

# GODALMING JOINT BURIAL COMMITTEE

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17 June 2011

I HEREBY SUMMON YOU to attend the **JOINT BURIAL COMMITTEE** meeting to be held in Godalming Council Chamber on THURSDAY, 23 JUNE 2011 at 5.30 pm.

Louise P Goodfellow  
Clerk to the Committee

Committee Members: Councillor Thomson  
Councillor Wheatley  
Councillor Wilson  
Councillor Lister  
Councillor A Bott  
Councillor Noyce

## AGENDA

1. TO ELECT A CHAIRMAN

To receive nominations for the Chairman of the Committee and to elect said Chairman.

2. TO ELECT A VICE-CHAIRMAN

To receive nominations for the Vice-Chairman of the Committee and to elect said Vice-Chairman.

3. MINUTES

The Chairman to sign as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 14 April 2011.

4. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

5. DISCLOSURE OF PERSONAL AND PREJUDICIAL INTERESTS

To receive from Members, in relation to any items included on the agenda for this meeting, disclosure of any interests which are required to be disclosed by the Local Authorities (Model Code of Conduct) Order 2007 No.1159.

Members are requested to disclose, in accordance with the Code of Conduct, both the existence and nature of any "Personal" or "Prejudicial" interests that they may have in relation to matters for consideration on this agenda.

Personal Interests

- (1) Subject to sub-paragraphs (2) to (5) below, where a Member has a personal interest in any business of the Town Council and attends a meeting of the Council at which the business is considered, the Member must disclose to that meeting the existence

Members of the Public have the right to attend all meetings of the Town Council and its Committees and are welcome.

and nature of that interest at the commencement of that consideration, or when the interest becomes apparent.

- (2) Where the Member has a personal interest in any business of the Town Council which relates to or is likely to affect a person described in paragraph 8(1)(a)(i) or 8(1)(a)(ii)(aa) of the Code of Conduct, the Member needs only disclose to the meeting the existence and nature of that interest when s/he addresses the meeting on that business.
- (3) Where the Member has a personal interest in any business of the Town Council of the type mentioned in paragraph 8(1)(a)(viii) of the Code of Conduct, the Member need not disclose the nature or existence of that interest to the meeting if the interest was registered more than three years before the date of the meeting.
- (4) Sub-paragraph (1) only applies where the Member is aware or ought reasonably to be aware of the existence of the personal interest.
- (5) Where a Member has a personal interest but, by virtue of paragraph 14 of the Code of Conduct, sensitive information relating to it is not registered in the Town Council's register of members' interests, the Member must indicate to the meeting that s/he has a personal interest, but need not disclose the sensitive information to the meeting

### Prejudicial Interests

Where a Member has a personal interest in any business of the Town Council that Member also has a prejudicial interest in that business where the interest is one which a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice that Member's judgement of the public interest. Where a Member has a prejudicial interest that Member must withdraw from the room or chamber where a meeting considering the business is being held.

## 6. ACCOUNTS PAID SINCE LAST MEETING & SCHEDULE OF PAYMENTS

Clerk to report on the accounts paid since the last meeting.

A schedule of the accounts paid will be tabled for the information of Members. The vouchers relating to these payments will also be tabled at the meeting for inspection. All payments made are in line with the agreed budget or other resolution of this Committee or Full Council.

Members to agree that the Chairman should sign the schedule of accounts paid.

## 7. FINAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE 12 MONTHS ENDING 31 MARCH 2011

The Final Accounts are attached for the information of Members. Members are asked to note that the overall income exceeded expenditure by £19,358; this surplus exceeds the amount anticipated in the revised estimates by £8,720, the impact of this can be seen on the summary of details of movement and balances for 2010/11 and 2011/12 respectively.

The income and expenditure account (copy attached for the information of Members) shows the detailed variances to budget, significant variances to note are as follows:

### Income

Income generated has increased by £5,000 for Nightingale and £4000 for Eashing cemetery, over the revised estimates for the year. This provides the additional income received over the revised estimate calculated in October 2010.

### Expenditure

In the main budgets were marginally over or underspent but overall balance each other out with no effect on the budget at the end of the year. The final payments were made at the commencement of the year for the Eashing Lodge development project.

Transfers from "Earmarked Reserves", to support projects and expenditure, have been agreed and minuted throughout the year. In total transfers from the revenue budget amounting to £15,500 have been made to the earmarked reserves to provide for ongoing work and projects as specified when the revised estimates and budget were agreed. In addition to this the revenue surplus of £19,358 has also been added to the reserves. These additions have increased the total reserves from £45,171 last year to £80,029 this year providing a healthy position for the future.

Members are asked to RECEIVE and ADOPT the Annual Accounts for Godalming Joint Burial Committee for the year ended 31 March 2011.

#### 8. AUDIT SUB COMMITTEE REPORT

TO RECEIVE Chairman's report of the Audit Sub-Committee, which met on 23 June 2011, including the Internal Audit undertaken on the 25 May 2011.

#### 9. INTERNAL AUDIT

Members to note that the internal audit was conducted on 25 May 2011 and that the outcome from the internal audit was reported to the Audit Sub Committee on 23 June 2011.

Members are asked to RECEIVE the report (a copy of the Internal Auditor's Report is attached for the information of Members) and consider the recommendations contained therein.

#### 10. ANNUAL RETURN (INCLUDING ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT) FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 2011

Members are asked to consider and approve the Annual Return Section 1 - Statement of Accounts for Godalming Joint Burial Committee. Members should note that following clearer guidance from our external auditors, the value of the Council's assets has had to be restated. Therefore the total value of the assets on the annual accounting statement has changed; the value for last year has also been restated (a copy of the revised Asset Register is attached for the information of Members).

Upon approving Section 1, Members are asked to authorise the Chairman to sign Section 1 - Statement of Accounts for Godalming Joint Burial Committee.

Members are further asked to complete and approve Section 2 - Annual Governance Statement, so that the Annual Return may be forwarded to the External Auditor, BDO Stoy Hayward, to enable the external audit to proceed. The Committee will be aware that the Audit Sub-Committee has considered the answers required by the Annual Governance Statement and will wish to take the observations of its Sub-Committee into account when completing the statement.

When satisfied with the answers required by the Annual Governance Statement Members are asked to authorise the Chairman to complete the statement and sign it.

Members are also asked to note that Section 4 – the Annual Internal Audit Report to Godalming Joint Burial Committee contains a summary of the Internal Audit Report considered at agenda item 7 above.

#### 11. WEBSITE DESIGN

Members to receive a presentation from Plug & Play Design on the progress of the Godalming Cemeteries website and for the Committee to approve the palette in order for the final stage of the design process to proceed.

12. RE-PURCHASE OF TWO NATURAL BURIAL PLOTS

Members to agree the re-repurchasing of two natural burial plots brought in 2008 at a cost of £650 each. The current owners' circumstances have changed and they are moving away from the area. Precedence has been set for this situation in as much that burial plots have been re-purchased at the same price at which they were originally bought less a charge for administration. It is RECOMMENDED that if Members are minded to approve the re-purchasing of these burial plots an administration fee of £50 is levied.

13. TREE WORK – EASHING CEMETERY BOUNDARY

Members to approve tree removal work along the Ockford Ridge/Franklyn Road boundaries of Eashing Cemetery. It is believed that the current tree line along these boundaries was planted in the 1930s as a screen between the cemetery and the then new housing. However, at some point, maintenance on this tree line was not as rigorous as it ought to have been and the trees were allowed to grow unfettered. Of the 45 trees surveyed, 7 have been found to be in poor condition with the remaining 32 being considered as only in fair condition. Due to the very close proximity of these trees to neighbouring dwellings and gardens, it is RECOMMENDED that Members agree to the removal of the coniferous tree line with a view to replanting with lower growing native species.

If Members are minded to approve this work then it is RECOMMENDED that it is conducted during August, which is after the end of the current nesting period and whilst the ground should still be firm enough to take the vehicle weight with the least damage to the cemetery.

In accordance with Financial Regulation 12.1(h)(c) three quotes have been obtained. All contractors are fully insured with correctly qualified personnel and extensive experience of local authority work. Having asked amplifying questions and received satisfactory answers regarding the large price difference within the quotes, the Cemeteries Manager RECOMMENDS Members accept the lowest quote. However, a 40% contingency should be allowed for any reinstatement/repair works needed to the cemetery grass since the size of the vehicle to be used might cause damage. This would still mean the lowest quote (Quote A) is still £4,915 below Quote B.

Quote A = £5,470 to include full clearance of all arisings, trees to be removed by lorry mounted crane. Timber will go to a Bio Mass provider for use within Surrey.  
Re-instatement work not included  
Quote B = £12,573 to include clearance of all arisings  
Quote C = £14,000 plus waste disposal at cost but not including on-site generated chippings

Members should also note that on 8 June a cemetery tree split causing it to fall across a pathway, inspection of the split tree revealed rot within its trunk, therefore, the Clerk has ordered the removal both of the fallen section and the removal of the remainder.

14. TEMPORARY SUMMER STAFF FOR RE-WRITING PLOT REGISTERS

Members are aware of the importance of the Cemetery Plot Registers as the working records of the cemeteries. The Cemetery Plot Registers will be made available in the chamber for Members' inspection. The accuracy of these records cannot be overstated nor can the importance of them being in a good material condition. As Members will see, the material condition of the Plot Records has deteriorated to an extent whereby action is needed to ensure that the records remain accurate and available for use.

There are many companies who offer various degrees of service to computerise burial records including plot registers. The majority require a large initial outlay to data input the records and then an annual software licence to enable continued use of the records and include many features that are not necessarily relevant for this Burial Authority. However, none will provide guarantees that in 70 or 100 years' time these fully computerised records would still be accessible. Therefore, it is RECOMMENDED that Godalming Joint Burial Committee records, including the Plot Registers remain in a paper form. It is possible, however, to provide a computer-based recording process combined with a hard copy printout that would enable ease and efficiency of use with the security of accessibility offered by a paper copy, this would bring the Plot Registers in-line with the type of system adopted for the Register of Burials.

In order to achieve this the current data held in the manuscript records will need to be entered into computerised pages, these would then be printed and placed into appropriate folders to be used as the working copy. Manuscript alterations to the Plot Register would be made to the working copy with the computerised record being updated at the end of each quarter when other burial records are also updated. Updated pages would then be printed and inserted as required and a signed record of updates would be shown at the front of the paper copy. This process would mean that the working copy was always up to date and that the computerised record never had more than a 3 months lag.

To achieve this the initial data input must be accurate, therefore it is proposed that during August 2011 a temporary employee is engaged for 3 hours per day to conduct the data entry. The time will be structured such that no more than 2 hours of data entry is conducted before a line-by-line check with officers is conducted to ensure accuracy. It is believed that this process would take 4 weeks. Initial enquiries with the recruitment agency previously used by the Town Council for temporary staff indicate that, in order to engage someone with the appropriate skill levels and attitude to conduct this function, the cost would be £690 for four weeks.

It is RECOMMENDED that approval be given to engage a temporary member of staff for 4 weeks for data entry of the Plot Registers with a contingency to increase to 6 weeks at a maximum total cost of £1,035.

15. STRATEGIC PLANNING WORKSHOP

Members may wish to consider using an external consultant to assist in the formulation of a strategic business plan. In order for the Cemeteries Manager to implement an agreed business plan it is necessary for Members to provide strategic guidance for the formulation of the business plan. A number of major areas of development and expenditure have been discussed in isolation that needs to be considered within an overarching strategic framework. An option that Members may wish to consider is a Strategic Planning Workshop facilitated by Peter Linsell Management Consultants (specialists in Cemetery Management) who, having conducted a site visit and familiarisation along with appropriate research and data collection, would conduct a one-day workshop with Members and report on outcomes with recommendations and present the report to Members. Such a report could be used as the foundation for a strategic business plan. The cost of the above plus travel and expenses would be £2,950 plus VAT to be met from reserves.

16. MAINTENANCE CONTRACT SPECIFICATIONS

Members to agree ground maintenance contract specifications (copy attached for the information of Members) for the Nightingale and Eashing Cemeteries and to authorise the Cemetery Manager to seek tender bids in accordance with Financial Regulation 12.1.

17. NIGHTINGALE CEMETERY STEPS

Members will be aware of the previous considerations regarding the steps at Nightingale Cemetery (Minute No. 79-10 refers) and that Members of this committee had previously noted that:

*‘...although the Nightingale Cemetery steps were not a public right of way the closure of the steps could be considered as a loss of amenity.’*

As such, and as directed by this committee, the issue of Nightingale Cemetery steps as they related to a public amenity was put to the Policy & Management Committee of Godalming Town Council. The Members of the Policy & Management Committee discussed the possibility of meeting some of the costs of keeping the steps open but indicated that they would like further information on the potential costs before making a decision. Members also decided that they would like more clarity about alternative footpaths in the locality. Accordingly Members asked that, if the Joint Burial Committee decides it would like the Town Council’s financial assistance in keeping the steps open, the Joint Burial Committee should take quotes for work necessary to repair the steps and report back to this Committee with that information and further data (including maps) of the location of other footpaths (Minute No. 40-11 refers).

The Joint Burial Committee surveyor has been requested to breakdown the quotes for the work into the two distinct area of works, and it is RECOMMENDED that when these are received, the quote relating to the repair of the steps along with the additional information requested be put to the Policy & Management Committee of Godalming Town Council. It is further RECOMMENDED that, as the closure of the Nightingale Cemetery steps would have no adverse effect on the operation of the cemetery, if the Policy & Management Committee does not wish to fund the repair of the steps then this committee agrees to the permanent closure of the steps. In making this decision Members would wish to note that Godalming Town Council has received a petition of 26 signatures against the closure of Nightingale Cemetery steps, this petition states:

*“We understand that consideration is being given to closing the steps providing access to the cemetery on its northern side and express the hope that a way can be found to keep the route open. This is used by local people both for quiet walks and as access to the cemetery itself, and we call for an imaginative approach to retain it for the use of the public.”*

Irrespective of whether or not Godalming Town Council decides to fund the repairs to Nightingale Cemetery steps or not, this committee retains the responsibility to maintain the banking between the cemetery and 29 Shadyhanger. However, if neither this committee nor Godalming Town Council decides to fund the repair of the steps, then the timescale for the repair to the banking alters, ie. the work on the bank must be conducted at the same time as repairs to the steps or they can be scheduled separately, within the normal programme of works for the cemetery, if the decision is to close the steps. As such, if the Policy & Management Committee agrees to fund the repair of the steps then an extraordinary meeting of this committee will need to be called in order to agree the funding of the repair to the banking so that all necessary works can be scheduled at the same time. Alternatively, this committee could agree to approve repair work to the retaining bank up to a maximum of £6,000, subject to the normal rules relating to quotes, if the Policy & Management Committee agree to repair the steps, with an extraordinary meeting of this committee only being required if quotes exceed £6,000.

Members would also wish to be aware that unless repairs to the steps are completed by 1 October 2011 then they would need to be either temporarily or permanently closed depending on the decisions of each committee.

18. CLERK'S USE OF DELEGATED POWERS – NEW CYPRESS TREES AT EASHING CEMETERY

Members to note that the Italian Cypress trees (*Cupressus sempervirens stricta*) planted along the driveway at Eashing Cemetery in 2009 are still struggling to establish themselves and are showing signs of extreme stress. It is entirely possible that this is due to suffering two relatively dry years with an extreme winter in between. On grounds of urgency and in consultation with Councillor Wilson (as the former Chairman of this Committee), the Clerk has used her delegated powers to authorise a programme of fortnightly watering of the trees by a specialist contractor. It is hoped that this will revive the trees. The cost of this watering will be approximately £30 a fortnight (some £210 in total). This sum to be met from the budget set aside for the replanting of failed shrubs. However, it is RECOMMENDED that if they have not recovered by the end of September/beginning October then they are removed and the ground prepared for late autumn re-planting. The choice of replacements and the funding being brought to this committee in October for approval.

19. HONEY BEES

Enquiries have been made of the Cemeteries Manager regarding the feasibility of local beekeepers placing hives within Eashing Cemetery. Members are requested to consider whether, in principle, they would support such a request. If Members are minded to support the request, they are requested to authorise the Cemeteries Manager to negotiate the detail of any arrangements, ensuring that there are no financial liabilities on the Joint Burial Committee or its constituent authorities.

20. BURIAL STATISTICS

Statistics for the previous quarter and for the twelve months ending 30 June 2011 (subject to final confirmation) are attached for the information of Members.

21. GODALMING IN BLOOM

Members to note that the Cemeteries Manager has entered Nightingale Cemetery into the 'Managed Community Garden' section of Godalming in Bloom 2011 and Eashing Cemetery Natural Burial Garden in the 'Wildlife & Wildflower' section. Judging takes place on 24 June 2011.

22. WAVERLEY DESIGN AWARDS

Members are asked to approve the entry of the new Eashing Cemetery entrance including the refurbished Lodge House, the new houses, the wall and new railings into the Waverley Design Award competition.

23. CHANGE OF DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Due to the non-availability of Clerks on the Thursday, 13 October 2011 this meeting is cancelled and the next meeting of the Godalming Joint Burial Committee is now scheduled to take place on Thursday, 29 September 2011 at 5.00pm at **Eashing** Cemetery and thereafter in the Council Chamber. Additionally, Members should note that due to audit requirements an additional meeting is now scheduled for Thursday, 27 October 2011 at 5.00pm in the Council Chamber. **Members to note this is a change of a previously agreed date and an additional meeting.**

24. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Brought forward by permission of the Chairman. Requests to be submitted prior to commencement of the meeting.

TO: ALL MEMBERS OF THE GODALMING JOINT BURIAL COMMITTEE