



BOUGHTON-UNDER-BLEAN PARISH COUNCIL

NOTICE OF MEETING SUMMONS AND AGENDA

AN EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF BOUGHTON-UNDER-BLEAN PARISH COUNCIL
WILL BE HELD IN ST BARNABAS PARISH CENTRE ON
TUESDAY 6th JUNE 2023 AT 7:30pm

Members of the public wishing to address or ask questions of the Council are requested to do so in writing or by email to the Parish Clerk at least 24 hours before the meeting.

Members of the public and press are invited to attend. Under the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014, attendees may be filmed, recorded or otherwise reported about by anyone present. Unless advised otherwise, the council accepts no responsibility for data recorded in this way or its distribution. Any item on the agenda may be heard in private when considered to be confidential.

1. APOLOGIES *(1 minute)*

2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS *(1 minute)*

3. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION *(15 minutes)*

Members of the public will be given up to 15 minutes to talk with Councillors, the item may be added to the agenda for the next meeting if agreed by Councillors.

4. CIVIC CEMETERY *(1hr 43 minutes)*

Receive report from Clerk (*Appendix A*), report/recommendations from Working Group (*Appendix B & attachment*) and resolve further action on the following:

A. Revision of terms and conditions

1. To discuss dividing the burial ground and Garden of Remembrance rules and regulations.
2. To discuss Introducing a document that plot holders sign to say they have read and understand the rules and regulations.
3. Discuss the banning of glass vases throughout the civic cemetery.
4. Discuss recommending the banning of plastic flowers or that they are permitted but are not allowed to deteriorate.
5. Increase the approved types of headstone and memorials.
6. Review the size of headstones.
7. Discuss whether permission should be given for fencing or edging of plots.
8. Discuss changing the rules to permit statues and other memorial items
9. Discuss changing the rules to permit chippings.
10. Discuss the use of shrubs and bushes

B. Maintenance and inspection

1. Discuss the purchase of one bin for the burial ground
2. Discuss the removal of the large pile of rubbish at the far end of the burial ground
3. Discuss the establishment of a fenced off area for soil and garden rubbish (composting)
4. Discuss the removal of the broken tree branches
5. Discuss the removal of the moss on footpaths
6. Discuss the repairing or replacing of benches

C. Contractors

1. The monitoring of the contractor's work
2. Ask the contractor to be considerate to the presence of mourners
3. Ask the contractors not to walk over graves
4. Provide the Parish Council with the relevant contract for review
5. Inform the contractors that if they damage items they should reimburse the cost

D. Plots

1. Review the cost of plots in the burial ground and the Garden of Remembrance
2. Review the sizes of plots as they appear to be different sizes
3. Review the exclusive rights of plots in the burial ground (50 years) and the Garden of Remembrance (20 years)
4. Discuss what happens when the rights have lapsed
5. Discuss how plot holders are informed of their ownership

E. Communication

1. Introduce a more empathetic approach to communication with the bereaved.
2. Introduce a robust complaint procedure
3. Propose that complaints are sent to the Amenities Committee for comments – identifying details can be redacted.
4. Agree on a process for removing items for graves
5. Regular updates to funeral parlours and stonemasons
6. Updating of details for plot holders – notice in the magazine / notice board

F. Other things to consider

1. Why is there a baby in the Garden of Remembrance?
2. Why is 12 considered an adult but it is 18 in Swale?
3. Does the council inform parents that they can get assistance for the burial / interment of a child?
4. Wild flower area in the Garden of Remembrance

1st June 2023

S. Muteham

Clerk to the Council

APPENDIX A

Clerk's Report on Civic Cemetery

Statistical information as at 01 June 2023

48	Plots in the Garden of Remembrance
113	Plots in the Burial Ground
27	Plots identified by members of Public Amenities committee in 2022 and letters sent to those plot owners
10	Plot holders agreed to be contacted by the Working Group (under GDPR regulations)
4	Complaints received by Clerk from plot holders who have conformed, expressing concern over those who had not conformed
1	Complaint received relating to ground condition of grave
3	Complaints received by Clerk from plot holders about stress/confusion caused by letter

Summary timeline of council matters relating to the civic cemetery

Apr 2015	Existing ploholders in GR contacted regarding reallocating rose bushes
May 2015	Council approved installation of rose garden.
May 2021	Members of the Public Amenities committee noted that some cemetery plots were not well maintained
May 2021	Council agreed to install noticeboard to display summary cemetery regulations
Oct 2021	Noticeboard installed with summary regulations
Oct 2021	Council approved revised cemetery regulations
Dec 2021	Council approved revised fees with effect from 01/01/2022
Jan 2022	New cemetery gardening contractor
Jan 2022	Council declined to purchase additional litter bin for cemetery
Oct 2022	Council approved renovating rose garden
Oct 2022	Members of the Public Amenities committee held site visit to identify plots not conforming to regulations
Nov 2022	Council requested Clerk contact the identified plot holders (letter reviewed by members of the Public Amenities committee before being sent)
Feb 2023	Council approved working party to address plot holder concerns.

APPENDIX B

WORKING PARTY RECOMMENDATIONS:

Council Procedures

Questions Raised: on the report there were questions raised – that answers are forthcoming to these questions and a formal discussion ensues.

Communication: A commitment to better/more empathetic/personal method of communication with the bereaved when dealing with enquiries, comments, compliments, or complaints. This needs to be a 2-way process. The working party are all happy to be involved, while they remain elected councillors.

Process regarding future complaints: Agree a process to take future formal complaints forward (councillors have not seen correspondence of complainants, although those complaints were sent to the Parish Clerk – adopted GDPR rules of the Parish Council should state that complaints sent to the Parish Clerk will be shared with the Parish Council, even if that information has to have personal details redacted).

Maintenance and Inspection: That the council maintain the Civic Cemetery in good order and inspect on at least a monthly basis: it was apparent that the Civic Cemetery had not been regularly inspected/maintained in a way which would be reasonable to expect.

Renovation: A timely program of renovation be agreed: benches to be fixed/maintained, paths to be cleared of moss and kept clear, another rubbish bin to be provided and situated in the Burial Ground.

Equal access: That work be considered to improve the accessibility of the Burial Ground, i.e., a new path to be installed.

Contractor: That the Parish Council regularly inspect and monitor the gardening contractor's work, and their employee's behaviour be quiet and respectful in a place where people come to mourn. Additionally, that accidents/incidents, such as running over the hose from the tap, are reported promptly and that they are made good at the expense of the contractor. Contractors to receive feedback and that the Parish Council are provided with their response to the recommendations affecting them. Can the Parish Council be provided with a copy of their contract for review?

Damage to grave items: If items on graves are damaged by the contractors - that the council agree on a formal process on how to inform people responsible for the grave.

Review cost of plot: (burial V ashes plot in the Garden of Remembrance) –

Review the length of time for exclusive right of burial: currently there is a minimum 50-year Exclusive Right of Burial for burial plots and only a 20-year Exclusive Right of Burial for ashes plots. Alter time scales to ensure consistency across the two halves of the Civic Cemetery. Advise plot holders what ramifications this may have on their perceived 'ownership' of the plot.

Revision of the Terms and Conditions/Rules and Regulations:

Dividing the rules: for the Burial Ground and the Garden of Remembrance. Currently they are too confusing. They are in one long document and the rules vary for burial and for ashes plots. The rules given at a time of intense mourning should be succinct and easy to understand.

New Document: when people purchase a plot they date a document and sign to say they have read and understand the rules.

No glass vases: The rule that there are no glass flower vases allowed anywhere in the Civic Cemetery should be enforced, as broken glass is a health & safety hazard.

Rules tightened up on plastic flowers/tributes: The Working Party would like to recommend that no plastic flowers should be allowed at all (as they deteriorate and when dumped within the compost heap they cannot biodegrade). Some flowers had sharp staples which were strewn across a large area of the garden of remembrance. This is a health and safety hazard. Alternatively and bearing in mind that plot holders have good reasons for using plastic flowers we would suggest that plastic tributes not be allowed to deteriorate and be disposed of appropriately.

Choices of headstone: Types of stone allowed for memorials and headstones to be reviewed and the selection allowed could be expanded upon. As advised by a local stonemason, only 3 stone types are now

available, out of the four which we currently allow. Of these 3, one is very hard to source as the quarry has closed and the other 2 stone types currently allowed are both extremely porous & result in poor wear and tear over a short period of time. They require extra cleaning to maintain their appearance. Also, they are more expensive to purchase, than granite for instance, which is available in a variety of colours and is very hard wearing. The rule has already been breached, and not enforced, as there are already granite headstones in place, and have been for over a decade. A local stone mason identified this and complained historically to the parish council, but no enforcement action was taken.

Headstone sizes: For the burial ground. There is a maximum size of headstone, which has been breached in a few cases, already. There should be a minimum size of headstone also to ensure clarity, just as there is in the Churchyard adjacent. Maximum/minimum sizes should be specified as being measured from ground level with a drawing of the dimensions to be provided by the funeral director/stone mason. All headstones should comply with these sizes from the accepted date of any revision of these rules as adopted and agreed by the council.

Fencing of plots: That the council consider allowing the fencing of plots, both in the garden of remembrance and in the burial ground. This is an emotive issue. All participating in the working party meetings viewed this as a way to ensure that tributes to their loved ones are undisturbed from animals (eating plants/flowers) and that the graves/ashes plots are undisturbed by other people (walking on or encroaching on the grave). The view that people should not walk on other people's graves is widely held and strongly felt to be disrespectful.

Statuary/tributes: Council to consider altering the rules relating to statuary not being allowed on graves, as many people find personal items a meaningful way to express their remembrances/feelings about a loved one.

Stone Chippings/kerbs: Council to consider the use of stone chippings – these are not currently allowed, however at Love Lane Cemetery they are often used in conjunction with stone borders or edging, which are not currently allowed either at the Civic Cemetery.