

WEST NORWOOD CEMETERY ADVISORY GROUP

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON

Wednesday 5 February 2020 at 5.30 pm

PRESENT: Jill Dudman, Dr Brent Elliott, Professor Robert Flanagan (Chair), Robert Holden, George Young, Councillor Pete Elliott and Councillor Peter Ely

ALSO PRESENT: Tim Stephens, Canon Reverend Ivelaw Bowman, Nicholas Long MBE (Chair SoMC/Chair of Project steering group for NLHF), Dan Thomas, Jacqueline Landy, Beth Cross, Preeti Chatwal-Kauffman,

APOLOGIES: Councillor Fred Cowell

1. WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chair, Professor Robert Flanagan, 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;
- Nicholas Long was a grave owner; and,
- Jill Dudman was a cremation plot owner.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS ADVISORY GROUP MEETING

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting dated 30 October 2019 be agreed as an accurate record of proceedings.

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS SCHEME OF MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting dated 13 November 2019 be noted.

In discussion, it was noted that officers needed to discuss the list of outstanding Cemetery actions with Professor Bob Flanagan, Chair of the Management Advisory Group (MAG) and Nicholas Long (Chair SoMC/Chair of Project steering group for National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF)).

4. PROJECT MANAGER NLHF PROJECT UPDATE

Preeti Chatwal-Kauffman, Project Manager, introduced the report and responded to questions as below:

- Officers apologised for the delays during the transition period, however the lead

consultants - Donald Insall Associates – alongside Paul Harrison and Conisbee – had now been appointed, and quantity surveyor procurement was in progress, with a March date to interview for the appointment.

- The Stage 4 design was now beginning and major spend was expected from August 2020 onwards. Designs and plans would be discussed with stakeholders as soon as possible.
- The Capital Delivery team had seen numerous changes, but staff posting was now largely complete.
- The RIBA Stage 4 (ITT) was projected to begin in May, but due to tendering delay, was now expected in August. Progress would be updated on a monthly basis to increase visibility.
- The Chair reiterated the MAG's and Scheme of Management Committee's (SoMC's) concerns over progress to date, with a three-month delay from that previously advertised, and NLHF funding based on meeting the project's timelines.
- The Chair asked for individual timelines to be provided for each work package, detailing lead officers.
- Officers were in regular contact with the NLHF to provide assurance on grant funding and progress. A key reason for delays were to correctly package procurement to get the highest quality lead consultant, which had been achieved and would shorten the design phase by providing continuity.
- Once work packages were activated, detailed development would be provided by monument, infrastructure, drainage, pathways, and visitor centre work strands.
- The Interpretation Consultation would follow the quantity surveyor appointment to initiate the project later in the year. The Chair noted that he did not want to employ someone to duplicate his advice.
- Beth Cross, Activities Co-Ordinator, confirmed planned events were now live on the project website.
- The full cost plan was approved as part of the Development Round 2 Bid, but the NLHF required a continuing audit of works and contracts before tender to monitor and amend cost plans. Furthermore, the NLHF did not advise appointing a quantity surveyor at the same time as a lead consultant.
- There was no progress on obtaining a Faculty for extinguishing grave rights for the proposed Hubbard Road entrance, but officers and Harrisons would oversee progress. There was similarly no progress on extinguishing burial rights on graves on the proposed level access to St Stephen's Chapel. Failure to receive Faculty would entail a rethink on a second entrance and demonstrated the importance of detailing and sequencing works.

5. CAPITAL PROJECT OFFICER UPDATE

Dan Thomas, Programme Manager for Capital Programmes, introduced the report, noting that:

- Planning for the reconstruction of the boundary wall between the forecourt and library was part for the lead consultant bid, but there had been no progress since the last meeting.
- A business case would be made to allocate funding to secure a sustainable future for the Catacombs; with an update at the next meeting, and would also detail remedial works on membrane fabric, leaks and access. The Chair noted that regular inspections were needed.
- Catacombs' membrane designs would be reviewed offline and brought to the MAG for consideration and then the SoMC for approval, with intervention expected prior to July pending planning approval.
- Tree works had been handed over with capital funding to the Tree team and were due to go out to tender soon, but there was no progress to report. The Chair reiterated that

extensive damage could be caused by a storm and it was fortunate that trees were currently out of leaf; and asked for a report at the next SoMC meeting, with officers confirming that the arboriculture specialists had visited and not recommended any specimens for immediate removal.

- It was confirmed that logs and branches were to be removed and provided to parks for chipping or to local florists.

6. OPERATIONS UPDATE

Jacqueline Landy, Bereavement Service Manager, noted the report and provided the following responses to questions:

- The Landscape team working on Doulton Path, had now mown the grass on Lower Road, and would remain with the Cemetery for a further week for mowing, scrub clearance and minor tree works.
- Officers would provide costs for the replacement or replicas of the Maddick Mausoleum handles. Although it was preferable to replace them, if a different material was used it might be acceptable if it deterred future theft; and required Heritage England advice. It was also noted that the Mausoleum was subject to maintenance in perpetuity and so the Council likely had liability for repairs.
- The SoMC Chair stated his hope that the Council were handling the Benjamin Colls relief as an open insurance claim.
- Jill Dudman recorded that previous repairs to the Maddick Mausoleum roof were now failing and rainwater was entering, with the rate of failure accelerating. Officers noted that costs and a cost centre were still being devised by Facilities Management.
- The Chair noted that the Talford memorial, previously demolished by a falling tree, was now a priority to replace and should feature as a future capital project.
- Attendees noted that the overgrown wildflower area was not appropriate as it had a full quota of 19th-20th century memorials and other areas needed to be suggested, such as the previously agreed area near the eastern boundary wall which had largely seen its monuments demolished.
- An unsafe monuments app was undergoing testing, and staff were recording and photographing graves to create an up-to-date record. It was planned that this would feed into existing registers and databases.
- The introduction of new animal species had been agreed in principle, although the Chair noted that bird boxes should not be put on trees listed for removal, and attendees added the importance of striking a balance with nature and diversity, and with the cemetery's primary purpose of commemoration of the bereaved; and that any conflicts would need to be resolved.
- Officers noted that winter tasks were currently being undertaken (agenda pack, page 20).
- The Stillbirth Memorial did not appear to contain burials and it was proposed to relocate, pending Faculty and SoMC agreement, as per Appendix B (agenda pack, pages 33-8). The Chair of the SoMC noted that the current memorial was well used, but likely sat over four graves and did not originally receive Faculty, and as such needed relocation.
- The delay to replace the coffin lift in the crematorium was due to vendor issues and works were now expected to begin in March. This would lead to extra vehicles in the Cemetery and officers confirmed would hopefully follow safety protocols to prevent damage to memorials.
- An inventory of coffins and equipment was needed for the various items stored beneath the Crematorium.
- Cemetery and park staffing remained the same, with the current rotating officer being

Rose Thomas.

- Lambeth supported beekeeping in each of its cemeteries, which encouraged plants. Councillor Ely stated that beehives in the Rosendale Road allotment were fenced off and often stung people, however officers confirmed that in six years the Cemetery hives had been largely trouble free and would not be fenced off.

7. PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Beth Cross, Activities Coordinator, introduced the report and provided the following responses to questions:

- The social media following continued to grow.
- The weekly visitor count increased during the summer due to open days, longer hours and the Norwood Feast, but declined during colder weather.
- The open day and bird walks drew a more diverse crowd and first-time visitors compared to the more established events, but the latter saw more return visitors.
- A new information leaflet was under development to help visitors learn about the Cemetery and increase public engagement. The Chair noted that the Friends were producing a new Guide to the Cemetery.
- Volunteering opportunities for 2020 were being planned, although it was more difficult to get volunteer involvement in winter activities.
- Volunteering events primarily comprised the weekly Dulwich College visits.
- The Chair noted that the Friends of West Norwood Cemetery (FoWNC) still received requests to assist in vegetation management, but the Friends did not the capacity to organise this themselves.
- Officers were reviewing contacting The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) to aid with scrub clearance and were in discussion with the Parks team to run sessions alongside Bereavement Services.
- Scrub clearance would also be needed once the capital works started, and officers would need to agree priority tasks to help maintain the Cemetery.
- There was interest in restarting Catacomb tours following numerous enquiries and this formed part of longer-term volunteering plans.
- A replacement leaflet box had been budgeted and the damaged one would soon be replaced.
- The Chair noted that new FoWNC information leaflets were available.
- Robert Holden noted that Lambeth's Local History Forum Fair was taking place at St Mark's Kennington and would be ideal for the Cemetery to have a stall due to its large footfall.
- The adjacent PictureHouse cinema complex had agreed an interactive exhibition space as part of its planning agreement and their new Manager was keen to make contact with the project and discuss ideas on how to best support one another.

8. REVISED CEMETERY REGULATIONS

Jacqueline Landy, noted the report and provided the following responses to questions:

- This document had been circulated previously for review and officers asked attendees for feedback.
- The new Regulations would cover all three of Lambeth's cemeteries and had last been revised in the 1980s.
- The Chair noted he had responded and provided comment to officers.

- Draft copies were accessible via the Council's website and would be placed in Cemetery offices.
- Tim Stephens asked for extensive consultation on proposals prior to SoMC or Cabinet approval.
- Clear direction on activities in the Cemetery were needed in the Regulations so that they did not conflict with bereavements, such as defining what would constitute a sport (e.g. yoga or cycling).
- Councillor Pete Elliott noted that driving was not banned in the Regulations.
- The Chair of the SoMC noted that a prohibition on single use plastics, in line with the Council's policies, would also help stop the accrual of plastic over graves.
- Brent Elliot noted that the rules on memorial inscription (agenda pack, page 60) could lead to misinterpretation, and the Chair of the SoMC noted that headstones should be accurate records.

The meeting ended at 7.00 pm

Date of next meeting: Wednesday 1 April 2020

Date of Despatch: Monday 17 February 2020

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