

Goudhurst Parish Council



BURIAL AUTHORITY

Minutes of a Meeting held on 28 February 2023 at 2.00pm in St Mary's Church

Councillors Present: Cllrs Barry Noakes, Geoff Mason and Caroline Richards (Chairman).

Officers Present: Mrs Claire Reed, Clerk.

Prior to the start of the meeting, Councillors attended the burial grounds to evaluate the holly hedge on the eastern boundary and to assess compliance with the requests to remove unauthorised items on graves.

1. Apologies were received from Rev. Rachel Robertson.
It was noted that Cllrs Phil Kirkby and Guy Sutton were absent.

2. Declarations of Interest: There were none.

It was resolved to move to Item 8

3. Request to Film in the cemeteries.

It was **noted** that a request had been received to film a short scene for a traditional ghost film in the Victorian Cemetery, the proceeds of which will be donated to the charity Family Matters. It was **resolved** to grant permission for the filming which will take place over two to three days between April and June. It was **noted** that the film company had Public Liability Insurance of £10 million, will provide the council with risk assessments and do not require any road closures. The committee agreed to advertise the filming in the e-newsletter and to request extras. **Post meeting note: the vicar of St Mary's, Rev. Rachel Robertson has refused permission for the filming.**

4. Minutes: It was resolved to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 18 October 2022

5. Questions from the public and press. There were none.

6. Burial Authority Regulations 2023-24

It was **resolved** to adopt the revised regulations for 2023-24.

7. Burial Authority Fees 2023-24

It was **resolved** to adopt the revised fees for 2023-24. It was **resolved** to reduce the term for the grant of exclusive right to burial from 100 to 35 years.

8. Hedge on the eastern boundary of the Burial Ground.

It was **noted** that a quotation has been received for the reduction of the holly hedge on the eastern boundary. The hedge has grown considerably in width and is now encroaching on nearby graves. The committee agreed that the hedge did not need to be brought down to 4ft as suggested by the contractor but the width needs to be taken back from the graves, some 2-3ft in places. It was suggested that the hedge may only need to be cut around the graves rather than along the whole length of the hedge. It was **agreed** that further quotations were required. **Action: Clerks to obtain further quotes for the works.**

9. **Green Spaces Management.**

It was **resolved** to stop using herbicides (weed killer) in the cemeteries and burial ground. It was **agreed** that letters should be sent to owners of the Exclusive Right of Burial in the ashes section informing them that the council will no longer be spraying herbicides on the ashes tablets and reminding them of their responsibility to keep their own grave spaces in good order. The letter will also inform owners of changes to the regulations, namely that only fresh floral tributes, without cellophane or plastic wrapping, are permitted.

It was **noted** that 'Caring for God's Acre', a conservation charity for Burial Grounds, is able to provide a site visit and management plan for the cemeteries at a cost of £800 (plus travel expenses). It was **agreed** that the Clerk should check budget provision for Green Spaces Management and report back to the committee at the next meeting. Post-meeting note, there is £3,000 budgeted for Green Spaces Management in 2023-24.

10. **Memorial Testing.**

It was noted that the Clerk has been in contact with the Institute of Cemetery & Crematorium Management (ICCM) regarding training for memorial testing and has offered to host a training course in the Parish. If enough people sign up for the course and it will run and the Parish Council will be given two free places.

11. **Unauthorised internment of ashes.**

The Clerk has been corresponding with the deceased's daughter to find a solution. Roger Taylor at Wellers Headly is aware of the case and is willing to take on the correspondence if needed.

12. **Digitisation of Burial Records.**

The project is progressing well with all 'grave spaces' in the Burial Ground now created on the software. The contractor is working through the vast quantity of paperwork, cross referencing grants of Exclusive Right of Burial and internments and adding any additional details to the records.

13. **War Grave Signage.**

An application has been submitted to the War Grave Commission to install signage indicating the presence of war graves in the Victorian Cemetery and in the Burial Ground.

14. **Next meeting of the Burial Authority, 21 March 2023, 7pm in Goudhurst Village Hall.**

The meeting closed at 16.07pm

Claire Reed
Clerk