# MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE

# BURIAL GROUNDS AND GARDENS OF REMEMBRANCE COMMITTEE

# HELD ON 11th OCTOBER 2023

# AT 10:00 AM

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Present : | Cllr Larry Abraham  Cllr Lesley Driscoll |
|  | Cllr Anne Oxtoby  Cllr Brian Ramsay (*Chairman*)  Cllr Ian Ross |
| In attendance : | Mrs J Tyrrell - *(Assistant Clerk), Cllr Jim Colwell* |

Before the start of the Committee meeting, Members of the Burial Grounds and Gardens of Remembrance Committee carried out visual inspections of Hartley Burial Ground, Manor Field Burial Ground, Gardens of Remembrance and the Closed Churchyard.

## 1. Election of Chairman

RESOLVED: That,

Cllr Brian Ramsay be elected Chairman of the Burial Grounds and Gardens of Remembrance Committee until the Annual Meeting of the Council in May 2024.

**2. Election of Vice Chairman**

RESOLVED: That,

Cllr Lesley Driscoll be elected Vice Chairman of the Burial Grounds and Gardens of Remembrance Committee until the Annual Meeting of the Council in May 2024.

## 3. Apologies for absence

There were no apologies for absence.

## 4. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

## 5. Minutes of the last meeting

RESOLVED: That,

the Minutes of the meeting of the Burial Grounds and Gardens of Remembrance Committee held on 2nd March 2023, be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**6. Terms of Reference**

The Committee had been requested to review the Terms of Reference of the Burial Grounds and Gardens of Remembrance Committee as approved by the Council on 10th May 2023

RESOLVED: That,

the Terms of Reference of the Burial Grounds and Gardens of Remembrance Committee as approved by the Council on 10th May 2023 be approved and adopted.

## 7. Financial Report

The Committee considered a financial report setting out detailed income and expenditure by budget heading in respect of the Burial Grounds and Gardens of Remembrance Committee as at 5th October 2023.

RESOLVED: That,

the financial report setting out detailed income and expenditure by budget heading in respect of the Burial Grounds and Gardens of Remembrance Committee as at 5th October 2023, be received and noted.

## 8. Burial Charges

a) Members had been requested to review the burial charges in Hartley Burial Ground and the Gardens of Remembrance. Members agreed that the charges at Hartley were always competitive and usually cheaper than the neighbouring parishes. Members agreed to impose a £5.00 increase per charge for the Parish Rate (including the ground preparation and car park charge) and a £15.00 increase per charge for the Out of Parish Rate.

RECOMMENDED: That,

the Council’s burial charges for 2024-2025 be increased, as set out in Appendix 1 attached to these minutes.

b) The Committee reviewed the fee charged to the Parish of Hartley & Fawkham for the use of the car park at Manor Field for funerals, weddings and christenings, and at times when it was expected that a Church service at All Saints Church in Hartley would attract large numbers of visitors. (The charge was last reviewed in September 2022 when no increase was imposed. In 2021, a £5.00 increase was imposed).

RECOMMENDED: That,

the fee charged to the Parish of Hartley & Fawkham for the use of the car park at Manor Field for funerals, weddings and christenings and at times when it was expected that a Church service would attract large numbers of visitors at All Saints Church in Hartley, be increased to £50.00 per annum (currently £45.00).

## 9. Budget 2024/25

The Committee reviewed the draft budget for Burial Ground, Gardens of Remembrance and New Burial Ground for 2024/25.

The Committee noted that once Mr Munday retires, there is expected to be a substantial increase in costs to the Council.

The Committee considered the options and decided to increase the ‘Grass Cutting’ element from £6000.00 to £8000.00. They also decided to increase the ‘Maintenance Contract’ element from £3000.00 to £4000.00

RESOLVED: That,

the draft budget for the Burial Grounds, Gardens of Remembrance and Closed Churchyard for 2024/25 as set out in Appendix 2 attached to these minutes, be referred to the Finance Committee for consideration.

## 10. Risk Assessment

The Committee reviewed the Council’s current risk assessments relating to the Burial Grounds and Gardens of Remembrance Committee, as reviewed by the Clerk and Mr L Vesey, Health & Safety Advisor, NEBOSH/IOSHH on 18th February 2019.

It was noted that on the second page of the Risk Assessment for Manor Field Burial Ground, that the page header had ‘dropped down’ covering the risk level for the first item (Fencing/Walls – injury due to poor maintenance). The Assistant Clerk would amend this page so that the page header and the risk level were present.

Members considered that the risk assessments as reviewed by the Finance Committee at its meeting held on 28th April 2021 and subsequently approved by the Council, were satisfactory, subject to the amendment detailed above.

RECOMMENDED: That,

the risk assessments relating to the Burial Grounds & Gardens of Remembrance Committee, as reviewed by the Clerk and Mr L Vesey, Health & Safety Advisor, NEBOSH/IOSHH on 18th February 2019,   
as set out in Appendix 3 attached to these Minutes be approved.

**11. Manor Field Burial Ground**

(a) The Committee considered matters arising from the visual inspection carried out before the meeting.

It was noted that the beech hedge by the pergola, running *across* the burial ground, needed tidying up and self-seeded saplings removed from it. Members couldn’t recall whether this formed part of the general grounds maintenance contract or was an additional job on an ad hoc basis. Either way, this area needed attention in particular at the far side of the hedge, on the opposite side to the burial ground.

RESOLVED: That,

the Parish Office ask Mr Munday to remove the weeds and saplings from each side of the beech hedge that runs across the burial ground.

b) It had previously been decided that quotations be sought for some planting around the pergola. Suggestions of some suitable plants had been put forward and quotations requested. At the time of the meeting, despite several follow up emails, no quotations had been received.

RESOLVED: That,

the Parish Office continue to seek quotations for the supply and planting of ‘climbing’ plants that would cover and compliment the pergola.

c) At the previous meeting, it was resolved to obtain quotations for a low picket style fence to run parallel with both pathways. The fence should also include an access gate for machinery. Two quotations had been received and were reviewed by the Committee. In light of the fact that there was no money left in the budget and that there had been no further complaints regarding loose dogs, it was decided that no further action be taken in regards to this project.

RESOLVED: That,

No further action be taken in regards to the provision of a low picket style fence.

d) A further request had been received for a water source at or near to the Burial Ground This option had been considered previously and discounted due to the cost involved. It had been suggested that the idea of water butts attached to the Pavilion be considered instead as they would be much more cost effective. This idea had been referred by the Amenities Committee at their meeting on the 5th October 2022 and agreed the following;

*“The Committee considered the suggestion and agreed that it had no objection to the proposal, but that as it would be a Burial Ground amenity, organisation of the installation of the water butts and the resulting cost, should be the responsibility of the Burial Grounds & Gardens of Remembrance Committee.*

*RESOLVED: That,*

*the installation of water butt(s) at the Pavilion, Manor Field, including timer taps to prevent leakage of water, for use by visitors of the Manor Field Burial Ground, be approved, provided that organisation of the installation of the water butts and the resulting cost, be the responsibility of the Burial Grounds & Gardens of Remembrance Committee.”*

The Committee gave delegated authority to the Chairman and Clerk to make the necessary arrangements provided the total cost did not exceed £300.00 in total

**RECOMMENDED**:       That,

1. this Council agrees to install a water butt, attached to the Pavilion using the existing guttering with any adaptation as required.
2. the Clerk be authorised to make the necessary arrangements, up to the sum of £300.00
3. the total cost of the purchase and installation be met from the Parish Council’s General Reserves.

## 12. Hartley Burial Ground

a) The Committee considered matters arising from the visual inspection carried out before the meeting.

It was noted that the hedgerow by the layby, at the entrance to the Burial Ground needed attention. Members suggested that it needed facing and topping to ensure it remained in shape.

RESOLVED: That,

quotations be sought for the facing and topping of the hedgerow by the entrance to the Burial Ground.

## 13. Old Garden of Remembrance

a) The Committee considered matters arising from the visual inspection carried out before the meeting. Members had no items causing concern.

b) Members were asked to consider a request for an exception to be made to inter ashes into the**Old Garden of Remembrance**. This area had been formally closed on the 27th January 2021.

Members agreed that it would be unlawful and unfair to make any exceptions to this closure and as such, an email be sent to the family advising them of the Committee’s decision.

It was pointed out that our Rules & Regulations state on Page 5 ***“The Old Garden of Remembrance is full and has been closed to new interments for a number of years, although interments are still permitted for those with close family members already interred in the Old Garden”.***

Members agreed that the final part of the sentence which states ***“although interments are still permitted for those with close family members already interred in the Old Garden”*** is misleadingand should be removed. All Members present agreed to remove this part of the sentence.

RESOLVED: That,

1. An email be sent to the family requesting that ashes are interred in the OLD Garden of Remembrance explaining why this is not possible.

b) The Rules and Regulations be amended to remove the section at the top of page 5 which states ***“….although interments are still permitted for those with close family members already interred in the Old Garden”.***

**14. New Garden of Remembrance**

a) The Committee considered matters arising from the visual inspection carried out before the meeting.

It was noted that the bench in the corner of the New Garden of Remembrance had been damaged by a falling branch. This bench had been donated by a family so it was agreed to contact the family.

RESOLVED: That,

An email be sent to the family advising them that the bench had been damaged.

b) Members had been requested to consider a complaint received from a resident regarding the placement of flowers on the grass in the New Garden of Remembrance.

Our Rules and Regulations state;

**Old & New Gardens of Remembrance**

**The Old Garden of Remembrance is full and has been closed to new interments for a number of years, although interments are still permitted for those with close family members already interred in the Old Garden.**

1. A maximum of two interments of ashes are allowed in one single plot in the New Garden of Remembrance.
2. The burial of caskets is not permitted in the New Garden of Remembrance.
3. ***No wreaths, memorial vases, floral tributes, or other objects shall be placed on the Gardens, or around the walls of the plinths.***
4. ***Cut flowers only may be left on the plinths adjacent to the Old & New Gardens of Remembrance using the vases provided.***

Although the Committee sympathised with the resident, they explained why the ruling was in place and suggested that tributes are left in the plinths provided.

c) Members had been requested to consider a request from a resident to have her late sister’s ashes interred in the New Garden of Remembrance. The plot already has ***two*** sets of ashes interred – the late husband and son who were interred together. It is unclear whether the plot has been dug to a single or double depth and we are awaiting clarification from the Parish Office who arranged for the whole to be dug. Members were requested to consider another option for the family if the plot is full.

Members decided that in order to accommodate the family’s wishes, an exploratory dig could be undertaken in order for the ashes to be interred together.

RESOLVED: That,

The Parish office send an email to the family explaining that the ashes can be interred together.

d) Members had been requested to consider a request from a resident to replace a damaged bench in the New Garden of Remembrance with a new wooden bench the same as the one on Manor Field Burial Ground. As this was the same bench noted on the visual inspection and donated by a family, the Committee suggested contacting the family who had donated the bench first. A suggestion was made if the family wish to replace it, that both the family and the resident could possibly purchase the replacement bench between them.

RESOLVED: That,

1) The Parish Office send an email to the family explaining that the damaged bench needs to be replaced and mentioning that a resident is interested in purchasing a bench for the same location.

2) The Parish Office send an email to the resident explaining that the damaged bench belongs to a family and that they were being contacted about replacing it but they would be told that a resident is interested in purchasing a bench for the same location and that possibly this could be a joint project.

**15. Closed Churchyard**

a) The Committee considered matters arising from the visual inspection of the Closed Churchyard carried out before the meeting.

It was noted that the tree at the entrance to the closed churchyard was in a very poor condition. Members agreed that it needed to be removed as it was very close to the entrance to the church.

RESOLVED: That,

Quotations be sought to remove the tree at the entrance to the churchyard on health and safety grounds.

b) Members had been requested to consider an email regarding concerns with the bank at the west entrance to All Saints Church. (The bank contains graves and some headstones). The retaining posts have rotted at the bottom, therefore weakening the bank. The Church has replaced a couple of the posts to ensure safety but believes the full length needs to be supported and is the responsibility of the Parish Council to replace/repair.

Members were unclear whether this bank was owned by the Church or the Parish Council but considered that this would possibly fall to the Parish Council for maintenance.

Members agreed to investigate ownership and responsibility and then if applicable, to seek quotations for the replacement of the wooden retaining posts at the bank.

RESOLVED: That,

1. The Parish Office establish ownership and responsibility for the wooden retaining posts on the bank at the entrance to the closed churchyard.
2. Quotations be sought to replace wooden retaining posts on the bank at the entrance to the closed churchyard if it is established that the Parish Council is responsible.

**16. Memorial Safety Programme and Testing Policy**

The Committee had been requested to note that in accordance with the Parish Council’s Memorial Safety Programme and Testing Policy, the Memorials are due to be re-inspected in accordance with the policy minimum frequency of every five years.

The inspection and testing took place at the beginning of July and the summary report and detailed report had been received.

The Committee noted that Stephen Gay Memorials had identified ***eight*** memorials which had failed Hartley Parish Council’s Memorial Safety Programme and Testing Policy.

The failed memorials had been inspected by a Member of the Committee before an instruction was given to Stephen Gay Memorials to lay down all eight memorials at a cost of £245.00 plus VAT as a matter of urgency.

The Assistant Clerk had written to the Grave Owners for which we had contact details and was in the process of reviewing the other memorials that had been identified as unsafe.

b) Having sought advice from the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management, they confirmed that it is **not** a legal requirement to write to all grave owners when the memorial testing is being undertaken. As long as notices/signs are displayed, this is sufficient.

Members considered the above information and opted to review the Memorial Safety Programme and Testing Policy in particular, to review the section headed Communications on page 4;

*“The Council will advise all existing memorial owner/s of its safety, inspection and testing regime on memorials in Hartley Burial Ground and Closed Churchyard, as set out in this adopted policy and on any implications that may arise subsequently.*  ***For memorials located in Hartley Burial Ground this will be carried out by writing to each memorial owner/s at the last known address recorded in the Register of Purchased Graves, in advance of any formal inspection****. This will not apply to memorial owners in the Closed Churchyard as the Council does not hold any records; the means of communication will be restricted to the display of public notices as set out below”.*

RESOLVED: That,

The Parish Office re-write the section regarding Communications and this draft policy could then be considered at the next meeting.

**17. Burial Ground - Administration**

a) Members had been requested to consider a review of the Rules & Regulations of the Burial Ground, in particular to consider ***separating*** the Rules & Regulations for burials and Interments to make it clearer for families. Everyone agreed that this was a good idea and suggested that the Parish Office redraft the Rules & Regulations and bring the revised versions back to the next meeting to be approved.

RESOLVED: That,

The Parish Office separate the Rules & Regulations into two – one for Burials and one for Interments and for the revised documents to be approved at the next meeting.

b) Members also considered the introduction of a checklist for the Interment of Ashes reiterating that caskets are NOT permitted to be interred.

RESOLVED: That,

The Parish Office compile a checklist for the Interment of Ashes to include a section reiterating that caskets are NOT permitted to be interred and for the revised document to be approved at the next meeting.

**18. Grass cutting and burial ground maintenance contract**

Members reviewed the grass cutting specification and maintenance contract at Hartley Burial Ground, and the grass cutting specifications at the Closed Churchyard and the Manor Field Burial Ground which falls due for renewal on 1st April 2024 and noted the list of Contractors invited to submit a quotation. Members agreed to proceed and to invite Contractors to submit their quotations.

RESOLVED: That,

The Parish Office send out the documents and invitations asking Contractors to submit their quotations for the grass cutting and burial ground maintenance contract for 2024/25.

## 19. Date of next meeting

The meeting closed at 11:00am

Signed:…………………………………………… Date:………………….

Chairman of the Burial Grounds and Gardens of Remembrance Committee

**HARTLEY PARISH COUNCIL**

**CHARGES FOR HARTLEY BURIAL GROUND, MANOR FIELD BURIAL GROUND**

**AND GARDENS OF REMEMBRANCE**

**Effective from 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **EXCLUSIVE RIGHT OF BURIAL IN EARTHEN GRAVES** | **PARISH RATE** | **OUT OF PARISH RATE** |
| 1. For the exclusive right of burial of a body for 100 years in a grave space. | £190.00 | £570.00 |
| 1. For the exclusive right of burial of a child up to 18 years for 100 years in a grave space. | No charge | No charge |
| **INTERMENT** |  |  |
| 1. For the interment of body in grave space, (incl. turf). | £195.00 | £585.00 |
| 1. For the interment of a childup to 18years. | No charge | No charge |
| 1. Interment of ashes in garden of remembrance | £165.00 | £495.00 |
| 1. Interment of ashes in New garden of remembrance | £165.00 | £495.00 |
| 1. Interment of ashes of a child up to 18 years | No charge | No charge |
| **MEMORIAL AND PLAQUES** |  |  |
| 1. Approval of memorial on the grave of a child upto 18 years | No charge | No charge |
| 1. Approval of memorial | £155.00 | £465.00 |
| 1. Approval of additional inscription to memorial | £130.00 | £390.00 |
| 1. Approval of bronze plaque for garden of remembrance | £130.00 | £390.00 |
| 1. Approval of *additional* inscription to bronze plaque for garden of remembrance | £105.00 | £315.00 |
| 1. Approval of stone tablet for new garden of remembrance | £130.00 | £390.00 |
| 1. Approval of *additional* inscription to stone tablet for new garden of remembrance | £105.00 | £315.00 |
| **OTHER CHARGES** |  |  |
| Ground preparation for interments of ashes | £30.00 | £30.00 |
| Hire of Manor Field car park (Funeral) | £10.00 | £10.00 |























