

Our Ref: 30/LJM

30 March 2015

Dear Councillor

**Cemetery and Allotments Sub-Committee**

There will be a meeting of the **Cemetery and Allotments Sub-Committee at 10.00 a.m. on Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2014 at the Cemetery and then at 12.00 noon at the Town Hall** to consider the following Agenda:

**A G E N D A**

- 1. Apologies.**
- 2. Declarations of Interest.**  
*Members and officers are invited to make any declarations of interests that they may have in relation to items on the agenda and are reminded to make any declarations at any stage during the meeting if it then becomes apparent that this may be required when a particular item or issue is considered.*
- 3. To consider requests for dispensations for Councillors with a Pecuniary Interest.**  
*Any Councillor with a pecuniary interest in a matter who wishes to be granted a dispensation to remain and speak during, or vote on, that matter, may apply for a dispensation in writing to the proper officer of the Town Council as soon as possible before the meeting which the dispensation is required. Applications may also be made at the Parish/Town Council meeting itself (if Parish/Town Councils have a standing item on the agenda to deal with dispensation requests and the nature of the interest has only become apparent to a Councillor at the meeting itself).*
- 4. To Approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> February 2014 - (attached).**  
To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> February 2014
- 5. To Inspect the Cemetery and Receive Verbal Updates on Matters Pertaining to the Cemetery**
- 6. To adjourn the meeting and reconvene at the Town Hall**
- 7. To Consider the Removal of the Spoil Heap from the Cemetery -attached**  
To consider the removal of the spoil heap from the cemetery

8. **To Consider Public Access to the Cemetery and Langley Avenue - *attached***  
To consider public access to the Cemetery and Langley Avenue
9. **To Note the Situation Regarding Computerisation of Cemetery Records – *attached***  
To note the situation regarding computerisation of cemetery records
10. **Closure.**

Yours sincerely

TOWN CLERK

To Councillors: Jan Garfield, Morris, Walker (Vice Chairman), Sennington, Sharman, Stokell and Webb (Chairman).

## **ITEM 7**

### **To Consider the Removal of the Spoil Heap from the Cemetery**

Members will have been shown the accumulated spoil heap at the Cemetery. This site, used to store excess soil from grave excavations, has grown to this size because of a previous cost-cutting policy which reduced the number of skips hired by the Cemetery. In addition the site has been used to dispose of tree cuttings from the Cemetery and has, as a result, become an unauthorised dumping ground for allotment holders and the general public.

A quotation has been received for its removal, by way of self-loading lorry, which is £1,200. There is no budget for this work but **Members are recommended to seek approval from Full Council, via Finance & General Purposes Committee, for the funding to be provided from the “Recycling Credits” earmarked reserve.**

Once cleared the site will be used for allotment holders’ car parking and for the storage of a large (and lockable) skip which will be emptied regularly from within existing budgets.

## **ITEM 8**

### **To Consider Public Access to the Cemetery and Langley Avenue**

At present the Cemetery gates are locked each night at dusk to deter (rather than prevent) unauthorised access. Members should be aware there is a cost associated with this activity, which is just under £8,000 per annum.

This cost could be reduced by a decision to vary the opening times to those of the workforce Monday-Friday (with extended opening Saturdays/Sundays) or by not locking the Cemetery. However the former may attract public criticism, and the latter offers the potential for anti-social behaviour.

**Members are to consider the current policy regarding locking/unlocking the Cemetery.**

Members will have noted and been made aware of the current state of the Cemetery railings and gates, which will require considerable investment to return to their former state. Members will also be aware that Langley Avenue is in the ownership of the Town Council and that there are no restrictions on access to Langley Avenue.

Whilst the original deeds transferring Langley Avenue to the Town Council contain references to the erection of “field gates” at either end, and restricting rights of access to a limited group of people, these have long been extinguished and the public have acquired the right to pass/repass on foot or bicycle (cars having been prevented by a new gate part-way along Langley Avenue). Indeed in recent years a cycle route has been shown as passing through Langley Avenue.

However the need to review the condition of the railings and gates along the Cemetery frontage has identified that there is likely to be a considerable benefit to the Council Tax if

it were possible to close the Cemetery section of Langley Avenue to ALL traffic between dusk and 7.00 a.m. each day, in that the railings could be removed and replaced by new gates across Langley Avenue. This opens up a large expanse of land for cemetery use without the need to create new roads/pathways and disturb the allotments.

There are possible implications in that residents may claim an established use, with a high probability that the roadway will have to be re-opened 24 hours/day for pedestrian/cycle traffic. However the potential cost benefits are so great that some form of public consultation should be undertaken, to ascertain the existing level of night-time pedestrian/cycle use along this unlit road, and the potential for a challenge.

**Members are recommended to undertake a consultation on the use of Langley Avenue between dusk and 7.00 a.m.**

## **ITEM 9**

### **To Note the Situation Regarding Computerisation of Cemetery Records**

Since this item was last considered by Committee/Council there have been a number of developments, and further information/advice received. The initial intention, to use a package which was complimentary, and linked in, to the accounts package has been subsumed by the change to a different accounts package. This may be seen as a blessing as the allotments package, from the same supplier, could not be fully integrated between the two, and indeed now runs standalone.

The advice therefore, going forward, is to acquire a stand-alone cemetery package and rely on procedures/checks to ensure all income is accounted for. There are a number of stand-alone packages, including those which can be linked to the internet.

The big question is whether to proceed with a “big bang” approach, with all the Council’s burial records being computerised or put online in one hit, or whether to proceed solely on the basis of making a computerised entry when the record is accessed (i.e. for a new interment, or change of ownership, or a memorial application).

The former has high upfront costs to scan and transfer the data to a computerised record; the latter has lower initial costs but means that it may be a very long time (never ?) before all the records are computerised.

Which begs the question – why is the Council considering computerising the records ? Unlike some other Councils, the burial records (which must be kept by law) are kept securely in the safe (albeit one which has suffered water ingress last winter). The older records are, however, showing signs of natural distress caused by handling over the years, and their future life must be questioned.

The way forward therefore may be a two-pronged approach; scanning the records, together with computerisation of all new records from 2014, and storing the scanned images on a cloud-based server. The scanning cost would be c£2,000 as a one-off cost, and a further annual storage cost. A computer package to record ongoing burials would cost c£1,000 plus training and annual licence fee.

So, should the scanned records be made publicly available on the internet, or simply be retained as an inhouse record, with the original books being transferred to the Suffolk Records Office, where they could be open to public inspection ? Obviously the latter is the cheaper solution and does not preclude any interested person inputting records online themselves.

**Recommended:-**

- a) That all the computer records be scanned
- b) That the scanned records be stored on a cloud-based server
- c) That the original records be given to the Suffolk Record Office for safekeeping
- d) That a computer software package be acquired to record future burials
- e) All future burials, deeds transfer, grants, etc be recorded on the computer software package