

**HALLS, CEMETERIES & ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE
WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL**

Held on Monday, 12 July 2021

At 6.00 pm in the Virtual Meeting Room via Zoom

Present:

Councillor M Jones (Chair)

Councillors:	V Gwatkin	T Ashby
	J Aitman	O Collins
	L Ashbourne	R Smith
Officers:	Adam Clapton	Deputy Town Clerk
	Derek Mackenzie	Halls & Green Spaces Administrator
	Simon Wright	Democratic & Legal Services Officer
Others:	0 members of the public.	

As there was no legislation in place for the Town Council to hold virtual meetings, and because of the ongoing Covid-19 Pandemic, the Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee formed virtually as an Advisory Committee. Any recommendations outside of the current work's programme, budget or policy would require ratification at the Full Council meeting held on 2 August 2021.

H357 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Liz Duncan.

H358 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest from members or officers at this juncture.

H359 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 24 May 2021 were received.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee held on 24 May 2021 be approved as a correct record of the meeting and be signed by the Chair.

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

H360 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

H361 **COMMITTEE WORK PLAN**

The Committee considered the report of the Town Clerk outlining the priorities for the Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee from the recently approved Open Spaces Strategy.

Resolved:

That, the priorities be noted.

H362 **TOWER HILL CEMETERY - PEDESTRIAN ACCESS**

The Committee considered the report of the Maintenance & Environmental Services Officer regarding options for the introduction of a new pedestrian access at Tower Hill Cemetery. Clarification was given of the proposed location of the access and ownership of surrounding land.

It was emphasised that the proposal would allow a more convenient access for all site users. The committee noted that the new arrangements would not be a cut through and therefore should be used mainly by those accessing the site. It was requested that appropriate measures be put in place to ask people to show respect when using the area.

Recommended:

1. That, the new requested location for the pedestrian access be approved.
2. That, Officers be delegated to requote with contractors for the new path and access point.
3. That, Officers be delegated to agree a communications strategy for the project bearing in mind the negative feedback from the consultation process.

H363 **TOWER HILL CEMETERY - DDI AUDIT ACCESS REQUIREMENTS**

The Committee received the report of the Maintenance & Environmental Services Officer regarding a disability access audit that was conducted at Tower Hill Cemetery.

The Committee discussed the recommendations in the report and in particular options around reducing gradients around the site or the use of steps. It was agreed that Health & Safety on the site was paramount.

After discussion it was agreed that the report should be considered further by officers to look at options to meet the recommendations.

Resolved:

That, officers be requested to consider the recommendations of the Audit and provide a list of proposed works at the next meeting.

H364 **WINDRUSH CEMETERY - MEMORIAL GATE REQUEST**

The Committee received the report of the Cemetery, External Contracts & Compliance Officer regarding an application for a memorial gate at Windrush Cemetery.

Councillors indicated that whilst liking the design they were concerned that the gate could give the impression of the site being a memorial area for one person. Members suggested that a bench somewhere on Town Council land would be more appropriate.

Members suggested that elements of the design could be incorporated as part of the bench construction or on a plaque. It was noted that there was an existing policy for benches in cemeteries but no policy was in place for public space and would be part of the Open Spaces Strategy.

It was agreed that the provision of a bench should be supported subject to the requirements of the forthcoming policy on benches in public spaces.

Note: Councillor Thomas Ashby declared a personal non-prejudicial interest at this juncture as his family had an application for a bench pending. Councillor Ashby advised that he would not vote on the proposal.

Recommended:

1. That, the application for a memorial gate is not supported;
2. That, the applicant be advised that the Council gives 'in principle, agreement for a memorial bench at Oxlease;
3. That, a policy on memorial benches be created by Officers and brought back to the next meeting of this Committee;
4. That, Officers discuss what might be available with the applicant, the design of any bespoke bench being subject to the new policy for such installations

H365 WINDRUSH CEMETERY - ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

The Chair outlined concerns that had been received regarding anti-social behaviour and littering at the site.

It was advised that any issues should be reported to Thames Valley Police (TVP) via 101 and that Council Officers were undertaking regular visits to the site. It was further suggested that if issues involving young people were identified then Got 2 B CIC could be involved. It was further noted that a meeting with TVP was scheduled and this issue would be raised then. An update would be provided to members in due course.

Resolved:

That, it be noted that officers are undertaking regular inspections of the site and that the matter will be raised with Thames Valley Police.

H366 CLOSED CHURCH YARDS - GRASS CUTTING

The report of the Operations & Estates Advisor was received outlining the setting up of a Benefice Environmental group covering the churches of St Mary the Virgin and Holy Trinity Churches that are maintained by Witney Town Council as closed churchyards.

The Committee supported the ambition to achieve Eco Church Status. It was noted that the wild areas would be carefully located and that the project would be communicated to interested parties and residents by both the church and council.

Recommended:

That, the proposal for grass cutting at the closed churchyards be supported.

The meeting closed at: 6.55 pm

Chair