY & ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Cemetery & Allotments Committee held at the Walter Gidney Pavilion Soham on Thursday 24 October 2019 commencing at 7pm.

Present: Cllr G Dyer (Chair), Cllrs C Warner, G Woodbridge, D Woricker and Mesdames R Aitchison & L Johnston

CA09/19 **PUBLIC COMMENT TIME**

No comments were received from members of the public to items on the agenda or under more general considerations/matters.

CA10/19 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE OF COUNCILLORS.**

No apologies were received from committee members. Cllrs Ross & Chapman were recorded as being absent.

CA11/19 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations made by members to items on the agenda.

CA12/19 **FOR INFORMATION – RECEIPT OF PREVIOUSLY APPROVED MINUTES OF LAST TWO CEMETERY & ALLOTMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD 15TH OCTOBER 2018 & 18TH FEBRUARY 2019 RESPECTIVELY TOGETHER WITH DRAFT MINUTES OF MOST CURRENT FINANCE & POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 14TH OCTOBER 2019 (3 attachments)**

NOTED- sets of minutes were received by committee members for assistance in discussions, decision and for approval purposes.

CA13/19 **MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS COMMITTEE MEETINGS OR FULL COUNCIL MINUTES –TO INCLUDE**

A) Changes to fees (and where necessary regulation) effective April 1st 2020 (currently blanket 5% pa applied)- any rent increase/changes to allotments requires a minimum years notice to be given to tenants on or before October 15th (when annual rents fall due) in the preceding year to when £ change takes effect.

NOTED Cllrs Dyer and Aitchison have undertaken CPD on burial regulation and allied matters recently noting the use of 'discretionary reductions' and mis(use) of fee doubling/multiplier charging for non-resident burial/interments requests.

NOTED full council has approved that as of 1st April 2020 there will be no right to burial/ interments for non-residents (usual exceptions not withstanding) but in implementing this measure there will be some instances where non-residents who have in the past pre-purchased their Rights and before this stipulation comes into effect who will be allowed to be buried in the cemetery).

NOTED that the level of this type of 'exception' and so the number of people who will be affected is currently not easily assessed/quantified using current record keeping methods.

NOTED the Chairman has reviewed the cemetery fees and benchmarked them to the nearby towns (Burial Authorities) of Newmarket and Ely.

APPROVED TO RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL and as suggested by the Chairman a one time step increase in fees consistent with the mean £ value charged by Ely and Newmarket Authorities and thereafter for the burial fees at Soham Town

Council to continue to be reviewed annually (draft sheet or proposed changes to be provided to full council at a subsequent meeting).

APPROVED TO RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL allotment rents to continue as current (5% annually) acknowledging that for any significant £ changes over and above current annual increases/water disbursement recharges need to be:

- i) Consistent with any % increase applied to other services provided by the town council at that time and
- ii) The required timescale/extended notice period required prior proposed implementation.

B) South chapel restoration (repairs due to subsidence) expenditure in current year + any works planned (3 year forecast)

NOTED under general considerations (see below) the unexpected expenditures incurred in current year as a result of subsidence causing necessary repairs to South Chapel.

NOTED that the full scaffolding (6 months hire included as part of installation costs May 2019) ends 18th October 2019 and to extend to end January 2020 will cost an additional £5000 (net).

NOTED delays in moving this project forward has been a combination of repairs not being expected together with those administrative requirements made by insurers, ecclesiastical (Faculty permissions) considerations and legal permissions required.

NOTED Cllr Woodbridge's comment that the matter of the poor state of the South Chapel was brought to the committee and full councils attention in 2017 when he acted as the elected Committee Chairman but decisions to act and to spend monies was not approved at those times.

NOTED that all relevant governance permissions have been sought and obtained and now membership can make final decision(s) in regards South Chapel repair expenditure accordingly:

APPROVED TO RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL expenditure of £5000 (net) to extend scaffold hire to end January 2020.

APPROVED TO RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL and consistent with recommendation made by the Finance & Policy Committee essential roof repairs up to £20 000 (Delegated to Chairman and Clerk) to be completed before end January 2020 to coincide with removal of full scaffolding.

APPROVED TO RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL and consistent with recommendations made by the Finance & Policy Committee the schedule of works provided by the Insurers for reinstatement of gable end wall including external and internal repairs together with acceptance of £ contribution (TBA) to and for decoration.

APPROVED TO RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL those additional budget and virement approvals made under point D) below.

C) Current Request RBL Soham Branch for repair and cleaning war memorial to include previous approval for addition of the inscription for 'MC' for Bravery be added to one of the war dead listed on the memorial when it is cleaned (44/18) (unexpected/unplanned expenditure proposed in current financial year)

NOTED Finance & Policy recommendations in regards to this matter (to be listed as an agenda item for full council consideration)

NOTED Cllr Woodbridge's investigations, comments and those comments received via email from the District's Conservation Officer who has serious reservations in the proposed actions and will not support the proposed cleaning of the War Memorial including the temporary wooden batons that have been applied to support the poppy installation(s).

APPROVED TO RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL not to financially support the cleaning (repair and inscription amendment -see point below) of the War Memorial.

NOTED Cllr Woodbridge is liaising with the local family in regards to clarification of the designation of 'MC' for Bravery to one of the soldiers listed on the Soham War Memorial as due to a number of enlisted men retaining the same name at the time the honour was awarded there remains some confusion to the Award (matter being referred to CWG for clarification and outcome to be reported back to the town council and in due course by Cllr Woodbridge).

APPROVED TO RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL that the matter of any further conservation/repair requests to the War Memorial be considered as part of Neighbourhood Planning and delegated community membership and/or under as part of any Legacy improvement projects under the delegation of Cllr Leonard (see minutes of Community Amenities Committee that directly followed this meeting).

- D) Strategic project proposals from membership (for next year and as 3 year forecast) to include cemetery DDA compliant public toilet provision, fencing for 52 Fordham Rd Lodge (agreed previously as part of the planned improvements, additional cemetery land provision-any other suggestions)

GENERAL POINTS OF DISCUSSION/CONSIDERATION:

NOTED Committee's current 'special works' budget (currently set at £30 000) is anticipated to be fully spent-up by those previously council-approved works in year that includes the following projects:

- i) Installation of new electric gates at entrance allowing for change of weekend working arrangements with ground staff
- ii) General entrance improvements (noticeboard, antique lighting column replacement)
- iii) Replacement of front railings

NOTED committee members considered three quotes at meeting based on a 'like for like' replacement (conservation area) of railings (current wrought iron railings are not reparable due to sputtering).

APPROVED Art Steelworks as preferred suppliers at a cost of £4800 (net) to provide and install replica railings subject to confirmation that they will be manufactured in solid steel (not tubular) be powder and black bitumen painted for durability purposes.

NOTED installation costs will be undertaken post installation of railings by appointed contractors Collaboration 23 under their current LTA.

NOTED in addition to those council approved projects a (significant) overspend (currently circa £15K rising to £35K with current approvals regarding roof repairs) due to unexpected (unplanned) expenditures associated with the South chapel gable wall subsidence and damage caused (see B) above).

UNDER THOSE CONSIDERATIONS HIGHLIGHTED ABOVE:

APPROVED to make request to Finance & Policy Committee for the special/project works budget for 2020-21 of same (£30000) but

that these monies would be provided back to the general funds used in the forward expenditure this year for the chapel repairs.

NOTED that as consequence of this action there would be no capital investment (with the exception of probably low cost/de-minimus works) available for Cemetery infrastructure or amenity provision/improvements from the precept rate demand made from residents in 2020-21 (there remains options in allocated reserves where necessary and allotment surpluses remain unaffected see approval below).

NOTED that the continuation of proposed improvements to cemetery including provision of DDA compliant toilet under previously approved planning application (to commence within three years from Q1 2018) should be a consideration made by Finance & Policy Committee in forward financial planning for the Authority but where there might be some de minimus monies in the precept allocation for 20-21 might reasonably include the removal of the Leylandii trees, installation of fencing/path at back of 52 Fordham Rd (subject to any prohibitive costs in conditions set ie archaeological survey report etc).

NOTED those current ground clearance works being undertaken at the Weatheralls allotments (As previously approved by full council) and as consequence the need to repair and where necessary provide new security fencing particularly alongside footpath/Kents Lane.

APPROVED TO RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL that the Committee Chairman obtain 3 quotes to fence along Weatheralls allotment boundary, monies to be taken from existing allotments surpluses but members acknowledged in this action there might be a need to precept for an £ amount (TBD) to cover any running costs/minor expenditures incurred in 202-21.

CA14/19

**EMERGENCY MATTER FROM LAST FULL COUNCIL MEETING
FESTIVE LIGHTS 2019 (& 3 YEAR FORECAST MEASURES)
UPDATE FORM VICE CHAIRMAN CLLR JOHNSTON (123/19,
113B).**

NOTED the Vice Chairman's update to matters related to festive street lighting provision in High St Soham for 2019 as a result of policy changes and permit requirements now imposed by Cambridgeshire County Council Highways.

NOTED verbal confirmation that Soham United Charities is willing to provide up to £3500 in match funding (cheque to be issued to supplier and not to the town council) to assist in those additional costs incurred in complying with the regulatory, health and safety requirements

APPROVED hire, install and re-rig costs by preferred supplier GalaLights to install High Street Christmas lights under a three year LTA.

APPROVED letter of thanks be issued to both SACT volunteer (who will continue to assist in light installations in the closed churchyard of St Andrews which on private lands occupied/maintained by Soham Town Council is covered by the Authority's insurances) and Soham United Charities.

CA15/19

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING (TO BE CONVENED AT REQUEST OF
CHAIRPERSON OR UNDERSTANDING ORDER DATE & TIME
TBD)**

The meeting closed at 7:50pm