

Goudhurst Parish Council



BURIAL AUTHORITY

Minutes of a Meeting held at St Mary's Church on Tuesday 19 July 2022

Present: Cllrs Mrs Caroline Richards (Chairman), Antony Harris (ex-officio) and Barry Noakes
Also Mr David Nichol (Adviser and Representative of the Friends of St Mary's).

Apologies: Chris Ditton (resting after surgery) and Phil Kirkby (away on business).
Rev Rachel Robertson.

Those present took the opportunity to walk around Christ Church Churchyard. The temperature outside was 38C.

Questions and statements from the public. There was none

Change of the annual year for the Burial Authority. It was agreed that the Burial Authority year be changed to run from 01 April to 31 March annually in line with Council's accounts. In the meantime, the current Burial Authority Regulations and Fees which apply from 01 September 2021 to 31 August 2022 are to be extended to 31 March 2023.

Regulations of the Burial Authority. It was agreed that they should remain unchanged. However, Cllr Antony Harris raised the matter of leaning memorial headstones. It was agreed at Deputy Clerk's suggestion that this is an important matter but it is complicated and should be discussed outside this meeting.

Burial Authority Fees for April 2023 to March 2024. It was agreed unanimously that the fees published with these Minutes be approved.

Unauthorised items on Graves in the Burial Grounds. This project has been under way since the beginning of 2022. Deputy Clerk has approached a dozen or so Grave lease holders variously asking them to remove unauthorised items or Council will remove them. So far 2 have agreed to Council's request whilst one is resisting.

Digitisation of Burial Records. This is proceeding well. We have two enthusiastic part-timers working 2 hours a week each. So far, they have completed 497 and there are 658 more to do. There is adequate budget provision in the 2022/2023 budget.

Burial Authority receipts and payments 2021/2022. Members noted that receipts exceeded target whilst payments show an explained over spend.

Memorial Headstone Safety Testing. Following Council's minutes 186/21, 252/21, 330/21, 081/22. Deputy Clerk reported that he will be meeting the likely contractor on site shortly to refresh and clarify to work to be done. Deputy Clerk will bring the plan to seek Council's approval once the final 2022-23 budget is approved. Cllr Antony Harris queried why this project is necessary and Deputy Clerk offered to meet him at a later meeting to explain.

Leylandii behind the western side hedge of the Burial Grounds. It was agreed that Chairman of the Burial Authority and Deputy Clerk will again check carefully the land registry records for the area that the Leylandii are situated to clarify the ownership. In the longer term, Councillors' opinion was that the Leylandii should be removed and that should be Council's clear aim Action: Chairman Burial Authority, Deputy Clerk and Clerk.

Marker Posts on the eastern side of the Burial Grounds. Deputy Clerk proposed 3 or 4 half height 4 x 4 marker posts be established. Since the cost will be low, Councillors agreed the proposal in view of the fact that the old markers have been largely obliterated over time. Action: Deputy Clerk

Weed Control. It was agreed that our weed control contractor should attend, as soon as possible, the Burial Grounds ashes plots and the graves with kerbs in the Victorian Cemetery.

'Green Spaces Management'. The committee noted that it had been decided elsewhere that the grass bank along Back Lane on the South side of St Mary's Church, and the grassed area in the south east corner of the Victorian cemetery will be mown once a year. St Mary's Churchyard will be mown on a higher setting from now on but at the same frequency as the mowing contract stipulates.

The meeting closed at 6.30 pm

Anthony Farnfield, Deputy Clerk