

ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

WEDNESDAY 15 MARCH 2017

Cemeteries and Closed Churchyards Sub Committee

The committee has met on a number of occasions in the last year making policy recommendations to the full Town Council, for ratification or amendment relating to the cemeteries and closed churchyards for which the Town Council has responsibility. This includes fees charged for burials, their appearance, and ensuring the Cemeteries are a safe place for the public to visit and staff to carry out their duties. The committee is serviced ably and supported by the Town Clerk and Officers.

Town Cemeteries

As a result of the monument testing at Tower Hill, a great number were identified as being unstable. Deed holders were contacted and advised that work was required to make them safe again.

A number of the monuments have been attended to and are now in a safe condition again. However a further 170 headstones still need attention. These are now being attended to by the Council staff in a sensible and sensitive manner. Notification of this work was promulgated by a press release, the Council's web site, and social media.

At the Windrush cemetery the committee has considered issues with graves, due to ground collapses during periods of adverse weather conditions, access for those with disabilities, and the future development of the site. A professional report, from Peter Mitchell Associates, has been received and is being considered further.

General maintenance is undertaken as required and the grounds cared for by the contractors.

There have been 56 burials and internments at the Tower Hill Cemetery plus 39 at the Windrush Cemetery.

Closed Churchyards

The churchyard of St Mary's on Church Green and Holy Trinity are both closed churchyards, and the grounds maintenance was passed to the Town Council many years ago under statute.

Working closely with the Rector of Witney, the committee has considered and taken appropriate action regarding the safety of the monuments and trees in both churchyards. One particular area of concern are the pillars at the entrance to St Mary's. Repairs having taken place early in 2016, paid for by insurance, further vehicle damage has occurred. A solution to the continued damage to the pillars is being sort.

The committee has been addressed by members of the public. The Chair has met with residents to discuss particular issues. These contacts and exchange of information are very helpful in providing openness and a communication channel. It is hoped to set up a "Friends of Witney Cemeteries". Invitations to join have been placed on the council web site, in the newsletter, and notices in the cemeteries.

Cllr Howard Chirgwin

Chairman of Cemeteries and Closed Churchyards Sub Committee