Haltwhistle & District Joint Burial Committee
Wednesday 24th April 2024
Greenhead Village Hall.
Draft Minutes

Present 19.00	Cllr M Ridley Cllr A Dale Cllr H Maxted Cllr A Whitehead	Cllr A Sharp Cllr E Walton Cllr D R-Mackie	HTC Clerk – Mrs S Saunders Cemetery Keeper – Sean Glenton
26/24	**Meeting Started at 19:05 Apologies for absence –** Miss K Heaney.		
27/24	**Declarations of Interest** The chair reminded members of the Council of their duty to declare an interest in each agenda item.		
28/24	**Minutes of the meeting for approval held on:** Minutes from 15th March 2024 were discussed and amendments proposed: It was agreed the wording did not reflect the decision made and the following was approved. **18/24.04** Memorial Plaque Enquiry – Members provisionally approved a memorial and will consider the request once it is known what is proposed. **PROPOSED Cllr E Walton SECONDED Cllr M Ridley AGREED** The HTC clerk had concerns over the wording and decision for the confidential staffing matters. It was agreed to address this in the confidential section at the end of the meeting.		
29/24	**Matters arising from previous Minutes not dealt with elsewhere in the current agenda.** No matters.		
30/24	**Clerks Report** Members received Clerks report. It was reported that the clerk has passed her Filca – Financial Introduction to Local Council Administration.		
31/24	**Cemetery Matters** **31/24.01** Exclusive Rights & Transfers to approve: 4219, 4149. These were approved. **31/24.02** Cemetery Report. It was noted that the report had not been received by the clerk in time to be sent out with the papers. The cemetery keeper was asked to make sure the report is sent over a week in advance of a meeting in future. It was agreed to bring the allotment section forward as the cemetery keeper had some information to report. **32/24** It was reported that there have been two break-ins in the allotment gardens, the cemetery keeper spotted them on the 2nd night and thought they looked like teenagers. They have not been back since then but have managed to cause substantial damage. It was agreed that the height of the fence is increased and, a combination lock fitted at the section where they were entering in a bid to prevent further damage. The cemetery keeper was asked to get a price for the work. **PROPOSED Cllr M Ridley SECONDED Cllr A Dale AGREED** Defra have ruled that all poultry holders must register their hens if they have at least 1 hen (it was previously 50). The burial clerk is producing a poster to put in the notice board and, it was agreed that she should write to all allotment holders to inform them of this rule. **PROPOSED Cllr M Ridley SECONDED Cllr A Sharp AGREED** Members had a walk around the allotments for the inspection on 2nd April. There were some plots that were not in good order and one where a fire had been lit too near the hedge and caused some damage. Cllr Dale will liaise with the burial clerk to send out letters to ask that they are made good and a warning about fires. **PROPOSED Cllr A Dale SECONDED Cllr M Ridley AGREED**		

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31/24.03 Greenhead Cemetery & Haltwhistle Cemetery
It was reported that the community service team had been to greenhead and tidied up the cemetery of sticks ready for the grass cutting to start. They will paint the iron gate when the weather is better. They will also help out at Haltwhistle over the summer by re-painting the iron railings.

Members have not had anymore correspondence from Northern Rail about the wall that is damaged. It was therefore agreed that the grass bay box should be positioned with a gap to the wall. Chris Moore had volunteered to cut planks and construct the box and was waiting for the go ahead. He will be asked if it can be completed in the next week.

It appears that the contractor who is to do the fence at the cemetery has not received his acceptance for the contract. The clerk will be asked to look into that and make sure he knows he can start the job.

32/24 **Allotments –** Brought forward See above.

33/24 **Land Registration of Haltwhistle and Greenhead Cemeteries**
Members agreed that a review of the files should be requested as they have concerns that the incorrect advice may have been given to register the land in the name of trustees, namely 2 employees and the chair at the time.
PROPOSED Cllr M Ridley **SECONDED Cllr A Whitehead(?)** **AGREED**

34/24 **Reports on Financial Matters**
34/24.01 Balances, Income and Expenditure as of 31st March 2024
34/24.02 Payments for Approval as of 24th April 2024

For Approval	£	*Included in above balance*
PPH	£395.50	*Thermo Gloves, Sitemate screws & Smooth flags.*
Greenhead Cemetery Rates	£194.61	*rates for april 24 - march 25*
Total	**£590.11**	
		Not Included in above balance
Nalc	£75.00	*Annual website fee 24/25*
ICCM	£100.00	*Management.)*
Lloyd ltd	£140.02	*Nylon Line - Strimmer*
Greenhead Village Hall Fee	£25.00	*Meeting Hall Hire 2 hours 7pm - 9pm 240424*
D Benson	£400.00	*020424-110424 Strimming*
D Benson	£200.00	*180324-280324 Hedge cutting & Path Maintenance*
S Saunders Exps	£328.77	*Hard drives & burial book*
Sean Glenton	£70.00	*Fuel reimbursement fot Van & Strimmers.*
Clerk Home allowance/Mileage	£77.50	*Home allowance and mileage - April 2024*
Monthyl Agreed Amounts	£2,737.04	
Total	**£4,153.33**	

The payments for £4,153.33 were approved.
PROPOSED Cllr A Sharp **SECONDED Cllr M Ridley** **AGREED**

34/24.03 Budget for 2024-2025 to be reviewed.
The clerk was asked to ascertain when the digger finance would be completed. Members were reminded that a mower was purchased on finance and was finished. Cllr Walton asked if both mowers were in use.
It was agreed to review the budget at the next meeting once the information was confirmed.
34/24.04 Scale of Fees – Saturday fees to be reviewed. There has been some confusion about the Saturday fees which the clerk endeavoured to explain. The full Saturday day fee was historically paid to the cemetery keeper in full. When the new cemetery keeper began it was agreed that he should receive 75% of the fee and that the fees should not be increased alongside other increases until it came in line with a more appropriate amount. As a result, the fees for Saturday were increased so that the cemetery keeper would still receive the same amount in January 2023 min ref: 07/23.03
It was agreed that the Saturday fee for cremations should be reduced to £165 and that no annual increases to these fees would automatically be applied.
PROPOSED Cllr M Ridley **SECONDED Cllr A Sharp** **AGREED**

35/24 **Melkridge Parish Council**

Northumberland County Council have issued their report on the issues arising from Melkridge Parish Council's request to withdraw from the joint committee. A brief summary of the decision outcomes are as follows:

1. *That the expenses are apportioned in accordance with the existing constitution, on the basis of the relevant Band D tax base.*

2. *To change the arrangements of the constitution to those agreed by member councils in 2019.*

3. *That membership of the Joint Burial Committee is not a determination that can be made under Schedule 26 para.4 to alter the arrangements.*

Northumberland NALC was asked for advice on point 3 and returned the following from their solicitor:

'Schedule 26 of the Local Government Act 1972 sets out how a parish council can leave a Joint Burial Board (JBB) against the wishes of the other parties. It says nothing about the position if the other parties agree the withdrawal and this is because the JBB is an agreement between the various parish councils and the agreement can always be changed with the consent of all the parties. Therefore, one parish council can simply leave a JBB so long as all the parties agree. The change to the agreement should be documented for future reference.

The following proposals were put forward.

1. It is proposed that a chair of one of the member councils meets with the chair of Melkridge to agree with them the terms of Melkridge leaving the JBC. Any agreement is subject to ratification by all the member councils and that of Melkridge.

2. It is agreed that Melkridge can leave on 31st March 2021. The amount of £787.30 owed is to be paid and it is to be agreed that there are no ongoing assets or liabilities to be addressed.

Or

3. It is agreed that Melkridge can leave on 31st March 2024 or sometime in the future. The amount of £5474.40 (plus 2024-25 pro-rated) owed is to be paid and that on departure they have no claim on the assets of the JBC but will make no contributions in the future for the upkeep of the cemeteries.

Members agreed that they would ask Graeme Popay from Northumberland NALC if he would convey the committee's decision to Melkridge Parish Council as an independent person.

PROPOSED Cllr E Walton **SECONDED Cllr M Ridley** **AGREED**

Members then agreed to point 2 above as the offer to be made to Melkridge.

PROPOSED Cllr A Dale **SECONDED Cllr A Whitehead** **AGREED**

As councils had already agreed to the withdrawal of Melkridge, as long as there was no cost to the committee, if this decision is acceptable then councils would just be asked to re-minute their approval. If there are any differences, councils will be asked to approve a new proposal.

37/24

Confidential Matters

Resolution to Exclude Press and Public

To consider a resolution to exclude the public and accredited representatives of newspapers from the following item relevant to a subject which affects the Council's area.

Resolution

"That in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted it is advisable in the public interest that the public be temporarily excluded, and they are instructed to withdraw."

This resolution is moved under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 (as extended by s.100 of the Local Government Act 1972), the public and accredited representatives of newspapers be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by virtue of the paragraph specified against the item.

PROPOSED Cllr A Sharp **SECONDED Cllr M Ridley** **AGREED**

Min from Re-convened Meeting on 2nd April 2024. Members discussed the and the following was reported.

It was agreed that the unauthorised overtime undertaken by the cemetery keeper since his contract started would be paid less the ½ hour per week that he is paid to attend meetings etc. This amounts to £386.36 and would be included in April's salary payment.

PROPOSED Cllr A Dale **SECONDED Cllr M Ridley** **AGREED**

HTC clerk expressed concern over the agreement for overtime reporting. As the clerk to the Town Council it is the role of the clerk to manage staff and, so the clerk can have delegated powers to authorise overtime within the strictures laid down by the committee. The decision made on 2nd April suggests the cemetery keeper will just inform a councillor of intended overtime. For the councillor to be able to authorise this, it would need to be taken back to the committee. As the possible overtime is arising from the need to fill in a grave when the funeral starts late in the afternoon and potentially runs over the cemetery keeper's end of day, this would be unviable.

Members were split over whether the HTC clerk should be informed of requested overtime and so, in an effort to reach a conclusion, the clerk suggested that the contract is amended from '*all overtime must be authorised by the committee'* to the following:

'*If a late funeral is booked and the cemetery keeper works past the finishing time to be able to complete the filling of the grave, he should note that on the timesheet and will be paid accordingly. Any other overtime request must be approved by the committee.'*

	With these amendments and the amendment at 28/24, members agreed the minutes for 15th March 2024 **PROPOSED Cllr A Dale** **SECONDED Cllr D Rogan-Mackie** **AGREED** **37/24.01** Staffing and volunteers – Items to discuss. Members had a confidential discussion and agreed the following. 1. A letter to be written to the cemetery keeper to explain the overtime decision as above and address any other points that were under discussion. The Cemetery keeper will need to sign and return the letter to agree to changes in the contract and to show his agreement. 2. It was agreed to ask local contractors if they wished to be included on a list so they can be contacted if the cemetery keeper was in need of a second person for the digging and filling of a grave. There is a volunteer who has been undertaking this role over the past year and members agreed he should be written to thanked and asked if he would be interested. Should he wish to continue as a volunteer, the committee would be very grateful. **PROPOSED Cllr A Dale** **SECONDED Cllr D Rogan-Mackie** **AGREED**
38/24	**Date and Time of Next Meeting** It was agreed to meet on 4th June at Featherstone Village Hall. Cllr Whitehead will book the room and confirm. The meeting closed at 22.00.

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