

NORTH TAWTON TOWN COUNCIL

Town Clerk
Mrs Sarah Say
Assistant Town Clerk
Stephen Webb

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Minutes of the North Tawton Town Council Estates Committee held via Zoom at 7.15 pm on Wednesday 15th July 2020 at 7.15pm.

Present:

Cllr Ms J Trehitt (Chair); Cllr Dr P Brickley (Vice-Chair); Cllr S Whiteley;
Cllr K Hodge; Cllr C. Lee Cllr Mrs S Watson;
Cllr M Kennedy; Cllr Mrs C Burrow; Cllr Ms R Testa;
Cllr Miss K Drake, Cllr J. Gray

Mrs S Say – Town Clerk, Mr S. Webb Assistant Town Clerk

There were two members of the public on-line.

1. **Apologies for Absence** – Cllr Mrs R Davies, her apology unanimously accepted.

2. **Declarations of Interest** – None.

3. Management of Cemetery

i) The Internal Audit Report had raised a number of issues with regard to the overall management of the Cemetery. In order to address these issues, Cllr Miss R. Testa proposed that the Council form a Cemetery Working Group. This was seconded by Cllr S. Whiteley and there were eleven votes in favour and the proposal was carried.

It was further agreed that the Working Group would comprise Cllr Miss K. Drake, Cllr P. Brickley Cllr Miss R. Testa and Cllr Ms J. Trehitt. Cllr C. Lee agreed to provide technical input in relation to Risk Assessments. The remit of the group would include the drawing up of a Cemetery Management Policy and a review of the Councils Risk Management Policy to include Cemetery issues. In the meantime, the clerks would be trained on Cemetery management, obtain quotations for a Fire-proof cabinet for retention of the Ledgers and draft a revision of Job Descriptions to include Cemetery management.

ii) The Council reviewed matters arising from the last Cemetery inspection undertaken on 7th February 2020. It was noted that issues such as the placing of inappropriate memorials were included in the Cemetery regulations on the Notice Board and that past practice had been to include an announcement to remove these in the Roundabout, prior to their removal to the Chapel of Rest should visitors wish to collect them after removal. The general issue of the Notice Board was discussed and was agreed that this be part of the remit for the new Working Group. The Notice Board location and content would be reviewed once the new Cemetery Regulations had been agreed.

It was further noted that Stonemasons did not always adhere to the requirement to remove Mounds on installation of Gravestones and Memorials. Cllr. Miss R Testa proposed that Mr R. Knott be asked to provide a quotation to remove the mounds and use the surplus soil to fill in the collapsed graves in Row F. This was seconded by Cllr Miss K. Drake. There were eleven

votes in favour and the proposal was carried. In the meantime the Clerk would consider how best to re-inforce the regulations with the Stonemasons.

The Committee identified that it would be some time before the Cemetery Extension would come into use and it was agreed that Councillors generate ideas for the new Cemetery Working Group consider with regard to how it could be managed in the short to medium term. Cllr S. Whiteley also noted that incursion of weeds along the end of rows potentially reduced the availability of the main cemetery area for grave-spaces numbered on the map.

The condition of the entrance to the Cemetery was discussed. The roots from the Fir Tree were causing a trip hazard; Cllr Mrs C. Burrow noted a further hazard near the Chapel of Rest and it was agreed that the Clerk would make arrangements for the Handyman to mark these hazards to reduce risks to the public. It was noted that previous meetings had considered the need to widen the gates to accommodate access for mechanical diggers etc. The Clerk agreed to review previous investigations on this matter. It was further agreed that the new Working Group would review the case for removing the Fir Tree and Cypress tree near the entrance and the Risk Assessment would also need include the dangerous exposed drop from the boundary wall into the road.

The meeting also considered the issue of Gravestone numbering. Previous meetings had agreed that the Rows and Grave numbers be etched on the back of the stones. The Cemetery Group will review this issue and report back.

4. Permanent Fixture of Park Bench

It was noted that there was a danger to the public following the inappropriate relocation of the bench by some users of the park. There was a need to provide the bench with a permanent fixture. It was agreed that Cllr Ms J. Trehitt would liaise with the Handyman to ascertain the location for the bench. The Handyman would then make arrangements to install the supporting infrastructure into the ground. Once this part of the work was complete, it was envisaged that the bench would be extricated from the tree to enable it be fixed to the posts as quickly as possible.

5. Trees in the Churchyard.

Members noted that a number of issues had combined to delay implementing the programme of work identified in the 2019 Tree Survey. Included in the survey were a number of pollarded Lime trees which overhung properties at the back of the churchyard. The survey had noted that interruption of regular pollarding causes the formation of rot pockets. The trees were now proving to be a nuisance for neighbouring properties.

Cllr Miss R. Testa proposed that a small group be formed to meet with the Council's contractor to review the 2019 Tree Survey findings and identify and prioritise a programme of work to expedite the work. This was seconded by Cllr J. Gray. There were eleven votes in favour and the proposal was carried. Cllrs Ms. J. Trehitt, Cllr J. Gray and Cllr Miss R. Testa agreed to form the small group. It was further agreed that the Clerk would review budgetary provision for tree work. This would then enable the group to scope the range of the work appropriately.

Cllr Miss R. Testa also noted that not only were many of the trees subject to Tree Preservation Orders, but many were located in Conservation Areas. Financial Regulations required that prior to commencement of any work, the Contractor must apply for permission from WDBC which incurs a £60 charge. The Council therefore need to consider the best means of recognising the time and effort involved by the Contractor in surveying the trees and the "up-front" costs incurred by the Contractor. It was agreed that the new group consider this issue.

6. Chapel of Rest

Councillors had recently inspected the Chapel of Rest to review decorating requirements. This would involve painting two doors and two windows, one requiring some glazing work and re-puttying. It was also noted that part of the building was covered in Ivy and therefore this should be removed to ascertain if some of the brickwork required pointing.

Cllr S. Whiteley proposed that quotations be sought for re-decoration and that the Ivy be removed to ascertain the extent of re-pointing the brickwork. This was seconded by Cllr Miss R. Testa. There were eleven votes in favour and the proposal was carried.

7. Questions/Comments from members of the public

The meeting was suspended to allow members of the public to comment/ask a question on any **AGENDA ITEM ONLY – PLEASE QUOTE AGENDA ITEM NUMBER**. Time is limited to 2 minutes per person, up to a maximum of 3 persons, unless the Chairman rules otherwise. A brief record of any points made will be included in the minutes of that meeting.

With regard to Item 3 above, Mrs S. Knott noted that it would be useful to ascertain how many grave-spaces remained so that a calculation could be made as to when the extension may need to become operational.

Mrs S. Knott also noted re Item 6 that Mr Knott recommends the cutting of the bottom of Ivy stems at the base which facilitates easier removal of the Ivy growth. It was agreed that the Clerk request the contractor to do this.

Mrs C. Hughes noted that re Item 5, the Tree Survey included mention of the need to remove the growth of Elder on Yew Trees No 918 and 919. Re Item 3, Mrs Hughes also recalled that the Cemetery Gates cannot be altered to open inwards because of the rising ground level at the entrance and also made suggestions with regard to appropriate timings relating to the dissemination of Cemetery Regulation information to mourners. Members also briefly considered the need to relocate the Notice Board which would help in enforcing the regulations which would ideally also incorporate the Council's name and a Welcome notice.

The meeting was re-opened

8. Date of Next Meeting

The next Ordinary Meeting of the Town Council shall be Tuesday 4th August 2020 at 7.15 pm, via Zoom – any change to this will be notified when the relevant agenda is published.

PART II - EXEMPT REPORTS:

That under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 (as extended by S.100 of the Local Government Act 1972), the public and accredited representatives of newspapers be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by virtue of the paragraph specified against the item.

Cllr Mrs S. Watson proposed that a Part 2 meeting be convened. This was seconded by Cllr Miss R. Testa and this was unanimously agreed.

9. Future Land Purchases

Cllr S. Whiteley outlined that (pursuant to the powers invested in the Council in the Local Government Act 1972), it may be advantageous at the current time to consider purchasing land for a number of potential uses including car parking, house building, dog walking and planting. Members discussed the issue at length including potential future sites, including some with outline planning permission and the implications for vehicular access these sites posed,

In general there was support in principle to pursue this matter and it was recognised that it would be useful for members to gain further information on the experience of other Local Authorities who had made land purchases recently. The clerk also identified that a constraining factor may be the current resource capability of the Council administration in terms of time and expertise in this field. Cllr R. Testa agreed to get in touch with a contact at a near-by Community Land Trust which could provide an initial source of information and expertise.

Cllr Ms J. Trehitt proposed that the Council should investigate this matter further and that a smaller Working group of Councillors be convened which could identify potential plots of land and, where possible, likely cost. This was seconded by Cllr Mrs S. Watson. There were 11 votes in favour and the proposal was carried.

The meeting closed at 9.55pm