

**CREWKERNE AND WEST CREWKERNE**  
**JOINT BURIAL COMMITTEE**

Minutes of a remote meeting held on Thursday 17 June 2021 at 6.45 p.m.

**PRESENT:**

Cllrs. J. Borland (Chairman), M. Best, C. Broom, F. Freeman, A. Stuart and D. Wakeman.  
Also in attendance: P. Davidson (Clerk).

**19 TO NOTE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

21/22

None.

**20 OPEN FORUM**

21/22

No members of the public present.

**21 DAMAGE TO HEADSTONES**

21/22

To consider the issues raised by Mr Aslett regarding damage to the headstone on his plot and to damage to war grave headstones

Regarding the damage to the headstone on Mr Aslett's grave plot, the Chairman expressed on behalf of the Committee her sincere apologies for any distress caused to Mr and Mrs Aslett and their family from the issue of damage to the headstone on their plot.

A comprehensive assessment of all aspects of cemetery maintenance had been carried out over the previous weeks, involving meetings with the contractors. A detailed method statement had been obtained from the maintenance contractor and a risk assessment from the grave digger. Both confirmed that the contractors were fully aware of the sensitive nature of the grounds and the care needed when undertaking work at the cemetery. Establishing exactly how and who was responsible for the damage to Mr Aslett's headstone would be very difficult to establish. Nevertheless, recognising the distress caused to Mr Aslett and his family, the Committee had obtained a quotation from the original stonemason for the repair of the damage to the headstone, and the Chairman proposed that, as a gesture of goodwill and without prejudice, the Committee pay in full for these repairs to be carried out.

It was duly **AGREED** that the quotation obtained from the stonemason who had originally erected the headstone, for the repair to Mr Aslett's headstone, be paid for in full by the Committee.

Regarding the damage to the war grave headstones pointed out by Mr Aslett, Cllr. Best explained that, by a fortunate coincidence, he had taken a photograph of one of the headstones back in 2018. Examination of this photograph revealed that the damage observed today on this headstone was also present in 2018. It was therefore clear that the damage had not been caused by the current contractor, but had occurred at some point prior to the time of Cllr. Best's photograph of 2018. The Clerk added that the War Graves Commission had been in communication with the Committee regarding the damage to the war graves. The Commission had advised that damage of the type observed on the headstones in the Townsend cemetery appeared to have been caused by strimmers and that such damage was a common issue in UK cemeteries. The Commission did operate a headstone replacement scheme but the damage to the Townsend war grave headstones

was minor enough to not warrant new headstones. The Commission’s recommendation was that the Committee liaise with their maintenance contractor, to take suitable care when strimming or using mowers around the war grave headstones. Cllr. Best added that such discussions had already been held with the cemetery maintenance contractor.

The Chairman concluded by stating that, as usage of the cemetery had increased, it was clear that closer communication was required between the maintenance contractor, the Town Council grounds staff and the Joint Burial Committee, in order to ensure the efficient management of the increasingly complex cemetery grounds.

22 **TO ELECT THE VICE CHAIRMAN**

21/22

**Cllr. Best was unanimously elected as Vice-Chairman for 2021/22.**

23 **MATTERS OF REPORT**

21/22

- Cemetery maintenance: the Clerk supplemented what the Chairman had reported above, that regular meetings were now taking place with the cemetery maintenance contractor, to ensure that maintenance tasks were prioritised according to the ongoing needs, which were dictated by such things as prevailing weather conditions. He added that, as a result of these discussions, the scope of work for the contractor had been expanded to ensure a more responsive service.
- Asset register: Cllr. Wakeman noted that the Burial Committee’s asset register had been recently added to the Town Council website. He pointed out that the asset values related to a valuation from 2010 and questioned why these valuations had not been updated. In response, the Clerk clarified that, in accordance with standard practice for town/parish councils, the asset register remained fixed in value over time, only changing when assets were acquired or disposed of. In contrast, the Committee did regularly review the value of the assets for insurance purposes.

24 **DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

21/22

Tuesday 5 October 2021 at 6.45 p.m. in the Council Chamber in the Town Hall, Market Square, Crewkerne (subject to prevailing covid restrictions).

The meeting closed at 7.10 p.m.

**Signed.....**

**Dated.....**