



Minutes of the Bradninch Town Council Burial Committee
Saturday May 18th 2024, 2pm, St Disen's Churchyard

Present: Cllr I Wild (Chairman), Cllr J Blythe, Cllr P Chambers, Cllr L Mottram.

In attendance: A Marshall, Clerk, no members of the public.

B/24/01 Election of a Committee Chairman and Deputy Chairman: Following the election of Cllr Wild as Committee Chairman at the May full Council meeting, it was RESOLVED to elect Cllr Blythe as Deputy Chairman. Cllr Blythe accepted the post.

B/24/02 Public Open Session: None.

Apologies: Cllr Birley, prior commitment. Cllr M Taylor, illness. Cllr Ottery, family commitment.

Declarations of Interest: Cllr Chambers declared an interest in Town Trust matters.

B/24/03 To consider updates and correspondence since the last meeting:

- a) **Churchyard hedges** – a request had been received from the Town Trust to lower the height of the hedge along the boundary between the Churchyard and the Church Street properties. A resident of Church Street had complained about the height of the hedge. Following an inspection of the hedge, which was estimated to be in the region of 3 metres high on the Churchyard side, it was RESOLVED to write to the grounds maintenance contractor asking for the height to be reduced to 1.8 metres, as per the signed contract, this autumn. The contract states that relevant Churchyard hedges should be cut once in September and once in November annually and that the hedge should remain at a height of 1.8 metres. Cllr Mottram abstained from voting with regards to the hedge cutting due to ecological reasons. The hedge height would be further reviewed by the Committee at the end of September and November.

It was further RESOLVED to ask the grounds maintenance contractor to tender for the cutting of the side and top of the hedge on the Church Street side. Although this was the responsibility of the resident, a tenant of the Town Trust property, it was thought beneficial to obtain a quote as the Town Trust or resident may wish to consider having the hedge cut. The Town Trust to be updated accordingly.

- b) **Churchyard wilding project and the Churchyard survey map** - Cllr Wild showed those present the two zoned areas set aside for wilding and it was agreed that both plots looked in keeping. Cllr Mottram confirmed that Sustainable Bradninch were to provide signs for the zones to let the public why the areas had not been cut and to advise of the wilding project.

Cllr Wild reported that the Churchyard survey map from the Church of England had been delayed and was not now expected to be available until year end.

- c) **Churchyard safety checking of headstones** - the Clerk had obtained a quote from FJS Memorials with regards to the independent checking of headstones for safety reasons. The cost of checking each headstone would be £3 plus VAT with additional costs payable should a headstone require strapping up to make it safe. All present were reminded of the Council's responsibility for maintaining the closed Churchyard although repairs to headstones, should they be required, were the responsibility of the plot owner and not the Council. FJS Memorials had been recommended and were able to provide a fully qualified employee to do the job. It was RESOLVED to put this matter to full Council at the June meeting and to request an annual budget from Council funds. The cost for checking all the headstones in the Churchyard was estimated to be £1,800 and it was suggested that the oldest stones should be checked as a priority. An official ongoing checking process would be put in place in due course. The Clerk had contacted the Church with regards to any existing policy in place for headstone checking and had enquired as to whether any funding from the Church towards checking would be available.

- d) **Training on the burial process** - Cllr Chambers had agreed to oversee a burial process training session and would advise the Clerk of his availability so that the session could be arranged. All Councillors would be invited to receive an overview of the burial books and to consider the draft burial process, put together by the Clerk, for adoption by the Committee going forward.
- e) **Churchyard Yew trees** – further to inspecting the ivy it was RESOLVED to request a quote from a local Tree Surgeon for removal of it in due course. The Committee was happy to leave the ivy in place currently as, should it fall, it was thought not to be a risk due to the lack of footfall beneath the trees. The Clerk was in the process of checking the Council's public liability cover with regards to Churchyard matters.
- f) **Churchyard wall** – following part of the lower Churchyard boundary wall falling into a garden at Fore Street, Cllr Wild had carried out the resolution set by full Council at the May meeting and had contacted the property owner for more information. He had also advised that the Council would be registering a claim with its insurers. Following investigation, and although it was not the owner of the Churchyard walls, it had transpired that the Council is likely to be responsible for any repairs to the walls as it had taken on maintenance for the closed Churchyard many years ago.

B/24/04 General maintenance of the Churchyard and Cemetery: It was agreed that the Churchyard and Cemetery were looking in good order at the current time, except for the hedges in both areas which were far higher than the 1.8 meters as stated in the grounds maintenance contract. The hedge between the Cemetery and the Bowling/Cricket Clubs had grown far higher than the contracted height and a request to reduce the height this autumn would be included within the letter to the grounds maintenance contractor regarding the Churchyard hedges.

B/24/05 Clerk/Councillor comments (no decision making): The burial fees schedule had been updated with effect from 1st April 2024 in accordance with the resolution.

B/24/06 Date of the next scheduled meeting: Scheduled for 7th September 2024.

The meeting closed at 3.25pm