



Minutes of the Meeting of the Cemetery Committee
held at the Council Meeting Room, Trane Cemetery, Tonyrefail
at 6:30pm on Monday, 8th September 2025

Present: Cllr Ceirion Skym (Chair)
Cllr Glenn Evans
Cllr Linda Michel

Absent: Cllr Martin Barron
Cllr Amanda Richards

Officers: Ms Jo van Tonder (Clerk & RFO)

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Cllr Mary Davies.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made.

3. Minutes of the previous meeting: 24th June 2025

It was proposed, seconded and

Resolved: To agree the minutes of the meeting held on 24th June 2025 as a true and accurate record.

4. Cemetery Committee Finance report

The Clerk presented the Cemetery accounts for the five months to 31st August 2025.

5. Draft Cemetery Regulations

The Clerk presented the first draft of the revised Cemetery Regulations and invited comments and questions.

The Clerk advised that the draft text was drawn from several sources including ICCM guidance, RCTCBC's Cemetery Regulations and several Welsh and English Councils' rules and regulations. Members were advised that the burials team had already had an opportunity to input into, and review the content.

Members discussed some key sections of the text and were given explanations for various burial practices. When asked, the Clerk outlined the current practice that

pertained to memorial decorations and the circumstances under which grounds staff would move or remove non-permissible items. It was noted that staff used compassionate discretion when it came to the graves of children or the newly interred.

Members were directed to *Section 5: Exclusive Rights of Burial* of the draft text and were advised that these clauses reflected a change in legislation and were of significant future importance.

Members agreed to review the draft document, in particular, section 5 and provide comment by no later than 30th September 2025.

6. Matters pertaining to Cemetery Maintenance

a) Installation of replacement water taps

Members were advised that one of the outside taps, located at the lower ladies' toilet, had been replaced with a lever-operated fixture as a trial. All remaining outside taps across the cemetery were due to be replaced with similar levers in the coming weeks.

b) Improvements to toilet facilities

The Clerk reported that, following concerns raised by the committee regarding the overall condition of the lower cemetery public toilets, all paper towel dispensers, soap dispensers and waste bins had been replaced, and were being replenished regularly.

c) Replacement flag pole

Members noted the quotation for a like-for-like replacement flag pole.

It was proposed, seconded and

Resolved: To purchase a 6m heavy duty, hinged flag pole from Harrison Flagpoles at a cost of £459.95 + VAT.

Members discussed holding a competition for local schools to design a flag, and depicting the Council logo.

d) Maintenance of SSSI land

Members noted that NRW contractors carried out extensive clearance works at the start of the year and returned to the site more recently to remove the remaining large trees.

The grounds staff had been removing bracken and Himalayan Balsam over the course of the Summer and would continue maintaining the site, aided by an NRW-designed maintenance plan.

7. Burial Activities

a) Quotation for Soil Box

Members were advised that, in certain sections of the cemetery, there were available grave plots that presented challenges for access with mechanical equipment. The

layout of traditional plots with kerb sets and substantial memorials made it difficult to position a digger or dumper immediately adjacent to a grave in the middle of a row, creating practical difficulties in handling and storing spoil during interments.

Members discussed the procurement of a 2m x 2m double-depth soil box and agreed it would offer operational benefit, especially in the lower section of the cemetery.

It was proposed, seconded and

Resolved: To purchase a standard soil containment box lined with heavy duty polypropylene at a cost of £1,750 + VAT from Teleshore.

b) Quotation for hydraulic breaker

The Clerk advised members that, at present, burials staff were making use of a hand-held mechanical breaker when encountering hard ground or quarry rock during grave digging. It was noted, under Hand-Arm Vibration Syndrome regulations, their usage of this equipment was restricted to eleven minutes per day per person.

Members discussed the proposal to purchase a hydraulic breaker attachment for use with the 360° digger. The benefits of an outright purchase against weekly hire were considered and it was agreed the purchase price being the equivalent of 24 months' hire represented better value for money.

Members noted the justification for sourcing a single quotation from the supplier from whom the Council already hires the 360° digger and dumper, and were advised that Prichards had undertaken to carry out annual maintenance on the breaker while maintaining the other two pieces of hired heavy equipment.

It was proposed, seconded and

Resolved: To purchase a hydraulic breaker attachment at a cost of £3,600 + VAT from Prichards.

c) Exploration of possible expansion of Section C

The Clerk reported the burials team were in the process of identifying new rows of potential full burial plots in Section C.

A test dig would be carried out to determine the potential depth as well as establish any logistical issues the area may present.

8. Cemetery Expansion

a) Update on Biodiversity Mitigation and Enhancement Scheme

The Clerk advised that, following the joint meeting on site with RCTCBC's planning, ecology and biodiversity officers, Acer ecologists were finalising the draft Scheme.

Once this has been completed, it would be circulated for review before final submission to the Planning Authority in order to discharge condition 3 of planning application 21/1056/10.

b) Update on demarcation of the site

Members were advised that the grounds team had marked out and measured the perimeter of the biodiversity zone on the ground with the marking out of the eastern extent of the 30m watercourse exclusion zone soon to follow.

Members discussed the access to the extension and were reassured to note that there was approximately 9m between the edge of the biodiversity zone and the back end of N-section that would allow sufficient clearance.

c) Site clearance programme

The Clerk referred to previous suggestions that the site be cleared of vegetation sooner rather than later.

She went on to outline concerns she and the grounds team had regarding the poor drainage on the top section of the cemetery that would be adversely affected by the removal of the predominantly willow from the extension land, especially over winter. In addition, planning consent required the fulfilment of condition 3 (Biodiversity Mitigation and Enhancement Scheme) before any works could commence on the site.

Following discussion, it was agreed to delay clearing the site until March 2026.

9. Public Toilet refurbishment

a) Results of online survey

The Clerk reported the results of the Facebook poll that had recently run. 21% of respondents said they visited the existing toilet facilities at least monthly. 38% of respondents would use the facilities more if there was improved accessibility and 22% would use a Changing Places unit.

b) Member's proposal to defer / cancel upper cemetery toilet refurbishment

Cllr G Evans presented his proposal to defer or cancel plans to refurbish the upper cemetery toilets, citing the following reasons:

- Lower Cemetery toilets were the priority and most frequently used,
- Lower toilets would be more appealing to grant funders,
- Having both sets of toilets refurbished would cause too much disruption,
- Not convinced there was a need for toilets on the upper cemetery.

It was proposed, seconded and

Resolved: To make a recommendation to Full Council to defer the refurbishment of the Upper Cemetery toilet block.

c) Minimum specifications / non-negotiables

The Clerk offered a suggested list of essential features for inclusion in the design specification of the toilet block.

Members worked through the list with nothing further added. The suggestion of having unisex toilets was raised, discussed and broadly dismissed.

The Clerk was asked to proceed with the drawing up of the project brief.

10. Memorial Management

a) Outcome of testing – year 1, quarter 2

The Clerk reported 82 headstones were tested in Section E, with a failure rate of 32%. All failed memorials were either laid flat or staked and banded.

b) Timetable for testing – year 1, quarter 3

Members noted that the next round of inspections was scheduled for early October and would cover approximately 209 plots within Section C of the cemetery.

c) Cleaning of Commonwealth War Graves

The Clerk advised that a volunteer group had been to clean the war graves. Due to the length of time since the last cleaning, it was anticipated that it would take further visits to fully restore the stones.

11. Date of the next Cemetery inspection

The next Cemetery inspection would take place on Tuesday, 23rd September 2025 at 10:30.

12. Date of the next Committee meeting

The next meeting of the Committee: Thursday, 27th November 2025.

Meeting concluded at 7:57 pm.