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CEMETERY & TOWN HALL COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Committee Meeting held on Thursday 3rd June 2021 at
19:00 hrs. Meeting held with remote attendance.

Present

Chairman: Councillor R. Dietrich

Committee Members: Councillors E. Andrews (via Zoom), J. Buczkowski, M. Dale, I. Emmett,
J. Johns and C. Snow

In Attendance

Officers: Maria Weston (Deputy Town Clerk)

4 Members of the Public attended the meeting.

C&TH Chairman's Announcements

94. The Chairman welcomed all new members to the Committee
A Committee Vice-Chair will be elected at the Annual Town Council meeting in July.
The Chairman welcomed the new members to the Committee and advised that only
members physically present in the Town Hall could participate in the meeting and vote.

C&TH Apologies for Absence

95. No apologies for absence were received – all Committee members present.

C&TH. Declarations of Interests

96. No Declarations of Interest were received from Councillors or Officers at this point in the
meeting.

A point of Order was raised by Cllr. Buczkowski: 95 pages of supporting documents have
been issued at varying times since Tuesday evening. This is contrary to a resolution of the Full
Council and in the Town Council's usual practice. Please can the Chairman confirm that he
was consulted about this and consented to the late distribution of these documents. The
Chairman advised that (to his knowledge) he had not been consulted. The Meeting
Administrator advised that the papers were sent out as soon as they became available but it
was noted that no documents were sent out with the agenda. It had been resolved that all
supporting papers should be sent with the agenda unless this has been approved by the
Chairman. This was noted by the Chair.

Cllr. Snow advised of a further Point of Order: There are some inaccuracies with some of the documents and with documents that have been sent out and those which should have been sent out.

The above Points of Order were upheld by the Chair and it was agreed that any agenda items where the papers had not been received in good time would be deferred, subject to an associated members vote.

C&TH Public Participation

97. This agenda item allows members of the public present at the meeting to raise matters which are relevant to the work of the Committee.

Speaker 1

- i) **Cemetery Concrete Shed:** Advised that the concrete shed located within the cemetery was still in situ and no landscaping or grass/turf had been put down (ex-historic soil heap area) and asked when some movement will take place with this?

A response was given: The Council had resolved to delegate the authority to the Town Clerk to progress these items. A draft specification of works had been 'drawn up' and this was circulated to the Committee Chair and officers for review. This will then be disseminated into the public domain/circulated to appropriate local contractors with a view to obtained quotations for the work to be undertaken.

Note: The Chair advised Cllr. Andrews that she would only be able to participate in the meeting during the Public Participation section of the meeting. The Meeting Administrator further advised that due to the lapsing of legislation in terms of allowing meetings to go ahead and decisions being taken virtually (in light of covid-19 restrictions), participation and voting on any agenda item is now only permitted if a Councillor is physically present in the Town Hall.

Speaker 2

Note: Speaker requested a formal acknowledgment of all the points raised –

- i) **Council Vehicle Parking:** An e-mail had been sent to the Town Clerk about the Council's vehicle which had once again been parked in the bay directly outside the Town Hall. He has responded to the Town Clerks reply that the member of staff was on an errand. An e-mail had been sent out to all Councillors and staff that no-one should park in that bay unless for loading/unloading. If there was a breach of this condition staff members/whomever should be reprimanded. Speaker further advised he had not received a reply from 6 no. days ago, there are other e-mails outstanding also.
- ii) **Minutes of Previous Meeting - Public Participation Question (March 2021):** Speaker had still not received a response from the Town Clerk in relation to persistently late documents placed on the website at very late notice, where the public and Councillors are not able to be involved fully. This is happening often and needs a proper enquiry to address this – he is raising this question regularly. This is not giving members of the public and Councillors enough time to address the matters fully.
- iii) **Fire Report (agenda item 11):** Reference is made to safety issues. Speaker has raised this point weeks and months ago. Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) bin – Where was this? Was it in use? Where are the fire extinguishers? Where is the existing signage which signposts emergency services (fire/ambulance/police) if called to an incident? Thankfully the report (as supplied Supporting Paper G to the agenda) at last acknowledges what speaker has been

raising for years' and which this Council has ignored. Speaker would like to see this corrected and an apology for his reasoning to help the Council being delayed due to incompetence.

A response was given (Chair): These comments have been noted. Some of these items are due to be discussed during the meeting. The Committee will address these points.

C&TH Minutes

98. The draft minutes of the meeting held on 6th May 2021 were considered (Supporting Paper A to the agenda) and it was:

RESOLVED:

That the draft minutes of the Cemetery and Town Hall Committee meeting held on 6th May 2021 are confirmed as a correct record.

C&TH Financial Monitoring

99. Consideration was given to the financial reports relating to the Cemetery & Town Hall Committee income, expenditure and commitments, compared to the 2020/21 budget estimates (Supporting Paper B to the agenda)

RESOLVED: That the financial monitoring papers of the Community Wellbeing Committee are noted and accepted with the following comments:

- 1)** Cemetery - Trade waste £934.34 half year. Is this a charge for all Council waste or does this relate solely to the cemetery? If this sum relates to all Council waste this should perhaps be moved or apportioned accordingly and not analysed to the cemetery budget;
- 2)** Town Hall – Conference System Microphones: £1,390.00 showing as an expense of the Town Hall as a running expense. It is suggested that this be moved to an equipment budget line.

Note:

- i) It was agreed that the Committee needs a clear indication of the general costs of running the cemetery (to ensure burial fees are appropriate) and likewise with the Town Hall;
- ii) A breakdown of costs would be useful for members so they may check for mistakes or if any items require reallocation.

C&TH Action List

100. The Cemetery and Town Hall Action lists (Supporting Paper D to the agenda) were noted.

RESOLVED: That the Cemetery & Town Hall Committee note its Action List as supplied with the following comments:

1. The Cemetery & Town Hall Committee have concerns regarding health and safety which are to be formally noted and supplied to the Town Clerk;
2. The area has not been fenced off and this should be done immediately.

Note:

- i) Item 8. Structural Engineer to assess subsidence in the chapel is still outstanding. Meeting Administrator advised that an engineer is due to undertake a site visit week commencing 14th June ideally on date Councillors will undertake their cemetery site visit.

- ii) Item 2 Pathways – This needs amendment as not current to reflect recent decisions;
- iii) Item 7 Cemetery Historic Soil Spill Area & Concrete Shed: As above ii). –
 - a) It was instructed that this area should be fenced off until work has been completed, on health & safety grounds. This has been ignored. Presents a risk to users of the cemetery. It was clear area should be fenced off at the last meeting.
 - b) Shed – It was instructed this was to be removed and the area tidied. Town Clerk was given delegated authority to expedite the process. In February the Town Clerk clearly stated that tender documents were to be issued within 6 weeks – and as a result a meeting was scheduled in April to review the progress. This meeting was cancelled. There has been no explanation nor action and the Committee deserves an explanation.

It was requested of the Chair, that the following three questions be noted together with their responses:

- 1. Why has this area not been fenced off and health and safety ignored?;
 - 2. Why has no basic work been undertaken to make the area presentable? It has been over 6 months since the soil was removed. Indeed we were told in February that outdoor staff would be working in the area (linked to the grave digging course);
 - 3. Why have the Council's instructions to remove the shed been ignored?
- iv) Action List Item No. 3 Paint the chapel & mortuary doors: Why have the listed buildings doors not yet been painted?

A response was given that:

As had been previously advised, the doors of one of the buildings (mortuary) were being painted initially and then the outdoor team will move on to the other (chapel) so as to negate any detrimental impact on the exposed wood from inclement weather. The doors of the first building (mortuary) had received an additional coat of green pain earlier today however the wrought ironwork needs to be painted back which would look aesthetically more pleasing and is in line with the advice from Mid-Devon District Council's Conservation Officer.

Resolved: That the Committee's concerns regarding health and safety at the corner of the cemetery (ex-historic soil heap) are formally noted and this area be fenced off immediately.

C&TH Outdoor Team Report

101. The report detailing the recent work undertaken by the Outdoor Team was noted and it was requested that a formal report compiled by the maintenance supervisor is supplied to members in time for the scheduled cemetery site visit on the 16th June 2021.

C&TH Memorials

102. To receive a report in relation to memorial and plinth sizes within the cemetery and to agree any appropriate action as required (Supporting Paper E to the agenda)

RESOLVED: To defer consideration of agenda item no. 9 as:

- i) this can impinge on financial and policy issues;
- ii) as the Supporting Paper had not been supplied/received in good time to allow members the opportunity to consider this agenda item.

C&TH Town Hall Hire

103. To consider revision of the charging policy so that in future, any hall bookings are taken in advance and paid by card (Supporting Paper F to the agenda)

RESOLVED: To defer agenda item 10, Town Hall Hire as the Supporting Paper had not been supplied/received in good time to allow members the opportunity to consider this agenda item.

C&TH Fire Safety

104. To receive a report regarding fire safety (Supporting Paper G to the agenda)

RESOLVED: To defer agenda item 11, Fire Safety as the Supporting Paper had not been supplied/received in good time to allow members the opportunity to consider this agenda item.

NOTE: The following points were highlighted.

There that there are fire safety reports missing for :

Cemetery

- Chapel and mortuary. As fire extinguishers have been placed in both buildings it is assumed this has been done to mitigate risks. This significant finding and mitigation should be recorded. There should be reports for the buildings.
- Storage containers
- Work processes i.e. use of equipment, fuel (e.g. mowers)
- Risk assessment for the siting and use of powder fire extinguishers particularly inside as these are not recommended for use indoors
- Safety plans also seem to be missing along with schedule of fire safety equipment and the fire safety log book
- Report states that the staff welfare unit should be reviewed when work is completed
- There is an outstanding action on the report from November – why has this not been completed?

The Committee had the following questions – (requested that an e-mailed response is sent):

Town Hall

- Maximum occupancy of the Town Hall
- Where the Emergency torches and hose reel are located
- Clarification needed by the Town Clerk regarding their comment in the report which states additional powder extinguishers to be provided at the cemetery as recommended by the company undertaking the fire extinguisher checks. Need this confirmed and would also like to see the fire safety report from the company undertaking the fire extinguisher checks. Confirmation needed of any further action in relation to the siting of the extinguishers.

It was further noted:

- No reference to the dangerous stairs which lead to the attic. The Council has a duty of care to staff going upstairs;
- Working times of staff are incorrect;
- What are the procedures for persons with limited mobility to evacuate the Town Hall?
- Corporate responsibility lies with Councillors.

Resolved: To defer agenda item 11, Fire Safety until such time as the Committee has a more accurate understanding of the Fire Safety Report when it can then give full consideration as warranted.

NOTE: Members would like an extraordinary meeting to discuss Fire Safety. Meeting Administrator to arrange this. Chair requested that Councillors, for clarity, e-mail any comments regarding Fire Safety to the Clerk.

C&TH Budget Requests

105. Consideration was given to the recommendation from the Policy, Finance & Personnel Committee (Supporting Paper H to the agenda) and it was noted that the Committee:

- i) does not wish to bring forward any items on its current 3 year work plan and that;
- ii) as the Cemetery & Town Hall budget already has capital funding of £35,000.00 (Code 9022) plus the additional sum of £16,000.00 as subsequently allocated to the Committee, (being the rebate received due to readjustment of the cemetery rates) that no further monies are requested from the amount previously earmarked for the 19 High Street Project.

C&TH Members Questions:

106. Cllr. Snow: Explained that a derogatory comment had been made about himself recently that was not justified and his name has been 'muddied' amongst Cemetery/Town Hall staff. To clarify, the relationship with himself and what is happening at the Cemetery & Town Hall is purely professional. This has been highlighting issues which need to be resolved. He does not expect staff to be derogatory.

Cllr. Emmett: Asked the question as to how, in the short term, the Council will deal with the shortage of labour whilst addressing the Committee's 3 year work plan.

Cllr. Snow: Advised that he had requested a maintenance schedule of work 6 no. months ago, there has been a new maintenance supervisor appointed however we are no forward. Urgent items need to be dealt with. What are staff doing? The Committee needs to be apprised.

Cllr. Buczkowski: Acknowledged this had been a particularly challenging meeting and passed on thanks to the Deputy Town Clerk.

RESOLVED: To exclude the public and press during consideration of:
agenda Item 15, Cemetery Pathways –on the grounds that publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of its confidential nature (financial, subject to negotiation). The documents relating to these items have been withheld from public circulation and deposit.

C&TH Cemetery Pathways

107. The Cemetery Pathways Report was noted and consideration given to the estimates of potential costs associated with various *options for the pathways with a view to formally agreeing the next steps (Supporting Paper I to the agenda – confidential for Committee members only)

Note: * Options: block paving, concrete, stone chipping, self-binding limestone (compacted)

Discussion ensued with the Committee narrowing down options for the pathways to either concrete or compacted self-binding limestone. It was:

RESOLVED: That following consideration by the Cemetery & Town Hall Committee of the cemetery pathways, that:

- i) Investigation is needed as to whether concrete will be permissible within the cemetery and if there are any restrictions particularly in terms of the colour and which colour would be recommended. Clerk to confirm position with Mid-Devon District Council's planning department.
- ii) Once above (i) has been clarified, Clerk to source quotation, taking into account legalities and social impact i.e. feasibility of using certain colours and for example, the affect this may have on those suffering from dementia;
- iii) Clerk to source contractors to supply and install both concrete and the **compacted self-binding limestone together with options and recommendations for drainage and edging.

**Note: Clerk to endeavour to establish where there are local projects which show the use of this limestone covering with a view to members of the Cemetery & Town Hall Committee undertaking a site visit (and viewing this flooring 'first hand')

The Meeting closed at 8:56pm.