



Minutes of the Meeting of the Cemetery Committee
held at the Council Meeting Room, Trane Cemetery, Tonyrefail
at 6.30pm on Tuesday, 27th June 2023

Present: Cllr Glenn Evans (Chair)
Cllr Debra James
Cllr Linda Michel
Cllr Amanda Richards

Absent: Cllr Greg Powell

Officers: Ms Jo van Tonder (Clerk & RFO)

1. Election of Chair for the year ending May 2024

Having confirmed his acceptance of the nomination, it was proposed, seconded and

Resolved: To elect Cllr Glenn Evans to the role of Chair.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Cllr Maria Balestrazzi.

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made.

4. Minutes of the previous meeting: 25th April 2023

It was proposed, seconded and

Resolved: To agree the minutes of the meeting held on 25th April 2023 as a true and accurate record.

5. Cemetery Committee Finance report

No report had been available in time for the meeting.

6. Complaints, comments and compliments

a) Complaint regarding inadequate grass cutting for Father's Day

The Clerk acknowledged not having scheduled sufficient cuts in advance of Father's Day, resulting in complaints.

It was agreed the grounds team had been under-resourced and that this had been remedied.

Members went on to discuss the public's understanding of the various functions of the two tiers of local government. It was agreed to put out an information leaflet outlining which Council is responsible for what.

b) Reports of theft from a grave and vandalism

The Clerk advised there had been a complaint of vandalism as well as a couple of reports of thefts from graves on the upper section of the Cemetery.

Members discussed and dismissed the possibility of installing CCTV cameras on the grounds that it would be a significant intrusion on bereaved visitors' privacy.

It was agreed the Clerk would monitor the situation and report back to the Committee.

c) Complaint of a continuously flooded plot

Members were advised of a plot located in N section that was permanently flooded regardless of weather conditions.

The Clerk told members that the burials team had removed the top layer of soil, backfilled with a more porous material and recovered the plot in an effort to improve the drainage in the immediate area. It was noted that the growth of grass over the plot had resulted in a slight improvement.

The Clerk suggested there may be a seam of rock or large boulder at the foot of the plot causing the groundwater to rise up at that spot.

It was noted the burials team would monitor the plot over the summer and install an underground drainage pipe to discharge on to the road if the situation does not improve.

7. Purchase of land to the North of Trane Cemetery

The Clerk reported that the Council's Chair and Vice Chair had signed the contract earlier in the month with the funds transferred over to the conveyancer. It was anticipated the exchange of contracts would take place imminently.

8. Appointment of seasonal part-time grass cutter

Members noted the recent appointment of a part-time grass cutter, employed on a fixed-term contract to October 2023.

9. Request to install a memorial bench

The Clerk advised the Committee that a request had been received for the installation of a memorial bench near the plot of the requestor's loved one.

Members noted the Council's current policy was to decline all requests for memorial benches. Historically, several benches had been permitted and remained the property of the family. Where those owners could not be located, the cost and responsibility to maintain those benches inevitably fell on the Council.

Members discussed the suggestion that a predetermined number of benches be permitted, not only in the Cemetery, but along footpaths but for a fixed term and of an agreed style and composition.

The Clerk was asked to draft a Memorial Bench Policy for consideration at the next meeting.

In addition, the Clerk to present a selection of possible benches for discussion.

It was agreed to reject the request for a memorial bench, inviting the applicant to apply once a new policy and procedure is in place.

10. Commonwealth War Graves Commission request to install signage

The Clerk advised members the Council had received correspondence from the Commonwealth War Graves Commission requesting permission to install a bilingual sign on the exterior of the Cemetery boundary. The sign would inform the public of the presence of 18 war graves situated at Trane Cemetery.

Members considered the various photographic examples and it was noted the signage would be provided, installed and paid for by the Commission.

It was agreed to accept the Commission's invitation and apply for signage for Trane Cemetery.

11. Matters pertaining to Cemetery Maintenance

a) Update on remedial works to Operations block

The Clerk advised there was no further progress to report.

b) Options for the replacement of hired heavy machinery

Members noted the digger and dumper currently in operation were hired at a cost of circa £20k per annum. The suggestion of purchasing second-hand equipment to avoid the ongoing hire costs had been raised at a previous Full Council meeting.

Members discussed this further and it was felt the Committee did not have sufficient expert knowledge of this type of equipment to inform a decision in choosing one piece of machinery over another.

The Clerk was asked to make contact with the ICCM Memorial Testing trainer who had recently delivered a session at the Cemetery, and ask for advice on the most suitable diggers and dumpers for the burials task.

c) Operational capacity of road-sweeper

Members considered the Council's road-sweeper, currently out of action.

The Clerk was asked to establish:

- the age of the machine,
- if it was repairable, and
- if it was suitable for an environment such as the Cemetery.

d) Measures to control roadside vegetation / weeds

Cllr G Evans raised concerns that the roadside weeds were making the Cemetery look untidy and members considered the options for removing or curtailing the vegetation such as weedkillers, burning and specialist hoes.

The Clerk was asked to seek advice from other Cemetery managers.

12. Matters pertaining to Memorial Managements

a) Memorial Management Policy

Members considered the draft policy.

It was proposed, seconded and

Resolved: To adopt the Memorial Management Policy as presented.

The question of excessive adornments on plots was raised. It was agreed to address this issue at a future meeting.

b) Timetable for and scope of Memorial Inspection Programme

The Clerk advised rolling out of the memorial testing schedule would begin within the next few months and would concentrate on C section.

Members discussed the process to be followed and noted the Council would need to give notice to the public of its intentions to undertake testing. It was agreed this would be publicised in the local magazine, social media, Council website and noticeboards.

It was suggested more noticeboards were needed at the Cemetery – to be discussed at a future meeting.

13. Timetable for Contemplation Spaces / Willow dome project

The Clerk advised the project would commence in the Autumn with at least one dome being the focus of a volunteer engagement session.

Members discussed the target demographic for the volunteer session and it was suggested children of Comprehensive School age could be considered. It was agreed to make contact with the Comprehensive Schools serving the District to establish interest in and feasibility of inviting 6-8 pupils to participate.

14. Options for public toilet refurbishment

The difficulty in obtaining quotations was noted.

15. Date of the next Cemetery inspection

The next Cemetery inspection will be scheduled for mid-September.

16. Date of the next Committee meeting

The next meeting of the Committee will be on 31st October 2023 at 6:30pm.

Meeting concluded at 7:35pm.