

  
***Devizes***  
***& Roundway***  
***Joint Burial Committee***

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

Date: Thursday, 17 SEPTEMBER 2015  
Time: **MEET AT THE CEMETERY GATES AT 6.15PM**  
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

## **A G E N D A**

### **1. TOUR OF CEMETERY**

A chance to have a tour of the cemetery before the nights start to draw in.  
Please be at the gates at 6.15pm

### **2. MINUTES**

To approve as a correct record and authorise the Chairman to sign the minutes of the rescheduled meeting held on the 16 June 2015, which have been circulated with the agenda.

### **3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

**4. 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.

**5. 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.

**6. FINANCIAL MATTERS**

Schedule of Payments: Since the last meeting accounts to £62,650.27 (net) have been paid (Doc 6/1).

**7. REPORT FOR INFORMATION – CEMETERY OPEN DAY 25<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2015**

The annual Cemetery Open Day was a great success and was very well attended throughout the day. A number of local residents came to investigate the whereabouts of the graves of family members and the event also attracted interested parties from further afield.

**8. REPORT FOR DECISION – NOTICE OF CONCLUSION OF AUDIT FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2014 – 2015**

**Recommendation**

That the committee acknowledges the report and agrees to implement the recommendations set out within it.

**Purpose of the Report**

To receive and agree the Notice of Audit for Financial Year 2014-15.

**Background**

Members of the Committee will recollect that at the meeting of the committee held on 17 June 2014, under minute number 7 (b), members adopted the accounts for the year ended 31 March 2015.

The Annual return for the financial year along with supplementary documents was sent to Grant Thornton UK LLP following that meeting and we have now received notice that the audit was concluded on the 26 August 2015.

The attached audit report sets two recommendations for the committee to action (doc 8/1 – 8/4).

The first recommendation relates to the value of the fixed assets which should be recorded as either purchase cost or a proxy cost. For small bodies, this value should not be adjusted each year, which is what has happened in the JBC accounts.

The second recommendation relates to the transfer of earmarked reserves. In the JBC accounts these transfers are treated as other payments which is incorrect.

In both cases the recommendation is to restate the 2015 figures on next year's Annual Return and write "restated" beneath the £ sign on the 2015 column.

The requisite notice of conclusion of the audit has been placed on the Devizes Town Council and Roundway Parish Council notice boards.

### **Options Considered**

The committee has to decide if it agrees the recommendation.

### **Implications and Risks**

#### **Financial and Resource Implications**

Officers are unaware of any resource implication associated with this decision.

#### **Legal Implications and Legislative Powers**

Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 gives the committee ancillary powers which allows it to carry out anything which is incidental to its main power which in this case is 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**

Failure to implement the recommendation in the Audit report may lead to a qualification should the same errors appear in next year's Annual Return.

#### **Crime and Disorder**

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

## **9. REPORT FOR DECISION – APPOINTMENT OF INTERNAL AUDITOR**

### **Recommendation**

That the committee confirms the reappointment of Mr Alistair Morrison as the Internal Auditor for the Devizes & Roundway Joint Burial Committee (JBC). He is directed by officers to carry out the duties as prescribed by the Audit Commission.

### **Purpose of the Report**

To confirm Mr Morrison's appointment as the internal auditor for the burial committee and that he has the authority to audit and sign the annual accounts.

### **Background**

It is a requirement that the JBC's annual accounts are audited and signed off by an independent internal auditor, therefore it is essential that the post of internal auditor is approved by the committee. Officers are satisfied that the internal auditing work of the committee will be conducted professionally by Mr Morrison, and that no issues have been raised by the Committee's external auditors. Mr Morrison will undertake an inspection of the Committee accounts and processes four times a year alongside that of Devizes Town Council and will follow an audit plan to ensure a consistent approach.

### **Options Considered**

No other options have been considered as this is a legal requirement, however if the committee should so wish to appoint another internal auditor it will have to instruct officers to recruit an alternative candidate through a financial agency and agree that this cost can be set against the general reserve.

### **Implications & Risks**

#### **Financial and Resource Implications**

The cost of the internal audit is included within committee estimates.

#### **Legal Implications and Legislative Powers**

These are outlined in the report above.

#### **Environmental Implications**

Officers are not aware of any resulting from this report.

#### **Risk Assessment**

These are outlined in the report above.

#### **Crime and Disorder**

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

## **10. REPORT FOR DECISION – SERVICES LEVEL STANDARD**

### **Recommendation**

That the Committee reviews and agrees the service level standard for the running of Devizes Cemetery.

### **Purpose of the Report**

To agree the service level standard for the financial year 2016/17.

### **Background**

Some years ago it was agreed that a scheduled setting out the level of service which the Town Council provides to run Devizes Cemetery should be compiled and this document would set out the cost of each of those tasks.

Officers have reviewed the schedule for this year, which is broadly in line with 2015/16 which is issued alongside this agenda. One of the change in terms of costs, is administration time spent on dealing with the processing of interments and grave transfers.

### **Options Considered**

The committee needs to decide if they accept the proposed Services Level Standards as set out.

### **Implications & Risks**

#### **Financial and Resource Implications**

The financial implications are set out in the schedules.

#### **Legal Implications and Legislative Powers**

Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 gives the committee ancillary powers which allows it to carry out anything which is incidental to its main power which in this case is 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 of any environmental implication associated with this decision.

#### **Risk Assessment**

Not agreeing a Services Level Standard will leave the Burial Committee vulnerable to poor maintenance, and unknown maintenance charges.

#### **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 - CEMETERY COST SPLIT 2016/2017**

**Recommendation**

That the Committee agrees the split for the cost of running the cemetery between Devizes Town Council and Roundway Parish Council.

**Purpose of the Report**

To set the split for charges for financial year 2016/2017.

**Background**

It is agreed that the split for cemetery costs should be apportioned on the basis of the percentage of the number of council tax dwellings in each parish as a % of the total combined number.

As at 10 August 2015, the number of dwellings provided by Wiltshire Council was as follows:

<b>Ward</b>	<b>Council Tax Dwellings</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Devizes Total</b>	<b>5818</b>	<b>71.5%</b>
<b>Roundway Total</b>	<b>2321</b>	<b>28.5%</b>
<b>Total Dwellings</b>	<b>8139</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

**Options Considered**

The committee are required to decide if they agree the above figures as a percentage split for the cost of running the cemetery.

**Implications & Risks**

**Financial and Resource Implications**

The financial implication impacts on the constituent councils rather than the burial committee.

**Legal Implications and Legislative Powers**

The way in which the Burial Authority splits the costs of running the cemetery is ancillary to The Burial Authorities (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1970 s1.

**Environmental Implications**

Officers are unaware of any environmental implications associated with this decision.

**Risk Assessment**

Officers are unaware of any risk implications associated with this decision.

**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 - ADOPTION OF DRAFT ESTIMATES FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2016 – 2017**

### **Recommendation**

The Committee is recommended to consider the draft estimates and agree a budget for the financial year 2016-17.

### **Purpose of the Report**

The purpose of the report is to set the burial authority's budgets for 2016-17.

### **Background**

To help members with the decision, officers have set out a written commentary on individual cost headings. This year officers have made some significant efforts to control costs.

## **EXPENDITURE**

### **Direct Operational Costs**

The committee will have agreed at this meeting the operational costs associated with the provision of direct labour at the cemetery based on the agreed standard of service. These figures are included in the estimates. There is a small increase in salary and machinery costs over last year.

### **Administration Costs**

The committee will have agreed at this meeting the cost of administering to the burial committee. The Council has had to increase the charge for this service as the number of hours needed to deal with burial administration seems to be increasing.

### **Insurance**

The insurance of the Cemetery continues to come under the Town Council's policy, which is then recharged to the burial committee. This offers a small saving.

### **Commercial Rates**

Wiltshire Council has given officers an indication of the level of rates payable in 2016/17 and this figure is included in the estimates.

### **Water & Electricity**

The estimated budget for electricity is based on current consumption usage levels. Water is charged on an annual charge.

### **Membership Subscriptions**

The Burial Committee is a member of the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management and also members of the Federation of Burial and Cremation Authorities. Membership of these bodies enables the burial committee to access information regarding changes in legislation and practise.

**Audit Fee**

The Burial Committee should continue with lighter touch audits and therefore the cost should therefore be in line with advice given regarding the cost of light touch audits.

**Planned and Responsive Maintenance**

Other than capital projects there is no other planned work. Responsive maintenance will be undertaken as necessary.

**Lodge Maintenance**

Over the past few years there have been some significant works carried out on the lodge. The ending of the old lease required some updating of the decoration before it could be re-let. Some external decoration is required within the next 12 months

**Replacement Tools and Equipment**

All equipment in owned by the Town Council so expenditure is confined to such things as new watering cans.

**Purchase of Memorial Plaques**

The cost of purchasing memorial plaques is passed directly to customers.

**Mole Control**

Following a decision to control moles in the cemetery this is an ongoing contractual arrangement.

**Contingencies**

This amount is used for meeting unexpected charges.

**Memorial Benches & Plaques**

The cost of memorial benches & plaques are met from memorial income. The ongoing maintenance of these benches is met from this budget heading.

**Children's Grave Area**

Work has started on this project and should be concluded in the next 12 months.

**Tree Works**

Officers have increased this budget in anticipation that some work may be undertaken to improve access to both Newlands and Belvedere Woods.

**Cemetery Software**

This cost relates to the support of the computerised burial record systems.

**Capital Item**

There are two principle capital projects for the cemetery, completion of repairs to the cemetery gates and repairs to the roads. These will be subject to future reports but adequate financial provisions need to be made to complete these repairs to these element of the cemetery.

## **INCOME**

### **Fees Associated with Burials**

Given low level of the Retail Price Index, officers have not allowed for a price increase.

### **Cemetery Lodge Rent**

Following a change in tenant, rental income has increased.

### **Options Considered**

Members need to decide what level of income and expenditure is achievable.

## **Implications & Risks**

### **Financial and Resource Implications**

The estimates are the basis for all the financial resources.

### **Legal Implications and Legislative Powers**

Devizes and Roundway Parish Councils have jointly agreed to fund the Burial Committee on a split, 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 not aware of any environmental implications associated with this decision.

### **Risk Assessment**

Not setting a budget would leave the committee open to challenge by the auditors for financial mismanagement.

### **Crime and Disorder**

Officers are not aware of any implications Under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder act 1998.

## **13. REPORT FOR DECISION - SETTING OF THE PRECEPT 2016/2017**

### **Recommendation**

Following the decision of the Joint Burial Committee on agenda Item 12, the JBC are required to set the precept for the financial year 2016/2017.

### **Purpose of the Report**

To set the precept for the Devizes and Roundway Joint Burial Committee for financial year 2016/17.

### **Background**

Once members have formally agreed the estimates for financial year 2016/17 members are required to set a precept to ensure there is sufficient funding to run the service.

## **Implications & Risks**

### **Financial and Resource Implications**

If members fail to set a precept there will be insufficient funds to meet the agreed expenditure.

### **Legal Implications and Legislative Powers**

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

### **Environmental Implications**

Officers are not aware of any environmental implications associated with this decision.

### **Risk Assessment**

Not setting a precept would leave the committee open to challenge by the auditors for financial mismanagement and improper governance.

### **Crime and Disorder**

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

## **14. REPORT FOR DECISION – ONGOING TREATMENT OF MOLE INFESTATION**

### **Recommendation**

That the Committee guide officers on what action it wishes to undertake to resolve the issue of moles digging holes and burrows in the Devizes Cemetery.

### **Purpose of the Report**

To agree a strategy for the treatment of the mole infestation at Devizes Cemetery.

### **Background**

Devizes Cemetery has suffered from a persistent mole infestation for a number of years. Mole holes and tunnels cause upset to those visiting the graves of loved ones to find the grave and headstone area disturbed. The tunnels left by the moles also create an uneven and potentially dangerous surface, particularly for the elderly or less mobile. If left untreated the unevenness of ground may have longer-term effects on the stability of headstones and monuments.

Since 2007 the Joint Burial Committee has agreed the employment of a specialist contractor who has introduced a number of measures to eradicate the moles.

This year 30 moles have been trapped over a period of three months in the new part of the cemetery but to date no trapping has been undertaken in the old part of the cemetery. The challenge is, given the size of the cemetery, that whilst progress is being made to catch moles, the area is so large they simply recolonise areas where clearance work has been undertaken. Although it has not yet been invoiced, the cost of mole clearance so far this year is £500.00 and could continue as a sunk cost if the process continues.

The contractor is concerned that the level of costs will continue to grow unless there is a change in the way in which mole eradication is approached, he is recommending the Committee agree a programme of gassing.

Should the committee consider this to be an acceptable course of action there will be a one off cost of £300 with the cemetery requiring closing for 2 days.

### **Options Considered**

The committee needs to decide if they wish to take undertaken a programme of mole gassing or to continue trapping.

### **Implications & Risks**

#### **Financial and Resource Implications**

There is a further £300 left in this year's budget.

#### **Legal Implications and Legislative Powers**

Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 gives the committee ancillary powers which allows it to carry out anything which is incidental to its main power which in this case is 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**

All treatments will be carried out by qualified contracted personnel in accordance with legislation.

#### **Risk Assessment**

A risk assessment has been carried out for this work. A public relations exercise may need to be undertake should the committee decide to agree a programme of gassing.

#### **Crime and Disorder**

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

**15. 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.

CLERK TO THE JOINT BURIAL COMMITTEE