

Embleton Joint Burial Committee

Minutes

of the Meeting held in the Ladies Room at the Creighton Hall, Embleton on
Monday 10th October 2016 at 6pm

Present: Bryn Owen; Chair (BO), Neville Fawcett; Vice Chair (NF), Terry Howells (TH), Gordon Coxon (GC), Bob Foster-Smith (BFS), Derek Gerrard (DG), Elizabeth Pearson (EP)

Clerk: Geoff Newcombe

696. Apologies for absence

None received

697. Declarations of Interest

None declared

698. Confirmation of the minutes of the last meetings held on 4th July 2016

The minutes were agreed and signed off as a true record.

Proposer: Terry Howell

Seconder: Derek Gerrard

Unanimous

699. Matters arising

Since 01/04/2015 it has been mandatory for Parish Councils to follow the Government Transparency Code which requires the minutes of Parish Council and Council Committee/Sub-Committee meetings are published on line. Draft minutes should be published within one month of the meeting.

At present the EJBC meeting minutes are not on the Embleton Parish Website. If the EJBC would like them on the Embleton site it is not a problem we can upload them OR we could wait until EPC have a new stand-alone website sponsored by NALC and add them on then. Obviously the EJBC finances are incorporated on the BDO return and are published on the EPC site.

Craster PC has requested that a URL/Hyperlink be provided to the constituent PC's to enable their website viewers to be directed to the EJBC minutes and financial statements on the Embleton PC website and save duplication of file uploads.

It was proposed that a hyperlink reference be provided to Craster & Newton PC's and that the EJBC minutes and draft minutes be published on the Embleton PC website forthwith.

Proposer: Terry Howell

Seconder: Gordon Coxon

Unanimous

Cemetery House structural survey; still to be undertaken by John Roper.

700. Maintenance of Cemetery

- Tree Survey/Maintenance position – Verbal report – Tree Feller (Robertson) cut down trees overhanging from adjacent property and assisted contractor from Thorneyhaugh who provided access equipment and removed overhanging branches from cemetery side trees e.g. Scots pine. Local contractor to remove waste timber.
- Tree lopping and weed killing – Verbal Report – some branches had grown over the summer and were obstructing grass cutting along south wall and funeral vehicles along roadways. Clerk asked for two quotes and received one decline and one acceptance to lop the relevant trees; weed killing on the ash scattering area was also undertaken. Monitoring and lopping will need to be done on an annual basis as will weed killing and included in the Tender.
- Trial eco-management scheme – NWT Report/BO
The members of the Embleton Joint Burial Committee (EJBC) made a site visit to the cemetery at 5pm on the 10th October last, prior to their quarterly meeting. The purpose of the site meeting was to assess the progress of the trial “meadow area” to the west end of the cemetery. A representative from the Northumberland Wildlife Trust (Steve Lowe) also attended; to give his professional assessment.
The members of the EJBC made comments on the progress of the trial and on the current state of general maintenance both at the site meeting and at the subsequent formal meeting:-
The general appearance of the cemetery was not being maintained to the level the public would expect; i.e.-

- The grass was long and did not appear to have been cut recently in accordance with the expected 30 cuts/yr;
- There were weeds on the path;
- There were grass cuttings on the path; and
- Saplings growing on the graves.

The committee received representations from relatives of people buried in the cemetery objecting to the proposed “meadow area” stating that they wanted the cemetery to be maintained with areas of neat mown grass.

The options, benefits and dis-benefits of continuing the “meadow area” trial were discussed; extra costs of managing area with grazing or scything, need to maintain neat mown access areas to graves and representations received. This was followed by a proposal to discontinue the “meadow trial” forthwith and ask the caretaker to re-include that area in the normal grass cutting regime. The members also asked the clerk to write to the caretaker expressing their concerns about the maintenance not being kept up to the expected standard. Thanks was also to be sent to Steve Lowe of NWT for his help and advice with the “Meadow Trial”.

Proposer: Terry Howell

Secunder: Gordon Coxon

Unanimous

- Headstone Survey Progress Update – Verbal report
Headstone photos matched up to headstones. A few were leaning, but none failed the (Ministry of Justice) test. Most of the graves on the plan matched up with the records; some in the low hundreds still to be matched. Still a work in progress.
- Burial Records – Update of Database – Verbal report – GN & BFS; Excel database tidied up and passed to BFS to be matched with plan (previous item). Will need an updating protocol when records & plan matching completed.

- Contract Tender – Draft examples of tender documents – Members agreed to set up a task force to meet as soon as possible to draw up tender documents for agreement at the next meeting to enabling tendering process to be completed in good time.

701. Cemetery House Maintenance

- Shower Tray and Bath water leak – renew silicone seal £30.00 ex VAT

702. Long Term Business Plan for Cemetery/House

- Consultation with Parish Council's – BO
Further work required on legal requirements of use of funds from assets and competitive valuations.

703. Correspondence Received

E-mail (14/08/16) to EJBC Clerk from John Roper, former representative of Newton by the Sea PC

“Thanks for your very kind words which are most appreciated.

It has been a real team effort. The EJBC have made some great improvements to the running of the cemetery over the last couple of years or so - a lot due to the hard work by Bryn and Neville in particular. The EJBC is now running in a much more professional 'business like' manner with real financial benefits for the community. I can see there will be further improvement in the future too.

Best wishes, John”

Contents were noted.

704. Financial.

- Rating Questionnaire - draft reply – draft notification of new business 2017 has been received; rate valuation £640; up from £250 previously. Estimated bill for 2017 is £129 after multiplier applied. However should be academic as premises exempt. To communicate results of completed questionnaire back to valuation Office and point out that they are using the wrong postcode/location.
- Fixed Business telephone line cancellation progress – Ombudsman ruled on 22nd August that within 28 days:-
Close the account and issue a final bill;
 - remove the balance of £35.62 from the account in recognition of the failed disconnection request;
 - provide an apology in writing in recognition of the shortfalls in customer service; and
 - make a direct cheque payment of £30.00 including VAT, to Embleton Joint Burial Committee (received).
 BT complied but no final bill sent; then further bills issued via 2 x clerks ago and PO wanting a £2 per letter surcharge for delivering them. 4th Sept sent bill for £28.43. Placed back in hands of Ombudsman.
- Precept/budget 2017/18 draft – discuss projection and cemetery charges/tender. Members agreed with projection and did not feel that a claim for precept would be necessary for the next financial year.

Bank Balance £8,064.26 @ 30/08/2016

Received since 04/07/2016

- Caretaker Rent x 3 (August, September, October) - £675.00

- BT phone cancellation compensation (refund) - £30.00
- Interment-Plot 54b (Headstone £200) - £200.00
- Interment-Plot 97 (Headstone £200) - £200.00
- Interment & grave digging Plot 96 - £1,000.00

Spent since 04/07/2016

- Clerk (pay & expenses) - £351.85
- HMRC (PAYE) - £81.00
- Caretaker Interment x1, P54b - £100.00
- Caretaker Contract Payment x 3 - (August, September, October) – £ 1,035.00
- Creighton Hall - £12.50 + £20.50
- NCC Water Charges x 3 (July, August, September) - £ 41.19
- Thorneyhaugh Farm, Tree Surgery & Cherry Picker Hire - £300.00 Inc. VAT
- G D Moody, Tree lopping & Weed Killing - £ 140.00
- Tree Feller, Tree Surgery - £157.50

Cheques Required

- Clerk (pay & expenses) - £361.99
- HMRC (PAYE) - £81.80
- Creighton Hall - £12.50
- JF McDougall & Son, Silicone leak repair - £36.00
- Caretaker (Interment & Admin Plot 96) - £180.00

Proposer: Neville Fawcett

Seconder: Terry Howell

Unanimous

705. Items for Next Agenda

706. Date and Time of Next Meeting

Monday 5th December 2016 @ 6pm.