

**MINUTES AND REPORT OF THE POLICY & MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
HELD ON 13 JULY 2023**

- * Councillor Follows – Chair
- * Councillor Weightman – Vice Chair

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Councillor Adam # Councillor Clayton * Councillor Crooks * Councillor Crowe 0 Councillor Downey * Councillor Heagin * Councillor Holliday * Councillor Kiehl | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Councillor Martin * Councillor PS Rivers * Councillor PMA Rivers * Councillor Steel * Councillor Taylor * Councillor Thomson * Councillor Williams |
|---|--|

* Present # Absent & No Apology Received 0 Apology for Absence L Late

150. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 29 June 2023, having been previously circulated were signed by the Chair as a true record.

151. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received and recorded as above.

152. DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND OTHER REGISTERABLE INTERESTS

Members made no declarations of interest in relation to any item on the agenda for this meeting, which is required to be disclosed by the Localism Act 2011 and the Godalming Members' Code of Conduct.

153. PETITIONS/STATEMENTS/QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

No petitions/statements/questions had been received from members of the public in accordance with Standing Order No 4.

154. QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS

No questions from Councillors were submitted in accordance with Standing Order 6.

155. ACCOUNTS PAID SINCE LAST MEETING & SCHEDULE OF PAYMENTS

	£
Godalming Town Council	
Accounts paid since the 30 th of June	31,092.16
Receipts received since the 30 th of June	34,445.32
Balance held in HSBC Current Account	
Balance at 13 July 2023	21,762.42
Balance held in the HSBC Business Deposit Account	
Balance at 13 July 2023	1,358,094.82
CCLA Deposit Account	
Balance at 13 July 2023	200,000.00

A schedule of the accounts paid was tabled for the information of Members and a copy is attached to record minutes. The vouchers relating to these payments were also tabled at the meeting for inspection. All payments made were in line with the agreed budget or other resolution of this Committee or Full Council.

Members agreed that the Chair should sign the schedule of accounts paid.

156. BUDGET MONITORING

Members considered a budget monitoring report to 30 June 2023 against the revised budget agreed at Full Council on 27 April 2023 (detailed report attached to record minutes).

The monitoring report shows a current variance of £59,427 underspend against the revised Budget. Items to note in the forecast:

Head Office

- £6.8k Rates underspend – this is the first ‘normal’ rates invoice since COVID and the change of use from retail to office space. This is a permanent saving.
- £3.0k Surveyor Fees overspend – this is the cost for the proposed Crown Court toilet renovation plans.
- £1.6k Other Professional Fees overspend – this includes the new Health & Safety system costs (£2.1k) and the cost to amend our financial system to include the cemeteries (£0.5k)
- £4.3k Insurance overspend – insurance now incorporates Cemeteries and is offset by an underspend of £5k in insurance in the Cemeteries cost centre. Overall, savings were made in our insurance by combining the policies.
- £30.2k Grants overspend – this is a timing issue only with our four SLA Grants paid in April.

Civic Expenses

- £0.8k Property Maintenance – cost to repair Mayor’s Consort’s badge,
- £0.9k Other Professional Fees – includes cost to update Board of Past Mayors and Town Clerks as well as cost of photographer for official Mayor’s photo.
- £0.9k Mayor’s Expenses – timing difference only. Costs are for Civic Service.

Town Promotion

- £1.7k Income – Sponsorship and donation gained for Floral Godalming exceeded budget.
- £2.0k Grounds Maintenance underspend – this covers the costs of Floral Godalming which runs for several more months.
- £4.5k Other Professional Fees overspend – this includes the cost of the flags along the High Street and Meadow for the King’s Coronation. As agreed by P&M 23 March 2023 (Min No. 561-22), this cost has been met by a transfer from the Emerging Projects reserve.

Festivals & Markets

- £0.9k Payroll underspend – staff who worked the Spring Festival elected to take TOIL rather than be paid.
- £1.7k Advertising – costs were incurred in March, prior to the Spring festival.

Coronation Concert

- Budget approved P&M 24 November 2022 (Min No 393-22 refers).
- £9.8k transferred from the Emerging Projects reserve.

BWP Youth Centre

- £101.2k received from UK Shared Prosperity Fund for 2023/24 to expand the youth service into Ockford Ridge and surrounding villages.
- £2.2k Repair/Alteration of Buildings overspend – deposit for solar panels as part of Capital Works Programme (Min Nos 314-22 and 602-22 refer).
- £23.7k Equipment overspend – £22.1k is the purchase of the Youth Service Van and £7.6k is the purchase of the Minibus, both of which are to enable the provision of a mobile service.

Wilfrid Noyce Centre

- £3.8k Rates underspend – unexpected Retail Hospitality & Leisure Scheme discount applied.
- £2.4k Cleaning underspend – timing issues only (invoice from Waverley outstanding).

Godalming Museum

- £2.3k Property Maintenance overspend – includes installing fire doors, repairing the fire exit and replastering the ceiling in office.
- £1.3k Rent overspend – car park space for Curator instead of monthly allowance. Timing issue only as salary underspend will offset rent overspend.

Land & Property Other

- £3.7k Equipment overspend – defibrillators for phone boxes in Spring Grove and Charterhouse.

Cemeteries

- £3.8k Energy Costs overspend – this covers the electricity costs from September 2022.
- £4.6k Rates underspend – challenge to rateable value successful resulting in lower rates for Eashing Cemetery.
- £4.6k Grounds Maintenance underspend – timing issue only.
- £5k Insurance underspend – insurance now combined in GTC main policy – see Head Office comments.
- £2.7k Legal Fees overspend – this is the cost of transferring Cemetery land assets from JBC to the Council.

Cllr Heagin raised three questions regarding the costs of the defibrillators in Land & Property Other:

- I. How many defibrillators do we have in total? Godalming Town Council has 5 fixed and one mobile defibrillator.
- II. Will we be registering them on the Circuit database? They have all been registered but there are issues with the database, which is preventing the registration from showing, this issue lies with Circuit and they are working to resolve.
- III. Is there any ongoing maintenance costs associated with the provision of defibrillators? Yes. Battery replacement every three years at £250 per battery, electrode pads replaced every two years at £130 per defibrillator, occasional replacement of cabinets due to vandalism £600. There is also a staff cost as the defibrillators need to be tested every week.

157. COMMITTEE REPORTS AND KEY DATES

Members noted the Committee's reports' schedule and key dates programme.

158. GROUNDS MAINTENANCE WORKS

Members considered a request from the Farncombe Initiative community group for Godalming Town Council to include the ongoing upkeep of the pavement planter on Farncombe Street and the border areas between the car parking area and pavements at the Green Lane/Long Gore shops. In considering this request, Members noted that Paragraph 24.1 of the Farncombe & Binscombe Vision document recognises the fact that if Floral Godalming were to be extended into the Farncombe and Binscombe area, the public display element would need to be planted up and maintained by GTC staff in as economical and sustainable way as possible and that Action 4 of the document states that GTC should “Work with the local community to expand Floral Godalming into the Farncombe and Binscombe area. Displays need not be limited to planters but may involve the planting of verges and other poorly maintained/minimal diversity grassed areas”.

Members commented that the Farncombe Initiative, as a community group has sown the seeds of the extension of Floral Godalming into the Farncombe and Binscombe area and Members wished to thank the Farncombe Initiative for its work in these areas and recognised that without a solution to the future upkeep of these areas, the community effort and goodwill that saw these projects set up in the first place would go to waste.

Whilst Members agreed that the capacity of GTC grounds staff is insufficient at the current time to manage a wider extension of Floral Godalming, with the initial groundwork already having been achieved, incorporating these two areas to make a modest start is achievable.

Therefore, Members resolved to agree the following actions:

- a. that GTC grounds staff incorporate the Farncombe street planter and Green Lane/Long Gore borders between the shopping precinct car park and the pavements into Floral Godalming works;
- b. the Farncombe Initiative should be thanked for its works in establishing these areas for communal planting; and
- c. the Town Clerk to confirm the ownership of the land in question.

159. COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP FUND

The Town Clerk confirmed the Council met the deadline for submitting the full application for capital funding of £165,988 for 80% of the building works and revenue funding of £28,498 for professional fees, statutory and regulatory costs based on the RCIS estimate for works to renovate the Crown Court public toilets.

The Council also consulted with its residents regarding whether the Council should apply for this funding (89% said we should) and whether the match funding should come from Neighbourhood CIL (87% said it should).

The Town Clerk anticipates a response to our application within six weeks.

160. BURIAL STATISTICS

Members noted the burial statistics for the quarter ended 30 June 2023.

161. RE-USE OF LAND WITHIN NIGHTINGALE CEMETERY

Members noted that to enable accurate data to be collated in support of an application for the re-use of burial land within Nightingale Cemetery, the former Godalming Joint Burial Committee had undertaken a process of digital mapping of Nightingale Cemetery alongside the digitisation of the historic burial records of Nightingale Cemetery.

Having completed this work Members were informed that a dialogue has been opened with the Diocesan Registrar of The Bishop of Guildford's Registry to explore the process to seek a faculty for re-use of land at Nightingale Cemetery.

In considering the former Joint Burial Committee's aim to re-use burial land at Nightingale Cemetery, Members were provided with background information as to why the former Joint Burial Committee sought to investigate options for continued burial at Nightingale Cemetery, the information provided is set out below:

Background

Burial land is a finite resource and having been opened in 1857, there are now very few inhumation grave spaces remaining in Nightingale Cemetery. Therefore, there is a need to explore ways of increasing availability within Nightingale Cemetery.

The current rate of burial at Nightingale Cemetery averages five inhumations per annum over the previous 14 years, although a small number in comparison to Eashing Cemetery, the wish to be buried in Farncombe close to family connections and within the ecclesiastical parish of Farncombe is important to parishioners. However, even though inhumations at Nightingale are now restricted to parishioners, the cemetery has less than a year's supply.

Developing a Plan

Having already created as many new burial spaces as possible in virgin soil, for Godalming Town Council to be able to continue to provide parishioners the option of an inhumation at Nightingale Cemetery it will need to re-use existing burial land within the cemetery.

The re-use of existing burial land is challenging and needs to be approached in a considered, well-resourced way.

Re-use may be seen as contentious by some people and would need to be carefully communicated to the community. Therefore, it is suggested that the Town Council should:

- formally consult with the Farncombe Parish PCC, Diocese of Guildford, residents and other stakeholders (including funeral directors);
- have funding allocated to undertake works; and
- set out clearly any risks associated with adopting and moving forward with the reuse of burial land.

By following a clear plan, Godalming Town Council will be able to:

- continue to have burial capacity and thus be able to offer a service to the community; and
- maintain revenue to offset costs to enable cemetery landholdings to be managed in the long term. Establishing a 20-year supply equates to a minimum income of £238,500 at current rates.

Re-use of Existing Burial Plots

Re-use of Graves Within the Unconsecrated Section

The disturbance of human remains within unconsecrated areas of public cemeteries requires the permission of the principal Secretary of State, which is currently unlikely to be given for the re-use of a grave space. However, it should be noted that Bishop Stortford Town Council, who have been pioneers in the reuse of burial land in town and parish-maintained cemeteries are currently seeking a Private Act of Parliament, similar to that granted to London metropolitan cemeteries, for reuse of land in unconsecrated areas.

Re-use of Graves Within Consecrated Areas

The general position is that buried human remains may not be disturbed without specific authority. However, *Section 25 of the Burial Act 1857 (as amended by section 2 of the Church of England (Miscellaneous Provisions) Measure 2014* allows, with permission from the appropriate Church of England Diocese, for the disturbance of remains in churchyards and other consecrated ground.

The Diocese of Southwark has published advice that there should be an expectation of re-use of graves after 75 years and the Diocese of St Albans has issued a faculty to Bishop Stortford Town Council for the re-use of graves within its historic cemetery. Therefore, the general principle of grave re-use in consecrated sections of a cemetery is established, although it is the responsibility of each Diocese to set its own guidelines and determine its own criteria. Permissions for re-use of grave spaces have previously been granted by the Diocese of Guildford, although it should be noted that each case is assessed on its merits.

Lift and Deepen

If permission were to be given to re-use existing grave spaces within the consecrated area of the cemetery, then a protocol for the dignified handling of any existing remains and possessions discovered would have to be approved. The Town Clerk has contacted the Bereavement Services Manager at Bishop Stortford and Lambeth Council to request the sharing of best practice to gain an understanding of the principles, policies, and procedures they have had approved.

Although there are two existing methods of managing the re-use of burial land, the 'Lift & Deepen' method is deemed the more dignified. This method allows for any remains and possessions discovered during the preparation of the grave to be lifted from their existing position, the ground is then dug to a greater depth than required with the discovered remains replaced in the same plot and then covered over with soil. Thereafter the plot space can be used as though it was a new grave. This is a simple system with much merit in that it allows plots to be re-used without having to extensively remap the cemetery.

Summary of Reuse Options

Although the House of Commons Briefing Paper No. 04060, 6 June 2017 – Re-use of Graves, shows that the availability of burial space is being kept under review, with the issue last being aired in November 2016,¹ the only significant changes made to the 1857 Burial Act that would allow for the re-use of existing graves relate to burials in churchyards and other consecrated ground. As such, it is the re-use of graves in the consecrated area of Nightingale Cemetery that offers the best hope for parishioners wishing to be buried in Nightingale Cemetery.

Next Steps

Following initial dialogue with the Diocesan Registrar of The Bishop of Guildford's Registry, it has been recommended that Godalming Town Council moves towards the stage of applying for a faculty to re-use cemetery land.

In making an application Godalming Town Council will need to provide a carefully worked out proposal to put before the Chancellor. The proposal needs to be clear about what it is Godalming Town Council is asking to be approved, based on professional research, opinions, and advice. Godalming Town Council will also need to be clear about what consultation/advertising it has done to make the public/families aware of any proposal, and any response to it. This consultation/advertising will need to happen before the request is

¹ House of Commons Debate 29 November 2016 c1487

submitted to the Chancellor and is in addition to any further public notice period that is required under the faculty jurisdiction rules.

Once a fully worked out proposal has been agreed and the required public consultation has taken place the next step will be to ask the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) to look at it (as they will be required to give advice to the Chancellor). Once the DAC has considered a proposal and issued its advice, a Petition will be issued for completion, which once completed is sent (along with all documentation considered by the DAC) to the Registry for the Chancellor's consideration.

Decisions

Having considered the above information and following debate, Members resolved to agree the following:

- a. to pursue the option to re-use cemetery land to be able to continue to offer an inhumation option within the Farncombe area of the parish of Godalming;
- b. for an Arboricultural Impact Assessment to be conducted to establish the root protection areas required to allow mapping of the area of land to be considered for re-use. Costs to be set against the ground's maintenance budget;
- c. that excepting the budgetary aspects, including information required to set fees and charges, of cemetery operations, considerations and decisions regarding the land management of the cemeteries should lie with the Environment & Planning Committee;
- d. the Parochial Church Council of St John's Church Farncombe should be consulted regarding the re-use of burial land at Nightingale Cemetery and that information should also be provided at Nightingale Cemetery; and
- e. the decisions of the former Joint Burial Committee in regards to financial approvals for this project are approved and remain extant.

162. POLICY DOCUMENT REVIEW

Members recommended the following documents be amended and then forwarded to Full Council for approval.

- Complaints Procedure – How to Handle – remove reference to the Joint Burial Committee
- Complaints Procedure – How to Make – remove reference to the Joint Burial Committee
- Safeguarding Policy – add reference to the Youth Safeguarding Policy

Members resolved that the following documents be updated as reviewed with no changes.

- Code of Conduct – Members
- Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Application Form
- Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Policy & Funding Application Form Guide

The following document's review was deferred until after the publication of the administration's future business plan:

- Godalming Town Centre Area – Past, Present & Future

163. TOWN COUNCIL REPRESENTATION ON EXTERNAL BODIES – REPORT ON THE FAIRTRADE STEERING GROUP

The report on the Fairtrade Steering Group was deferred to a future meeting.

164. TOWN COUNCIL REPRESENTATION ON EXTERNAL BODIES – REPORT ON THE FARNCOMBE DAY CENTRE

Members noted a report from Councillor Crowe on the Farncombe Day Centre, an organisation upon which Councillor Crowe represents the Town Council.

165. COMMUNICATIONS ARISING FROM THIS MEETING

Members identified no items from this meeting to be publicised.

166. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Policy & Management Committee is scheduled to be held in the Council Chamber on Thursday, 7 September 2023 at 6.30pm.

167. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Members were advised that there would be planning training at the Environment & Planning Committee meeting on 10 August 2023.