

Rogerstone & Bassaleg Joint Burial Board

Minutes of a Meeting of the Burial Board on Monday 26th April 2021, Held Remotely Via A Zoom Meeting

Present:

Cllr Stewart Jones(R) Chair, Cllr Stephen Bowen(R), Cllr Ray Caston(G), Cllr John Harris(G), Cllr Yvonne Forsey®, Cllr Sally Mlewa(R),

Also in attendance:

Cllr Paul Gregory(G)

Apologies:

Cllr Kath Hopkins(R)

1. Minutes of the Last Meeting

1.1

The minutes of 12th October 2020 were agreed as a true record.

2. Matters Arising

2.1

Cllr Gregory updated the meeting with the latest position with the ongoing Employment Tribunal & confirmed that evidence has been submitted for consideration.

3. Clerks Report

3.1

Burials & Memorials

To give Members an indication of demand, the following has been taken from 1st April 2020 – 31st March 2021

- 10 new full burials
- 12 existing plot full burials
- 4 new cremated remains
- 2 existing plot cremated remains
- 10 new memorials

3.2

Operational

Azimuth have provisionally completed the cemetery re-mapping which has enabled an estimation of the number of burial plots currently available & potential burial plots to be made. The survey drawing has been circulated to Members.

The plot indexing has been considered, but because of the Exclusive Right of Burials previously issued with reference numbers included, it was agreed to retain the existing system & add in the new plots.

3.3

There are now 45-50 new plots subject to ground conditions & 90 pre-booked plots available. There is also the existing capacity for second interments.

There are potentially 40 new plots if the section of road from the hammerhead to the rear of the cemetery were to be removed.

There are 50 – 60 cremated remains plots available, subject to ground conditions.

3.4

An application has been made by Graig Community Council to Newport City Council to determine a request for equal representation on the Burial Board. Newport City Council have agreed to process this & will respond in due course

3.5

The grounds maintenance contractor (DS Preece) has agreed to hold his prices at last years rates therefore has commenced this years grass cutting.

There will be a need to reinstate the boundary hedge where the laurel tree was removed to create existing capacity. This will be undertaken at the appropriate time of year for planting & a separate cost will be agreed.

Rogerstone Community Centre staff continue to attend site once a week to check for litter & empty the bins. Whilst on site they also undertake any minor maintenance required.

3.6

The new fees & charges have been implemented from 1st April 2021.

3.7

The new procedure for Statutory Declarations in respect of transfer of Exclusive Right of Burial has been implemented & is operating satisfactorily.

3.8

The two new litter bins & a notice board have been erected & are in use, although suggestions of notices to include in the notice board would be welcome. Members suggested a list of Board Members & the Cemetery fees.

A quotation has been requested for the repainting of the entrance gates by an established contractor who's rates have previously been market tested by Graig Community Council & also very recently Rogerstone Community Council.

3.9

Trikon Solutions have referred the Burial Board to a debt collecting company to recover £604.28 which they claim is owed from a contract entered into in August 2019 for the removal of waste from the cemetery.

The documentation which the Burial Board has is very limited, however since January 2020 there is sufficient evidence to robustly defend the Boards position. The case is ongoing.

3.10

The 2019 / 2020 Annual Return outcome has still not been made available to the Burial Board. The Wales Audit appointed Auditors (BDO) have been chased up on a number of occasions but have advised it is partially complete & with Wales Audit.. The Burial Board have been notified that BDO will not undertaking the 2020 / 2021 Annual Return, which will be undertaken by Wales Audit directly.

3.11

The income & expenditure account transactions for 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021 along with the financial year Bank Reconciliations were circulated with the Clerks Report along with the Bank Reconciliations

The 2020 / 2021 Accounts & Annual Return information has been prepared for the Burial Boards Accountant (Walter Hunter Ltd) & is to be submitted 27th April 2021.

4. Burial Board Administration Arrangements

4.1

Members considered a report from the Interim Clerk regarding options for the future operational management & administration of the Joint Burial Board. Whilst there are a number of options Members primarily discussed two, which were:

- (i) Employ a Clerk specifically for the Burial Board who would be completely independent of Graig Community Council & Rogerstone Community Council.
- (ii) Incorporate the duties of the Clerk into the existing Clerk's role of either Graig or Rogerstone. Cllr Gregory advised that Graig Community Councils Clerk was fully employed as she was the sole employee therefore had no spare capacity to undertake the role.

The Interim Clerk left the meeting whilst Members discussed a preferred permanent management arrangement.

The Interim Clerk was asked to return to the meeting & was advised of the Boards decision which is that the Clerk to Rogerstone Community Council is to be offered the Clerk to the Joint Burial Board position.

It is anticipated that the duties would be incorporated into the existing role of Clerk to Rogerstone Community Council, but the hours reduced to 4 per week from the current 5.25 hours to reflect the evolving role of the Clerk & the difference in hourly rate. Subject of course to Rogerstone Community Council agreeing & becoming the Employer.

5. Fee Discounts & Cemetery Restrictions

5.1

Cllr Caston proposed that the existing fee discounts for residents of Rogerstone & Bassaleg is very generous & possibly unsustainable in the longer term, therefore should be reduced.

Members debated the rationale for residents having favourable discounts from the standard rates & agreed that as a consequence of the changes to the fees from 1st April 2021 it is likely that income could be reduced by up to 10%. Also, there are financial implications to the development work that has been recently undertaken to the cemetery, with the future proposals to create further additional plots by removing the rear section of the road requiring significant financing.

It was therefore agreed that the Board Members recommend to the next meetings of Graig Community Council & Rogerstone Community Council that they agree in principle to consider reducing the discount on offer to residents once the loss in income from reduced fees can be seen, along with & the potential capital budget estimate for further development. It is proposed that the Board have delegated authority to set a new discount structure during Q4 of this financial year.

5.2

It was also proposed that only residents of Rogerstone or Graig can access the cemetery service & no interments are taken from outside the area in order to extend the lifespan of the cemetery further.

The Clerk reported that this would have further adverse effects on the budget as residents outside the area pay a significantly higher premium than residents, as well as there being a potential reduced number of interments per annum.

Members agreed to monitor the number of interments from outside Rogerstone & Graig wards this financial year & reconsider in Q4 alongside the fee discount review.

6. Any Other Urgent Business

6.1

There were no urgent matters raised.

7. Date of Next Meeting

Monday 7th June 2021 @ 7.00pm in Graig Community Hall Restrictions permitting, if not via Zoom)

Prior to the meeting (if held at Graig Community Hall) there will be a Cemetery Site Meeting at 6.30 at Rogerstone & Bassaleg Community Cemetery