

Notes of a meeting held in Eye Town Hall on 23rd November at 7.00 pm.

Meeting called by ETC (Eye Town Council) to explain cemetery regulation to members of the public.

Councillors in attendance: Johnnie Walker (Mayor), Tunie Brandon, Mary Agar, Caroline O'Donnell, Kim Crispin, Angela Rangecroft, Mike Smith, Jean Bush, Bruce Salter, June Gould (advisor to the Council).

23 members of the public in attendance.

11th October meeting report

<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/#label/town+council?projector=1>

23rd November meeting report from IW (Ian Winter)

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1nPWinO-X8fkial2weH_VkSf-P6OQp6_s/edit?dls=true

The Mayor (JW) started the meeting by asking who attended the public non-council meeting on 11th October. Some members of the public were in attendance at that meeting.

JW read a response to the report that was generated from the meeting on 11th October. JW stated that at the date of that meeting ETC only had 9 out of 15 councillors in post.

JW stated that H&S inspections would be carried out across the estate of ETC on a rolling programme. The next H&S inspection of the cemetery would take place on Sunday 26th November (this was subsequently cancelled due to the chair of the Environment Committee being unwell).

The volunteer group was still in place but had not met because the project co-ordinator at ETC had left but this was in hand to start meetings again.

Maintenance work on the cemetery was on-going through the contractors.

Fees and funding were discussed. No decisions as to the new fee structure had been made.

All the items in the report by IW from the meeting on 11th October were responded to by JW (mayor).

JW opened the meeting to questions from the public.

Clive Hill asked Mike Smith (MS) why in the minutes of the Environment Committee do not mention double depth graves and the ERB (exclusive right of burial) to be reduced to 25 years.

The ETC voted to change the ERB to 25 years and make double depth graves a default but all current ERBs will be honoured (e.g. for those purchased for 50 years). This has not come to the full meeting of ETC.

JW said that the Council was doing the best they could and that all the information will be available on the website by the coming Monday (27th November). The proposals will be discussed at the next Environment Meeting and then at the full ETC meeting in December.

JW stated that the Council had to follow the law and regulations regarding the cemetery.

It was stated by councillors that an ERB can be extended but cannot (by law) go past 100 years.

Councillor Kim Crispin (KC) asked who had drawn up the new prices.

June Gould (advisor JG) stated that she had done extensive research into rules and regulations for burial authorities. She stated that 25 years is a reasonable length for an ERB and is consistent with other burial authorities. Historically ETC has not kept in contact with the holders of ERBs and it can prove difficult to ensure that the owners keep the memorials safe.

JG set out the legal requirements of grave depths and why double depth graves should be the default. JG also set out the situation regarding the burial authority costs. She looked at over 40 other burial authorities and there is no uniform pricing structure. She stated that draft proposals will be brought to ETC for discussion. She stated that ETC has the right to adjust and/or increase costs as a burial authority.

A member of the public asked if we can identify all the graves in the cemetery. Stated that as residents that ETC should consult with the public as they would know.

Public comments were that why could the ERB not be 50 years, what are the costs of managing the cemetery and commented on the poor maintenance of the cemetery.

JW stated that we engage a contractor for the maintenance of the cemetery and that the costs of maintaining the cemetery was approximately £10k per year which represents half of the precept.

Public stated that other local cemeteries are maintained much better and much cheaper. Why can't ETC?

A representative from Rosedale Funeral Home raised concern that he was told 1 hour before a funeral that the grave depth was too shallow. He disputed this.

Public wanted to know who is responsible for informing people about the ERB. JG said that it is a shared responsibility between the burial authority and the funeral directors and that the funeral directors give the information to their clients.

Public said that funeral directors need to be more clear regarding informing clients of ERBs.

JW said that ETC had developed 3 leaflets that will be on the ETC website and sent to local funeral directors to give to clients that clearly explain the rules and regulations.

KC said that the public should be consulted regarding increasing fees.

JG stated that fees should be reviewed and raised annually in line with inflation. ETC is proposing to waive interment fees for anyone up to the age of 18. She also stated that the price of a double depth grave is the same price of a single depth grave.

Councillors made clear that the process is for committees to recommend actions to the full ETC and then voted on.

Ian Winter (IW) thanked the Council for responding to the questions raised in the report from 11th October. He raised the issue of suspension of committee meetings. He raised whether or not there needs to be an election for the reinstatement of committees.

Angela Rangelcroft (AR) said that she would investigate.

IW wanted to know how much a 25 year ERB will cost.

Public raised the issue of the cemetery railings and the progress. Mike Smith (MS) stated that the gates had been removed some years ago after a suspected collision with a lorry turning round on the road and using the driveway. They were looked at by a blacksmith who confirmed that it would cost twice as much to repair the gates as to replace them. MS confirmed the gates are in storage and have not been disposed of. MS confirmed that the contractors have been able to re use the fleur de lis on the new railings.

Public wanted to know why the trees had been cut down (pollarded). ETC said because they were encroaching on the road. Suffolk Highways recommended that they had to be cut back. MS said that Mid Suffolk confirmed that the work was properly carried out and some of the trees were diseased.

Public asked for proof that trees were diseased.

Public asked about the wooden circle structure in the cemetery. What was its purpose? MS said that it was nothing to do with ETC as it was put up by members of the public but it is planned to remove it.

A member of the public said that they found JW (mayor) aggressive. JW defended himself and apologised if anyone found him aggressive.

Public asked why the complaint email from IW on his resignation was dealt with in private.

JW stated it was because IW headed his email as confidential.

Public asked about H&S at the cemetery. Metal spikes sticking out of pillars. MS stated that this was the responsibility of the contractor and it was being chased.

Public asked about the rabbit holes in the cemetery. MS said that it is proposed that the rabbit holes are ferreted and then filled in.

Public asked why so many trees had been planted and not all of them were healthy. Appeared to be concerned about running out of space. MS stated that the number of burials was reducing as people were choosing cremations.

Public asked if all the green burials were being tracked. It was confirmed that they were and all burials were being plotted by Councillor Jean Bush. It is a large piece of work.

Public who was responsible for the H&S inspection on the coming Sunday. MS said that any competent person can be responsible under the legislation and that clear instructions will be given to those to go to the inspection (this was later cancelled due to ill health).

Public asked about the chapels. This was something that the Council hoped to move forward with in terms of getting funding.

Public asked if the cemetery group would start meeting. JG said that an advert was put in Eye Magazine asking for volunteers to come onto this group but no responses were received.

KC stated that lack of public meetings is an issue for many. She stated that people who had lived in Eye all their lives should have a greater say in the cemetery than those who have just moved here.

KC said that MS was not being transparent and there was no evidence of diseased trees. KC said that MS was not being honest.

Public wanted to know when running water would be available at the cemetery. MS said they were trying to find the break in the pipe. MS also stated that he was talking to the water company and contractor to identify the costs.

Representative from Rosedale suggested using water butts.

KC said that there was a lot of bad feeling between ETC and two ex-councillors CH and IW. KC wanted to thank CH and IW for their contribution to ETC.

JW stated that he had spent some minutes on his regular slot on Park Radio praising CH for his work on the recent Heritage Week.

Meeting closed