



Devizes

& Roundway

Joint Burial Committ

Town Hall
St. John's Street
Devizes
Wiltshire SN10 1BN
Clerk: Mrs Sarah Todhunter

Clerk: Sarah Todhunter
Tel: 01380 722160
Fax: 01380 722415

MEETING

Date: Thursday, **9 JUNE 2016**
Time: 7.00PM
Venue: Council Chamber, Town Hall, St John's Street, Devizes
Enquiries: Town Hall - 01380 722160

MEMBERS

Devizes Town Council:

Councillors: Mrs Burton
Mrs Bridewell
Giraud-Saunders
Nash
Parker
Smith
Wooldridge

Roundway Parish Council:

Councillors: Batchelor
Callow
Parsons
Stevens

AGENDA

- 1. TO CONFIRM THE CHAIRMAN OF ROUNDWAY PARISH COUNCIL AS CHAIRMAN FOR THE YEAR 2016/2017 IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CONSTITUTION**
- 2. TO CONFIRM THE MAYOR OF DEVIZES AS VICE CHAIRMAN FOR THE YEAR 2016/2017 IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CONSTITUTION**
- 3. MINUTES**

To approve as a correct record and authorise the Chairman to sign the minutes of the meetings held on the 3 March 2016, which have been circulated with the agenda.

- 4. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

5. DISCLOSURE(S) OF INTEREST

To receive any disclosures by a Councillor(s) and/or Officers in matters to be considered at this meeting in accordance with the provisions of Sections 94 or 117 of the Local Government Act 1972 or the National Code of Local Government Conduct.

6. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

At the Chairman's discretion, members of the public attending the meeting will be allowed to ask questions, make a statement or address the committee upon a matter of concern, which is relevant to the committee.

A time limit of 5 minutes per person will be permitted, but this may be extended at the Chairman's discretion and a maximum period of 20 minutes has been allocated by the Committee for this item of business.

7. REPORT FOR INFORMATION – CEMETERY OPEN DAY

The Committee is reminded that the Cemetery Open Day for 2016 will be on the 27 June. A rota for manning the event has been drawn up and committee members are asked to support the open day by giving some time to help visitors find the information they may be looking for.

8. REPORT FOR INFORMATION – WATERING CANS

The watering cans provided for use in the Cemetery routinely go missing, mainly being taken by the rough sleepers in the woods behind. This causes great inconvenience and, understandably, distress to those visiting the cemetery as they cannot water their plots. The Open Spaces team can sometimes recover the cans from the woods, which takes time. However, mainly the cans are not recoverable and replacing them is an on-going cost.

Officers have looked at how other cemeteries tackle this issue and, increasingly, they have removed watering cans completely and replaced them with disposable containers, such as plastic milk bottles. They also encourage cemetery visitors to bring their own containers, which they can either leave or take home with them. Councils provide a specific storage area for these containers and the problem is self-managed.

The Open Spaces team have made a bespoke storage area and provided a number of containers. Notices have also been displayed inviting visitors to bring their own containers. Officers will continue to monitor this issue over the coming months.

9. REPORT FOR DECISION - FINANCIAL MATTERS

(a) Schedule of Payments: Since the last meeting accounts to £30621.49 (net) have been paid (Doc 7/1).

(b) Year End Accounts (1st April 2015 to 31st March 2016): Attached at Doc 7/2 is a copy of the Statement of Accounts and Annual Governance Statement and Docs 7/3 – 7/6 Income & Expenditure account and supporting documents as at 31st March 2016 for acceptance by the Committee.

Members of the committee need to decide acceptance or otherwise of the attached Statement of Accounts. There is no longer a requirement for the Chairman of this committee to sign the 2015/16 annual return but it is considered good practice by officers for members to approve the financial statements. These have been approved by the Internal Auditor, Mr Alistair Morrison forming part of his quarterly internal audit reports.

10. REPORT FOR DECISION – COST OF CEMETERY SERVICES ON THE PUBLIC PURSE

Recommendation

To consider if a greater burden of the cost of maintaining and managing the cemetery should fall on those who use the services directly reducing the amount precepted through the Council Tax charge.

Purpose of the Report

To consider if a shift in emphasis is needed to determine where the funding to maintain and manage the cemetery service comes from.

Background

At its meeting on the 3 March an agenda item advised the committee that Devizes Town Council had raised concerns that the cost of providing a cemetery for the residents of the parishes of Roundway and Devizes, which places a burden on tax payers. It therefore asked the committee if more could be done to shift this cost onto those who use the service directly.

To help the debate, officers provided financial information about the cost of the service in the broadest terms and sources of income. Furthermore officers tried to identify those costs which relate directly to the cost of burials against those which relate to grounds maintenance for the area and its democratic management.

The report went on to explain that officers believed that there are three element of the service which are distinct. For the purpose of the exercise figures provided were based on 2014/15.

After considering the matter, the committee resolved that there was insufficient information to make an informed decision; therefore, deferred the item until officers had sought comparable costs from other local cemeteries and authorities.

Regrettably, whilst officers have had some success in gaining comparable charges they have not been so successful in gaining cost information. The principal reason for this is that, as with Devizes, all authorities advised that

maintenance of cemetery grounds is undertaken on an in house basis and they do not cost this element of work separately.

Whilst our enquires have identified that other council's recognise there is a cost on the public purse which is not full quantified, there is a view that although the cost of burials need to be met by those who use the services, general ground care and maintenance is needed to maintain the quality of the Councils assets and therefore has to be met from the public purse.

As part of the wider debate officers have been having with other Council's, there is a growing consensus which is supported by undertakers, that there is a growing trend towards cremations with ashes being buried or scattered privately which is resulting in fewer people using the services of traditional cemeteries.

Last year there were 64 internments in Devizes Cemetery, 37 of which were internment of asses and just 27 full burials, however this fairs quite well against other towns such as Calne which only had 39 interments in total.

Burial Charges

Set out below are the current burial fees for Devizes Cemetery and officers have provided a comparison with other local cemeteries.

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	Devizes	Calne	Chippenham	Corsham	Malmesbury	Marlborough	Wiltshire
EROB Infant (not exceeding 12 months)**	204	0	0	600	636	414	660
EROB Infant (not exceeding 12 months) (Resident)**	102	0	0	300	318	207	330
EROB child	204	0	370	600	636	414	660
EROB Child (Resident)	102	0	185	300	318	207	330
EROB Adult	648	480	660	600	636	414	1310
EROB Adult (Resident)	324	240	330	300	318	207	655
EROB Cremated Remains – Headstone Section	264	360	536	284	344	244	660
EROB Cremated Remains – Lawn Section	180						
EROB Cremated Remains (resident)- Headstone Section	132	180	268	142	172	122	330
EROB Cremated Remains (resident)- Lawn Section	90						
Interment Infant (not exceeding 12 months)	0	0	185	75	0	0	0
Interment Infant (not exceeding 12 months) (resident)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Interment Child	0	0	370	152	248	0	0
Interment Child (Resident)	0	0	185	75	124	0	0
Interment Adult	715	1200	750	960	914	1080	1460
Interment Adult (Resident)	536	600	375	480	457	540	730
Interment of cremated remains	388	410	370	330	388	238	500
Interment of cremated remains (Resident)	194	205	185	165	194	119	250
Scattering of Ashes Garden of Remembrance ***	138	No comparative information					
Scattering of Ashes Garden of Remembrance (Resident)***	69	No comparative information					

- Charges include all costs such as the purchase of a grave space, interment charge and grave digging.
- EROB = Excusive Right of Burial
- ** DTC charges for a grave space but not the cost of interment.
- *** There are no exclusive rights in the Garden of Remembrance.
- (Residents) = Residents qualify for a 50% discount

From the comparative table, it can be seen that whilst Devizes does not have the cheapest burial charges they are at the lower end of scale.

To help the committee understand the effect of any change in fees, below is a summary of interments for last year. Whilst there is a view that families rarely go outside the deceased local community, when thinking about a burial, the cost of

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this type of funeral is still quite high compared with a simple cremation. What is unknown is the elasticity of burial fees, that is to say will an increase in cost quickly result in purchasers of the service choosing a cheaper form of funeral, or is the type of funeral paramount and the cost secondary.

	Apr-15	May-15	Jun-15	Jul-15	Aug-15	Sep-15	Oct-15	Nov-15	Dec-15	Jan-16	Feb-16	Mar-16	Totals
Ashes Interment	3	3	1	5	3	1	1	4	3	3	2	4	33
Burial	3	1	4	2	2	2	3	2	3	2		3	27
Ashes GOR	1			1									2
Ashes near Tree				2									2
	7	4	5	10	5	3	4	6	6	5	2	7	64

Costs

As indicated earlier most burial authorities consider there are two principal elements to the use of a cemetery.

The main purpose is for cemetery is as burial ground and users of this services are very clearly defined. The costs can also be clearly define as can any revenue generated for the purchase of these services.

The second is as a quiet reflective space in which people walk and visit deceased relatives. The users of this service are much less clearly defined as some are simply residents who may not have any direct connection with the cemetery or friends of family who live in other areas paying respects to those interred. The cost of this for these uses is around general maintenance of the cemetery such as grass cutting, upkeep of the toilet, utility costs, path repairs and memorial safety inspections. Other than sundry income from the rent of the lodge, there is no dedicated income stream for this, therefore it is funded from any surplus from the burial element of the service and the JBC precept.

Finally as the Burial Authority is a democratic body and there is a cost of this type of management which is funded total through the JBC precept.

The Cost of Burial Service.

The table below set out cost in providing the burial and memorial service. *(These figures are based on 2014/15 accounts.)*

Activity / Income Stream	Cost	Income
Interment Administration	10958	
Financial Control	3730	
Funeral Services	4239	
Membership and Subscriptions	260	
Cemetery Software	1250	
Insurance	1200	
Grave Digging	12,336	
Memorials	488	
Maintenance of Burial Area		
Grave Digging		13,226
Purchase of Burial Space		10,654
Interment Fees		13,062
Use of Chapel		568
Memorial Fees		6,083
Total	£34,461	43,593

Cost of Grounds

The table below set out cost of maintaining the Cemetery. *(These figures are based on 2014/15 accounts.)*

Activity / Income Stream	Value	Income
Cost of Grass Cutting	58,097	
Financial Control	3000	
Maintenance and Repairs	19,283	
Rates	2285	
Electricity	326	
Lodge Maintenance	2068	
Tree Works	300	
Lodge Rent		5,100
Total	85,359	5,100

Cost of Democracy.

The table below set out cost associated with being a local authority.
(These figures are based on 2014/15 accounts.)

Activity / Income Stream	Value	Income
Committee Admin	3397	
Management Support	1831	
Capital Projects	10385	
Total	15,613	0

From the exercise, it is clear that the most significant cost is in respect of the Ground Maintenance with the cost of supporting the democratic process not being insignificant.

Options Considered

The committee needs to decide how it wishes to respond to the Town Council about placing a greater level of cemetery costs on the users of cemetery services.

Implications and Risks

Financial and Resource Implications

Current financial resources are set out in this report. Any implication for changes are unknown at this time.

Legal Implications and Legislative Powers

The Open Spaces Act 1906 ss9 and 10 give both Roundway Parish Council and Devizes Town Council the power to provide and maintain cemeteries

Environmental Implications

Officers are unaware of any environmental implication for the Council associated with this decision.

Risk Assessment

Changing the burden of cost will have a risk implication for the Council however it is too early to know what that is.

Crime and Disorder

Officers are not aware of any issues the Council should consider under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder act 1998.

11. REPORT FOR DECISION – FEE AND CHARGES FOR 2016/17

Recommendation

That the committee agrees the fees and charges for the financial year 2016/2017.

Purpose of the Report

To set the burials committees fees and charges for 2016/2017.

Background

This items was deferred at the meeting of the committee on the 3 March until it had an opportunity to reconsider the cost of cemetery services on the public purse as set out in agenda item 10.

As part of this year's estimates, officers were only allowing for a 2% increase in charges for cemetery services. However in the light of the earlier report the committee may wish to review that position. Officers have attached the current fees and charges for the committee information.

Options Considered

The committee needs to decide any action it wishes to take in relation to fees and charges for the remainder of financial year 2016/17.

Implications & Risks

Financial and Resource Implications

The income generating potential for the cemetery has an impact on the amount of each of the parent authorities has to pay towards the running of the cemetery.

Legal Implications and Legislative Powers

The Open Spaces Act 1906 ss9 and 10 give both Roundway Parish Council and Devizes Town Council the power to provide and maintain cemeteries.

Environmental Implications

Officers are not aware on any environmental implications associated with the decision

Risk Assessment

Officers are not aware on any risk implications associated with the recommendation as set out. Should the committee decide to alter the fees and charged as set out, this could lead to a shortfall in income.

Crime and Disorder

Officers are not aware of any issues the Council should consider under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder act 1998.

12. REPORT FOR DECISION – TO AGREE FEES FOR THOSE WHO LEAVE THE AREA FOR CARE REASONS

Recommendation

To review and agree the charges for cemetery services for those who leave the area for care reasons.

Purpose of the Report

To clarify the policy on those who qualify for a reduced fee.

Background

This item was deferred at the meeting of the committee on the 3 March until it had an opportunity to reconsider the cost of cemetery services on the public purse as set out in agenda item 10.

At its meeting on the 17 September 2015, the committee resolved to allow an appeal for reduced local fees for a resident who had moved out of the area for care reasons.

In agreeing the appeal the committee felt that the policy of only giving one year at the reduced fee rate to a resident who had lived in either Roundway or Devizes parishes was unfair and should be reviewed.

Officers have re-attached the flow chart (doc 12/1) which helps to interpret the committee pricing policy. From the highlighted element of the flow chart, the committee will note that the existing policy identifies the possibility that the deceased has moved out of the area for care reasons and makes a further exception if it is the care authority who have orchestrated the move.

Within the policy there is no reference to how long a resident was living in the town before they left the area and this maybe something the committee may wish to include.

Options Considered

The committee are asked to agree how those who leave the area for care needs are charged in future.

Implications and Risks

Financial and Resource Implications

Any financial or resource implication for the committee associated with this decision is negligible.

Legal Implications and Legislative Powers

Devizes and Roundway Parish Councils have jointly agreed to fund the Burial Committee on a spilt based on the number of council tax dwellings in each parish as a %age of the total under section Burial Authorities (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1970 s1.

Environmental Implications

Officers are unaware of any environmental implication for the committee associated with this decision.

Risk Assessment

Officers are unaware of any risk implication for the committee associated with this decision.

Crime and Disorder

Officers are not aware of any issues the committee should consider under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder act 1998.

13. QUESTION TIME

Members will be allowed a short period in which to put questions on matters of concern to the Committee, which are not contained in the report of matters formally considered by the Committee at this meeting. The question may be answered at the meeting or may be referred back to the Committee at a later date. The question may not be the subject of any further debate.

DEPUTY CLERK TO THE JOINT BURIAL COMMITTEE