

# Embleton Joint Burial Committee

## **Minutes of the meeting held in the Ladies Room at the Creighton Hall, Embleton on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> April 2016 at 6pm**

**Present:** Bryn Owen (Chair), Neville Fawcett (NV), Terry Howells (TH), Gordon Coxon (GC), John Roper (JR), Derek Gerrard (DG), Elizabeth Pearson (EP)  
**Clerk:** Geoff Newcombe

### **673. Apologies for absence**

None

### **674. Election to Offices**

Nominations and vote for Chair created by resignation of previous Chair. One proposal was received for Bryn Owen as Chair.

Proposer: Gordon Coxon

Seconder: Terry Howells

Unanimous.

The election of Bryn Owen to Chair created a vacancy for Vice-Chair.

No proposal or volunteer was received; therefore the post remains vacant.

### **675. Declarations of Interest**

None

### **676. Confirmation of the minutes of the last meetings held on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2016**

The minutes were amended by deleting "that topics requiring a decision cannot be added to the agenda following the 3 day deadline rule, especially a decision to spend money" and adding "states I have a concern about minute number 666 relating to the meeting on 6th October 2014 when the only agenda item was the Cemetery House Committee Report. The Good Councillor's Guide on page 34 clearly states: 'Topics requiring a decision cannot be added to the agenda after the 3 day deadline has passed, they must wait for another meeting'. It further states: 'It is actually unlawful to make a decision, especially a decision to spend money without sufficient (3 clear days) warning'."

Proposer: Terry Howell

Seconder: Gordon Coxon

Unanimous

### **677. Matters arising**

None

### **678. Maintenance of Cemetery**

- Tree Survey/Maintenance position – Verbal report.  
An estimate was received from tree surveyor for £740 + VAT; this was to survey and report on condition of trees only, plus they would require a CAD plan. Because of the cost implication Bryn Owen (BO) met with the farmer who owns surrounding land on which most trees located. He said that he would lop trees provided EJBC hired access equipment. BO enquired of cost for access equipment; a local plant hire firm quoted five day hire @ £260.00 + vat. Delivery

and collection @ £70.00 + vat each way. Decided it would be more appropriate to undertake work when weather improved, probably June 2016. BO stated that the farmer had located a cheaper source of access equipment hire. Members enquired if the farmer had the necessary qualifications, certification and insurance. BO confirmed he had and that the trees were mostly on his (the farmer's) land, but he would also lop the relevant trees within the cemetery boundary. It was proposed that the farmer be asked to proceed to trim the trees on the terms that EJBC would agree to pay for the access equipment up to £400 ex VAT.

Proposer: Neville Fawcett

Seconder: Terry Howells

Unanimous

- Headstone Survey Progress Update – Verbal report.  
Enquiries of NALC and Ministry of Justice guidance show that a Lay survey can be undertaken because of low risk level. Derek Gerrard reported that his initial survey had revealed that some headstones were moving; however the main problem was that the plan supplied as part of the cemetery records had no resemblance to the layout of the actual graves. Terry Howells will make enquiries of the local History Society for any layout records that they may have and the Clerk will make enquiries of the Caretaker to see if she has any accurate working plans.
- War Graves Commission – request to withdraw maintenance contribution of £40 per annum.  
The contents of the letter were noted.
- The Beautiful Burial Ground  
Bryn Owen volunteered to attend the training day and workshops on cemetery operation at Hexham on 27<sup>th</sup> April 2015 at a cost of £15 plus travelling expenses. It was proposed that Bryn's offer be accepted and the expenditure authorised.  
Proposer: John Roper  
Seconder: Elizabeth Pearson  
Unanimous.

#### **679. Long Term Business Plan for Cemetery/House**

Options Appraisal and scoping discussion.

Since this matter was last considered in 2014 the following actions have taken place:-

- An Assured Shorthold Tenancy exists between EJBC and the Tenant.
- A legal contract for grass cutting and the cemetery administration exists.
- Various repairs have been undertaken and the electrical system has been made safe.

However it is acknowledged that Cemetery House is not in a good state of repair and that is reflected in the level of rent. This is in line with Option 1 of the 09/11/2014 Options Report which was: "Interim Solution – Retain ownership and carry out only essential renovation works to Cemetery House".

This leaves the other 3 options on the table:-

- Option 2 - Retain Ownership and fully renovate Cemetery House
- Option 3 - Sell Cemetery House
- Option 4 - Maintain the Status Quo ('Do Nothing')

Councillor Comments:-

- Do we need 24Hr presence at cemetery?
- Why do we need Cemetery House?
- Sell to farmer?
- Caretaker not interested in buying house.
- Clerk could undertake administration function!
- Can EJBC sell with sitting tenant? Or if tenant does not wish to leave; what are tenancy rights? Clerk to take advice on tenancy rights.
- Tenants like where they live and lifestyle!
- Leave house as is and follow interim option of maintaining house; but if tenants move on then consider selling house.
- Farmer unlikely to sell land to EJBC to provide car park area for house.
- If tenants happy at present rent level until they leave could then renovate or sell!
- Difficult to sell house if there is no access to sewage system or parking area.
- A buyer would strip out the interior and re-furbish.

It was proposed that the status quo be maintained (Option1 - Retain Ownership and carry out only essential renovation works to Cemetery House) for the present then if the tenant leaves re-evaluate the sell or renovate options; and to keep the rent at current level.

Proposer: Gordon Coxon

Secunder: Elizabeth Pearson

Unanimous

It was pointed out that the 2014 survey had mentioned structural instability to the front gable wall. John Roper will inspect the wall to determine if it should be subject to a structural survey.

John Roper requested that the Caretaker be asked to prepare a written procedure for dealing with arrangements for funerals when she is on holiday. He also asked that the clerk check that the smoke/CO alarms had been installed and to check the Caretakers liability insurance.

**680. Chair & Vice Chair & Clerk Job Descriptions and Contract**

- Agree and confirm Draft documents

The Chair and Vice-Chair job descriptions were discussed and it was questioned as to their necessity. It was stated that the NALC Secretary recommended them for clarity and that similar JD's had been adopted by Craster PC.

The Clerks JD and Contract were generally felt to be satisfactory subject to clarification with the RFO on necessity of pension requirement, that payment should be after each EJBC meeting and document references coordinated. Hours of work to be ≤5Hrs/week averaged over 1yr.

- Review of Clerk's salary

Salary (£9.90/Hr) as indicated in draft contract is currently still the correct scale. Proposed that Chair & Vice-Chair & Clerk Job Descriptions and Contract be accepted as amended.

Proposer: Neville Fawcett

Seconder: Gordon Coxon

Vote: For-4; Against-3

Carried.

**681. Financial.**

Bank Balance £8927.40 @ 29/03/2016

Received since 01/02/2016

- Caretaker Rent x 1 (March) - £225.00
- Commonwealth War Graves - £40.00
- Interment-Plot 1103b (Burial Rights £600, Sale of Plot £200) - £800.00
- Interment-Plot 1058b (Burial Rights £600) - £600.00

Spent since 01/02/2016

- Clerk (pay & expenses) - £383.30
- HMRC (PAYE) - £84.20
- Caretaker grave digging (£100.00) and administration fees (£80.00) - £180.00
- Caretaker Contract Payment x 1 - (March) - £345.00
- Creighton Hall - £42.50
- Radiator Replacement - £182.40

Cheques Required

- Caretaker additional services (Plot 1103b-Grave dig @ £100 & Interment administration @ £80) & (Plot 1058b - Interment administration @ £80) - £80.00; Cemetery House Smoke & CO alarms - £43.98 - £303.98
- Clerk (pay £232.41 & expenses £16.28) - £248.69
- HMRC (PAYE) - £58.20
- Creighton Hall - £12.50
- NCC Duty of Care - £12.00
- Caring for God's Acre Training 1 x £15 - £15.00

## **Notes**

- Nil demand for 2016/17 for Non-domestic rates
- NWL Water rates demand for 2016/17 is £137.35; a £2.20 increase on 2015/16
- BT - Still awaiting final account for termination of business line
- BDO – Offer to undertake (Limited Assurance Review) audit check at £100 cost

Provisional end of year financial statement – TBC with RFO  
End of year balance £8,927.40; £326.94 less than end of 2014/15

### **682. Items for Next Agenda**

Cemetery Maintenance

- House/Insurance
- Trees
- Headstone Survey

### **683. Date and Time of Next Meeting**

Monday 4<sup>th</sup> July 2016 @ 6pm