WEST NORWOOD CEMETERY SCHEME OF MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Wednesday 11 May 2016 at 5.30 pm

Minutes

Present: Nicholas Long MBE, Councillor Max Deckers Dowber, Jill Dudman, Dr Brent Elliott, Dick Tooze and George Young

Apologies: John Whelan, Paul Barber, Reverend Ivelaw Bowman, J. E. C. Briant, Councillor Fred Cowell, Councillor Sonia Winifred, Colin Fenn, Professor Robert Flanagan and Robert Holden

Also present: Ann Kingsbury, Noshir Patel, and Steve Sheridan

1. WELCOMES AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair, Nicholas Long, welcomed everyone to the meeting and all present introduced themselves, with apologies received as above. It was noted that the Scheme of Management Committee was not quorate and that the meeting would therefore proceed on an informal basis unless the item dealt specifically with Advisory Group matters.

2. GRAVE RE-USE PRESENTATION

Steven Wong, Project Manager, and Paul Harrison, (Consultant), gave members a presentation on grave re-use, which detailed the methods and processes and in response to questions officers said:

- officers had been working through implications and practical issues surrounding re-use over the last year, in particular looking at records to see where re-use could occur and pilot areas in non-consecrated areas had been delineated;
- the process of ‘lift and deepen’ would be used;
- re-use could only take place legally when graves were over 75 years old, with no objection from the rightful owner or heir (or that efforts to contact had been made), and that legal procedures (including from the Diocese, where applicable) were followed in full;
- any funds gained would be retained and reimbursed into the
cemetery’s maintenance, principally of its gravestones and monuments;
- re-use and reclamation were similar, involving a new burial in an existing grave, but reclamation related to those instances where remains were not disturbed due to their depth, although it was noted that remains where often still disturbed during this process;
- grave re-use required good burial records and accurately knowing where graves were;
- further information was hoped to become available during the digitisation process and officers were comparing data-collection with those of other local authorities;
- Steven Wong would liaise with Jill Dudman regarding card inscriptions before they were sent to Deceased Online;
- any grave that received an objection would be discounted and would preserve rights;
- re-used graves could only be sold when the authority had either carried out the process or was certain that it could physically do so;
- in the City of London cemetery, the initial phase of digging was carried out the day before by machine, then finished carefully by hand on the morning of re-use;
- immense care would be taken to respect graves and memorials, and nor would there be disturbance to trees or plantings;
- experienced grave diggers would carry out the work and reopening graves was a quick and relatively normal process;
- West Norwood Cemetery (WNC) was complex in that it had been formed under its own Act of Parliament and the interrelation to more recent public legislation (principally the 1976 Act) was still subject to legal advice;
- grave owners had not previously attempted to independently re-sell graves, and it was noted that graves were not equity and the law stated ownership as ‘owner of rights’;
- other methods of grave reuse were not applicable as they would involve making assumptions on the number of internments and the shifting of ground;
- it was noted that many graves did not have current owners as no-one had registered themselves since the first owners, whilst notifications of Second World War damage had failed to reach many of the then current owners;
- grave regulations were worth investigating, as other cemeteries had seen graves resold to maintain them or selling rights before burial to someone else. In WNC there were two exceptional cases where graves had been adopted by the British Musical Society;
- the Friends of West Norwood Cemetery’s (FoWNC) attitudes toward grave re-use began with the consistory court ruling where it framed its case in a context of re-use, and this had been maintained in discussion since; and,
- the Management Advisory Group and FoWNC wanted to be certain that protections were fully in place so Lambeth could not revert to its
previous situation of running the cemetery.

The Chair reiterated that this was a work in progress, with much exploratory, methodology and planning work yet to be completed. Attendees thanked Paul Harrison and Steven Wong for their informative presentation.

3. MINUTES OF THE WEST NORWOOD CEMETERY ADVISORY GROUP (20.01.16)
The minutes of the West Norwood Cemetery Advisory Group on 20 January 2016 were agreed to be an accurate record of the meeting.

4. ADVISORY GROUP ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR
The Chair of the Scheme of Management Committee conducted the election of the Chair.

RESOLVED: To elect Professor Robert Flanagan as Chair of the West Norwood Cemetery Advisory Group for 2016/17.

RESOLVED: To elect Dr Brent Elliot as Vice-Chair of the West Norwood Cemetery Advisory Group for 2016/17.

5. MINUTES OF THE WEST NORWOOD CEMETERY SCHEME OF MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE (10.02.16)
The minutes of the meeting held on 10 February 2016 were noted and deferred to the next meeting (20 July 2016) for approval.

6. SCHEME OF MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR
The election of the Chair and Vice-Chair was postponed until the next meeting (20 July 2016) as the meeting was not quorate.

7. PROJECT OFFICER'S UPDATE
Steven Wong updated attendees on:
- the recent passing of Trevor Uprichard, and attendees passed on their condolences to his family and praised his hard work undertaken for the cemetery;
- the last financial year had seen a successful Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) bid;
- grave re-use progressing well;
the northern perimeter wall had been largely cleared of vegetation, the western perimeter had been cleared of ivy, and other vegetation clearance was progressing well;

the Effra culvert had been cleared and was running clear;

work had started on Lambeth’s burial record digitisation (WNC was due to begin in the next week) with Deceased Online undertaking record scanning;

restoration of the Letts and Thomas Memorials had started, but greater than expected damage had delayed work with structural engineers and Historic England would assess. The Chair noted that the costs provided in the agenda pack would be significantly increased, whilst there were many monuments in a similar position across the cemetery;

the 2016/17 (Year 2) programme was passed by Cabinet Member decision on 27 February 2016, with £413,371 allocated to WNC as detailed in the second dispatch agenda pack (page 1). The table detailed this spend and would be updated over the course of the financial year;

Tree surgery and removal, Lambeth tree officers and contractors had identified four trees for immediate removal, and there would be a wholesale survey across Lambeth cemeteries and a rolling programme of works;

the land management strategy was being drafted by the Technical Officers Group and HLF team, and would have a detailed policy on trees. This would include those plants not meant to be there and would take into account documentation of original planting in the cemetery and the remaining specimens from the Great North Wood;

tree removals at the moment were for health and safety, or those that had already died;

the cemetery’s records would be taken for digitisation in one go and it was expected that scanning would take two weeks, upon which the records would be returned to the cemetery; and,

it was confirmed that Deceased Online had a special scanner which would not damage the already fragile state of the tightly-bound registers.

8. **ENVIRONMENTAL OFFICER’S ORAL UPDATE**

Kevin Crook updated attendees on:

- The Veolia contract had ended on 01 April 2016 and these services had been brought in-house;

- Lambeth were behind with grass cutting, having restarted on 18 April 2016 with a temporary team of five agency staff with prior cemeteries experience;

- equipment had been purchased from Veolia and replacements were being sourced for older equipment. Lambeth had also acquired a mechanical sweeper which would now visit regularly, and would be purchasing a mechanical weed remover and replacement dustcart
(for refuge collection) which would be more efficient and smaller to reduce the risk of collisions with infrastructure;

- Lambeth cemeteries were about to move to a weekend-bank holiday static guard regime, with a temporary guard (contracted by facilities management) in place since the previous guard had now left;
- the new bins for the crematorium entrance would be purchased shortly;
- assessments were being carried out on the suitability of a mobility scooter;
- signage for the cemetery had been ordered;
- Bluehammer were to install the secondary catacomb ventilation grills in the next week;
- Kevin Crook was working with Lambeth's web and performance teams to produce a standalone cemetery service website which would aid in promoting the cemetery, and this would be reviewed next week;
- the yard was being leased to an architectural stoneworker on a trial basis, no issues had arisen and it was generating small additional income. In answer to questions, the stoneworker worked three days a week and rarely used mechanical equipment; and,
- Lambeth cemeteries had been given an increased income target of £518,000, equivalent to a 38% increase.

9. **HLF BID UPDATE**

Steven Wong updated attendees on the HLF Project:

- The Year 2 funding had been received, but the project was currently slightly behind schedule due to staff changes;
- a consultant would lead on the design of the Round 2 bid, but this document had been drafted and was with the procurement team to start the tending process;
- the proposed governance structure of the HLF development team was on page 4 of the second dispatch agenda, which also listed the four sub-groups;
- invites had not been sent for the steering group as it was hoped to get a consultant first, but the group would last for two years during the development and construction phases;
- grave re-use would fall within the remit of the Technical Officers Group (TOG), which would be interrelated across the policy divides with the other groups;
- the HLF project steering group would have representatives from the FOWNC, the Greek community, and the West Norwood community, whilst it was recommended that a non-cemetery person or councillor also be installed;
- it was confirmed that Professor Flanagan would Chair both the MAG and the TOG; and,
- Steven Wong would circulate an expanded version of the HLF development team at a later date.
10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- Steven Wong would review grave square numbers after Jill Dudman flagged up an inaccuracy before the Registers were delivered to Deceased Online;
- there had not been much change on the grave re-use pilot since the last meeting;
- Colin Fenn had requested the circulation of two additional papers for information: the Associated Clay Worker’s Union, proposing an art trail for WNC in 2017, and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission’s Living Memory project and would be looking to stage an event in September 2016; these would need to be submitted to Lambeth to be progressed further; and,
- the evening reception launch of the art trail would be in Portico Gallery and permission would be obtained to have the cemetery open until 20:00 so evening walks were possible during the 2017 summer exhibitions.

The meeting ended at 7.03 pm

Date of Despatch: Thursday 19 May 2016
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