

SALTASH TOWN COUNCIL

Notes of a Meeting of the Burial Board held on Tuesday 27th July 2010 at 7:00pm at the Guildhall

PRESENT: Councillors A Killeya, R Austin, M Gee (left early)
(For this meeting, Cllr A Killeya, as Ex-Officio, became Chair in the absence of Rev Alan Butler)

ALSO PRESENT: Mr M Hall (PFS Funeral Director)
Mr B Jones (St Stephens PCC)
Mr J Reid (St Stephens PCC)
Mr D Bartlett (Groundsperson)
Mr G Rogers (Groundworks)
Six members of the public (residents of Killigrew Avenue)
Ms A Miller (Press)
Mrs D Ashton (Temporary Town Clerk)

APOLOGIES: Reverend A Butler (Chairman)
Councillors D Holley, Oakes
Mr D Fowell (PFS Funeral Director)

11/10/11 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

Due to the number of members of the public attending this meeting with regard to the item on tree health and safety, members of the committee agreed that this item be discussed first and for there to be a public question session prior to discussion on this item.

12/10/11 HEALTH & SAFETY - TREES

The members of the public present were invited by the Chair and members to make their representation.

The members of the public introduced themselves as residents of Killigrew Avenue and the reason for their attendance at this meeting was a letter they had received recently from the Temporary Town Clerk, Mrs Ashton, regarding fly-tipping and tree-logging.

They had found the letter very insulting and strongly expressed it had caused a great deal of concern to them. They explained that there was no substance behind the accusations in this letter.

Mrs Ashton explained that this letter had unfortunately been written distributed without her prior knowledge and approval of the content. She explained that it had been as a consequence of both staff and Councillors dealing with a recent staffing change within the Town Council in the way they thought best. Cllr Austin confirmed this had been the case.

This letter was as a result of a much earlier Burial Board meeting and so should have been sent much earlier than now. There had been a degree of confusion as to who should have received it.

Cllr a Killeya and Mrs Ashton both strongly expressed that the author of the letter had in no way intended to cause such distress and would be distressed themselves to hear of this situation.

As Temporary Town Clerk, Mrs Ashton gave her sincere apologies to all those who received the letter. The Committee noted the issue that the members of the public had brought to their attention and expressed their regret that the letter was sent and gave their apologies to those that had received it. Members **AGREED** that a letter of apology from Mrs Ashton and the Mayor should be distributed too.

The members of public then spoke of various issues to do with vegetation in the cemetery.

The Clerk said that Mr Bartlett does a sterling job of maintaining such a large area on his own, with which committee members and members of the public agreed, and that he does have a schedule of works to be addressed. Mr Bartlett further explained that the issues raised were ongoing, in hand and had already programmed certain tasks into his winter schedule. The Clerk explained that a tree safety inspection of all the trees that the Town Council is responsible for is also due to be undertaken at some point shortly by Cornwall Council – date to be confirmed.

Members confirmed also that if there were any overhanging branches from trees within the cemetery in the gardens of the residents, they were legally entitled to cut them back to the boundary of their property and return it to those responsible for the trees by placing it where the Groundsman stacks his green waste debris.

Members felt that the points raised by the members of the public attending were very valid. They felt it would be beneficial to have special meetings in the future for all residents adjoining the cemetery to be invited to in order to create open communication so that issues can be addressed on both sides.

Cllr A Killeya thanked the residents of Killigrew Avenue for attending.

13/10/11

CEMETERY EXTENSION

- (a) Cllr A Killeya briefed members of a cemetery extension project team meeting that had taken place earlier in the evening. He explained that the contract had been awarded to WH Bond following a strict tender process and that Council had delegated authority to make minor decisions to a project team consisting of Cllrs A Killeya, R Austin and M Gee in conjunction with the Clerk. Mr Steve Blatchford of Cornwall Council was the project manager who reported back to Council via this team.

The Town Council had now obtained funds and a pre-contract meeting had taken place which was satisfactory.

Contracts are due to be signed on the 28th July by each side with a proposed start date for works on 9th August. The works should take approx. 17 weeks.

- (b) Mr Reid said that the draft regulations were sent out to all members of the committee a few weeks for the inspection prior to this meeting but had received little response.

Mr Reid explained that he had researched and obtained current regulations from the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM) to use as a basis for these draft regulations.

Members felt that the new regulations should be applied to the current cemetery and then applied to the new cemetery when it opens. They also felt that any specific regulation could be updated or amended as necessary as the need arose.

Mr Reid requested that another meeting the sub-group take place to give one final look through these regulations before coming back to the Burial Board with them.

Members discussed where the regulations would be displayed and that perhaps the new cemetery would require a notice board. Members suggested that an agenda item for the next meeting would be 'To consider the provision of a notice board at the new cemetery'.

Mr Bartlett spoke of the gravediggers and rules that should apply to them such as removal of soil. Cllr Killeya asked if a member of the sub-group meet with Mr Bartlett to discuss these issues. Cllr Austin said he would also supply Mr Bartlett with a copy of the draft regulations to see what issues he thinks need to be flagged up.

- (c) Members discussed whether the new cemetery would need any additional staffing cover in the future.

Cllr Austin asked for staffing to be discussed at Full Council with regard to the future administration of the new cemetery.

Cllr a Killeya explained to members that when the new Town Clerk is in place, a full review of staffing is planned.

Mr Reid asked about software to manage the cemetery. Mrs Ashton explained that she had had overall responsibility for maintaining the Burials Register when employed at Tavistock Town Council as Assistant to the Town Clerk. An MS Excel spreadsheet is used there to manage Burials Register information as it creates a simple database is easily updated. Using MS Excel also allows for any future use of

technology to e-map the cemetery as it can be just cut and pasted when building up the e-map e.g. the company Pear Technology does this.

Any administrative system wouldn't be required until the new cemetery starts to be used in approx. 18 months time.

Members went on to discuss potential additional staffing needs for the maintenance of the two cemeteries as there would be a point where Mr Bartlett would not be able to maintain both areas on his own.

Mr Bartlett felt that he would be able to cope at the moment on his own but when the new cemetery starts to be used next year, the taking on of extra staff would need to be looked at then.

Members again gave tribute to the good job that Mr Bartlett does.

- (d) Members discussed whether there should be a special council committee set-up for the new cemetery as the Town Council is going to be responsible for it.

Cllr A Killeya suggested keeping the current group as is but include four Cllrs plus the Mayor and Deputy Mayor and that there should be a Cllr Co-Chair or Chair as with other Council committees. Cllr. Members agreed that there should be a specified number of Councillors on any committee. Cllr Killeya also felt that any committee would need to meet more frequently but until the cemetery is up and running, to keep with the current quarterly timetable. Members agreed with this.

Members **AGREED** for Cllr A Killeya and the Clerk to put together a plan to organise the expansion of this committee.

14/10/11 **REPORT BACK ON WORKS UNDERTAKEN**

Members were updated on the incident of a large bough of a cherry tree falling in the cemetery recently. Urgent remedial works were immediately undertaken by Silvanus with the Clerk to initiate further works on this tree. Cornwall Council is due to undertake a tree safety assessment shortly. The clerk would notify Mr Bartlett and Mr Reid when the Tree Officer would be coming

15/10/11 **HEALTH & SAFETY**

- (a) Cllr Mrs Hooper had written to Cornwall Council with regard to seeking clarification on what responsibilities they have here. A letter sent in the name of the Clerk actioned from earlier Burial Board minutes had also been sent.

Members asked the Clerk to chase up if no reply had been received after a week.

- (b) This item had been dealt with under minute 12/10/11.

- (c) Quotes had been received from FD Builders for works to build new steps and repair and re-hang gate. Copies were passed to all members. Mr Reid felt that the work was quite urgent as there are gaps in the steps and they had caused a member of the public to fall recently. It was unanimously **RECOMMENDED** that works be undertaken as per the quote for £1500 for new steps and the quote for £500 for repair and re-hang of the gate.

With regard to leaning gravestones, Mr Bartlett explained that he does undertake checks of them on a rotational basis as he undertakes strimming duties and lies them down if they are dangerous. The Clerk had contacted Tavistock Town Council for advice on this but was still awaiting a reply. Members thought that this should be a future agenda item with a view to obtain a more permanent policy on risk assessment and addressing of fallen tombstones.

Member also noted that small stones are still being left around memorials which is very dangerous when strimming.

Mr Reid felt that a chainsaw should be budgeted for too as it would greatly assist Mr Bartlett in his duties. Cllr A Killeya said the matter had come before the Policy and Resource committee and had been deferred to when the new Clerk starts.

16/10/11 **DUMPING OF SOIL**

Members heard that a letter sent in the name of the Clerk actioned from earlier Burial Board minutes had been sent to the gravediggers.

Mr Bartlett confirmed that soil was still being dumped. He also added that graves were being dug and the soil fill was being left too high which meant that sinkage was occurring very quickly. He felt that the soil was not being tamped down properly during the grave filling in stage and that is the gravediggers responsibility to ensure the job is done properly as families are paying for their services. Mr Bartlett explained that he has to top up after an approx two week period.

Members asked Mr Bartlett to further monitor the situation and report back at the next meeting.

17/10/11 **PRESS RELEASES**

Ms A Miller kindly offered to do a piece on small stones around memorials.

18/10/11 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

13th September 2010 at 7.00pm. The sub-group on regulations will meet on 9th August 2010 at 7.00pm.

Rising at 8.26pm

Signed: _____

Chairman

Dated: 5th August 2010