

**WEST NORWOOD CEMETERY ADVISORY GROUP**

**MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON**

**Wednesday 28 March 2018 at 5.45 pm**

**PRESENT:** Jill Dudman, Prof. Robert Flanagan (Chair) and Robert Holden

**ALSO PRESENT:** Dick Tooze

**APOLOGIES:** Dr Brent Elliott, George Young, Councillor Fred Cowell, Councillor Max Deckers Dowber and Jack Kelly

**1. WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and the following declarations of interest were raised:

- Robert Holden had a family interest and a potential right to burial in five graves; and,
- Jill Dudman was a cremation plot owner.

**2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS ADVISORY GROUP**

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting dated 17 January 2018 be agreed as an accurate record of proceedings.

**3. MINUTES OF THE LAST SCHEME OF MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting dated 02 February 2018 be noted.

**4. HLF BID UPDATE**

Dan Thomas, Programme Manager for Capital Programmes, introduced the report and responded to questions as below:

- Financial information and project management was progressing well with no concerns, with project financing and spending on track. The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) mid-project evaluation and peer review of project documentation and proposals was to take place on 10 April 2018, with the HLF mentor and project manager to update on bid progress on the lead up to the August submission.
- Feedback was being received on the pre-planning review, including the refurbishment of the visitor centre/lodge, boundary works and potential new entrances at Hubbard and Robson Road, Greek Enclosure (including St Stephen's Chapel), and 16 monuments on English Heritage's monuments Heritage at Risk register. This would assess whether the proposals were suitable and deliverable.
- The outline of designs for the above would be circulated locally and to stakeholder groups.

- Lambeth was still in conversation with the Greek Cathedral Trust to help fund the Greek Enclosure works and to provide greater public and possible disabled access for St Stephen's Chapel.
- The Chair suggested that placement of the intended information monoliths should await the outcome of the Bid since the forecourt works were an integral part of the bid. Harrison Design had been asked to outline the construction programme and timings, with the Chair of the Advisory Group (MAG) to review before decision.
- An activities programme was under development with the re-establishment of volunteer working parties, with other events planned.
- Lambeth Grounds Maintenance teams had been active over recent months with positive feedback. It was noted that the Council's team dealt with 'hard' scrub clearance, whilst the volunteer team would do 'soft' clearance. The first rescheduled volunteer working party would take place on 14 April.
- An Open Day had been proposed for 01 July 2018 (a Norwood Feast day). The Friends of West Norwood Cemetery (FOWNC) had offered to liaise with the Activities Coordinator and Bereavement Services to put together a programme of activities for the day, risk-assess and provide necessary support.
- Officers would report back with proposals on improving and making safe access to the Catacombs.
- The HLF website was live and social media engagement continued, with the latest project newsletter to contain information on developments and the ongoing public consultation. This would collect demographics and visitor data for the HLF, with the online survey and local engagement to test proposals.
- The visitor counter had been installed to track visitor numbers and whether publicity was having an impact on footfall; this was thought to include separate pedestrian and vehicle counts. It was noted that increasing visitor numbers was a key target of the HLF bid.

The Chair offered thanks to Dan Thomas, Joahanne Flaherty and Beth Cross for their work, and noted that the Chair of the Scheme of Management Committee (SoMC) would provide further steer.

## 5. CAPITAL PROJECT OFFICER UPDATE

Dan Thomas, Programme Manager for Capital Programmes, gave the following responses to questions:

- Steve Wong had now left Lambeth with a replacement due in post in May and in the interim period the management of the cemetery capital programme be shared amongst officers.
- Officers were looking forward to completing the restoration of the Letts and Thomas memorials now that faculties had been obtained.
- The tender was now out with suppliers to undertake works, with a decision expected soon, depending on the number of bids received.
- The nature of the boundary wall between the cemetery forecourt and Nettlefold Hall had gone to the Planning Applications Committee which had requested better and higher quality decorative railing than what was proposed. Conways and a decorative railing supplier were to visit and formulate proposals, which would be circulated to the MAG and SoMC prior to planning consent. The proposed railings would sit atop the current wall as added security and match the colour of the existing railing.
- The adjacent cinema complex was expected to open in June or July and officers had visited to check on progress.
- The road patching outside the crematorium had been completed before Christmas.

- A request for funds for the Catacomb's scaffolding was to be made and officers were contacting contractors to get quotes on the design and methodology and installation. The main purpose of this structure was to stop water ingress and the inspection of scaffolding would inform the scope of intervention required from which designs could be made. The MAG would receive the recommendations following this inspection. In discussion it was noted that the old chapel sat above the central section of the Catacombs with two colonnades on each Western side wing.
- The grave re-use pilot had not yet begun, but officers were speaking with Paul Harrison (Harrison Design) to implement policy, costing and management. The Chair noted that this was a priority and it remained to be seen if the idea was viable, in particular Full Council needed to agree the policy before the pilot could proceed. The pilot was on unconsecrated ground so did not need SoMC or Diocese permission, but would still be sent to the SoMC for information.

The Chair recorded the MAG's formal thanks to Steve Wong for all his years of hard work and wished him well in the future.

## 6. OPERATIONS UPDATE

Kevin Crook, Head of Neighbourhoods, introduced the report and responded to questions as below:

- The first out-of-tenure memorial benches on the right hand side of the main road were removed on 28 March 2018 and further removals would be carried out by Community Payback going forward. Benches would be labelled and stored in Lambeth Cemetery's depot for one year, in case of complaints, and notices would be placed on those where ownership was uncertain.
- The grass was still fairly short due to poor growing conditions so far this year, but cutting would restart during the next weeks.
- The team had expanded on the scrub clearance from last winter and had now cleared most of the area behind the Catacombs and on the south side of Ship Path, with the volunteers to hopefully clear up leftover debris, litter, and monuments under guidance.
- The grounds maintenance team were removing conifers over 6ft high from over graves and had undertaken some epicormic growth removal.
- Plaques and information boards were to be placed close to some of the more interesting and significant trees to increase interpretation and interest, as one of the London in Bloom requirements, and were liaising with the Capital Project so that such highlighted trees were not felled.
- The first volunteer party was rescheduled for 14 April, with Beth Cross also looking to instigate a weekday session to attract a different audience. Robert Holden asked that Beth Cross be invited to the next MAG, but she would be attending the Open Day, public consultations and other events.
- Community Payback had been tasked on their Wednesday sessions to clear debris from the depot and memorial bases, litter picking, clearing the boundary wall gullies and other duties as directed.
- Officers were procuring new CCTV to install around the depot area, where anti-social behaviour and vandalism often took place, with additional cameras by the entrance to improve coverage. These cameras would have infra-red systems, be motion-activated, and linked to officers' phones.
- Approval had been received to recruit the two vacant positions in Bereavement Services, with the Cemetery and Crematoria officer position live and the Supervisor position to be

advertised soon. It was hoped to attract someone already qualified for the former position, as a second crematoria officer was needed.

- The Maintenance team structure chart (agenda pack, page 17) noted that a further seasonal officer was needed between April-October.
- The directorate restructure consultation was due to end on 09 April 2018, and was expected to include two extra posts in Bereavement Services and two seasonal officers to shorten the grass cutting cycle to 5-6 weeks. If approved, recruitment for these positions was expected in June.
- Attendees were asked to raise questions regarding the location of benches with Jacqueline Landy.
- It was noted that memorial trees had not been planted in specific locations, records were sparse, but – as far as could be ascertained – all would run their 25-year tenure unless dangerous. Any questions on specific trees were to be directed to Kevin Crook.
- Robert Holden drew attention to a film script found in the cemetery and during discussion it was noted that only commercial filming ventures needed to apply for a license to film in the cemetery. Others could file as long as there was no disturbance to graves, grave owners, or mourners at funerals.

The Chair thanked Kevin Crook for his ongoing work and cemetery upkeep, including the substantial work carried out over winter which had made a significant impact.

## **7. BEEHIVES IN THE CEMETERY**

The Chair asked Kevin Crook, Head of Neighbourhoods, to brief on the relocation of beehives:

- The beekeeper had moved his hives from close to the proposed grave re-use area (squares 8-9) nearer to the south-east corner, but the new location was too exposed and close to residential areas and the hives were to be moved back closer to the original site.

The Chair thanked attendees for their input and noted that the beginning of the meeting would be put back to the original start of 17:30 since the later start time had seen decreased attendance.

The meeting ended at 6.55 pm

Date of next meeting: To be confirmed

Date of Despatch: Tuesday 10 April 2018

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