

### Institute of Cemetery & Crematorium Management (ICCM) Visit

#### Notes of Cemetery Site Visit (Walk-around) Meeting held on Wednesday 24th November 2021 @ 2:00pm

Present: Councillors: R. Dietriche (Chair of Cemetery & Town Hall Committee), K. Haslett

ICCM Representatives: J. Dunk (CEO) & S. Allana

Also Present: J. Norris (Town Clerk), M. Weston – Deputy Town Clerk (DTC) & M. Shackleton – Outdoor Team Supervisor

Item No	Notes (topics discussed)	Outcome/Action required
1.	<b>Apologies</b>	Apologies were received from Cllrs: E. Andrews, J. Johns & M. Rowe
2.	<b>Background</b>	<p>Cemetery &amp; Town Hall Committee Meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> October 2021: Following consideration of an update report, ICCM comments received (in relation to memorial testing and levelling of cemetery ground) and a copy of the ICCM Management of Memorials guidance, it was recognised that this was an opportune time to ‘tidy up’ the cemetery site (older, top section) and to make it health &amp; safety compliant but that professional advice would be needed in terms of how this project is progressed. It was:</p> <p><i>RESOLVED: That following consideration of comments as received from the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM) in relation to memorial testing and levelling of cemetery ground, the Cemetery &amp; Town Hall Committee would like:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>a representative of the (ICCM) to be invited to attend a cemetery site visit to undertake an assessment of the grounds and to answer any questions that the Town Council may have;</i></li> <li>• <i>A budget of £100.00 is allocated as remuneration to the ICCM should a cost be incurred for the site visit (inspection) and associated advice etc.</i></li> </ul> <p><i>Note:</i></p> <p><i>i) All Members of the Town Council are welcome to attend the site visit;</i></p> <p><i>ii) A thorough investigation into the legalities of any action will be required and the Town Council should seek legal advice from a specialist local government advice team beforehand.</i></p>
2.	<b>General</b>	Introductions were made and attendees undertook a ‘walk around’ of the cemetery site with discussion entered into regarding the condition of the cemetery and general questions relating to site maintenance and legalities.
3.	<b>Name Plates</b>	<p>Should Town Council staff be checking name plates of coffins/ashes to confirm the identity of the deceased individual or should the responsibility for this lie with the undertaker?</p> <p>ICCM:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• advised there is no legal requirement to check a coffin/ashes name plate however, this is good practice.</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>recommended the Town Council adopt a policy on the procedure regarding supervision of a burial/interment and this should state who is responsible for health &amp; safety around the grave. Further advising, the Town Council is responsible for a burial/interment until such time as the undertaker's representative arrives on site and assumes responsibility. Once the interment has taken place, the undertaker's representative then hands back responsibility to the Town Council.</li> <li>advised that generally, a burial authority will have a representative of the Council, sometimes an officer attending (this does not necessarily need to be the grave digger or one of the cemetery staff) who can 'meet and greet' the funeral party and observe proceedings from a discreet distance; thereby being available to witness any occurrence that may arise.</li> <li>suggested that a discreet check of the name plate be undertaken whilst the coffin is being taken out from the hearse. Should there be an issue, the policy should then be referred to and as such this needs to be practicable.</li> </ul>
4.	<b>Re-location of a headstone</b>	<p>ICCM advised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>currently, headstones cannot be relocated under The Local Authorities' Cemeteries Order 1977 (LACO) – Cullompton's cemetery is still operational with continued burials/interments.</li> <li>the Town Council can lay memorials flat, thereby marking the grave space and making the area safe.</li> <li>it is not a 'huge fan' of relocating old headstones as this removes the 'context' and memorials should ideally be re-affixed on the grave where practicable. NB: The Health &amp; Safety Executive have guidance.</li> </ul>
5.	<b>Grave Distance</b>	<p>The question was asked as to the suggested or legal minimum space that should be left between graves (especially for the Primrose (children's) section of the cemetery where there is a concern in relation to the current layout).</p> <p>The ICCM advised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>there are no actual rules and sizes of plots are cultural to different areas around the country e.g. in London, graves are more tightly spaced.</li> <li>it is recognised that coffins are getting larger.</li> <li>to have 18" between each grave would be a practicable minimum to allow access to individual graves. NB: Within their (ICCM rep.'s) cemetery, 3m x 1.5 metres is the plot size and 9ft length x 4ft wide is the usual centre for an adult grave (space taken).</li> </ul>
6.	<b>Guidance</b>	<p>ICCM advised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local Authorities Cemeteries Order 1977 (LACO) governs municipal cemeteries; this is a useful document.</li> </ul> <p>NB: The ICCM's Burial Ground Regulations draft will be supplied for reference to the Town Council together with an example Cemetery Brochure.</p>
7.	<b>Lay to Lawn/Levelling of graves - ICCM Comments</b>	<p>Do grave owners need to be informed individually, that the cemetery is being levelled or can the Town Council just erect a notice in the cemetery?</p> <p>It was advised that the ICCM recognised Cullompton has an old cemetery and that inevitably, there will be air pockets in the ground which means it will periodically move; which is normal. The Town Council will never realise a 'bowling green' and the ground will always undulate.</p>

	<b>Permission</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Permission is not required from grave owners to remove ant hills and to fill and turf these areas however it is suggested that consultation is essential to enable good relations between the Town Council as the burial authority and members of the public/grave owners/relatives etc. Notices (signage) advising of planned works should be placed around the cemetery grounds; individual contact with grave owners is not necessary. Signage should include: What works are to be carried out and when plus duration of works where practicable.</li> </ul>
8.	<b>Divots</b>	<p>ICCM suggested:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>it would be useful, if an example of ‘divot filling’ be recorded by taking ‘before and after’ photos; these could be publicised to show the ‘progress of improvement’.</li> </ul>
9.	<b>Kerbing</b>	<p>ICCM advised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Audit Commission report 1970 recommends clearance of kerbing however this can destabilise the structure of a grave.</li> <li>It does not recommend a big programme of clearance.</li> <li>LACO specifies if a grave is damaged, notification should be given that action is to be taken.</li> <li>Perhaps the Friends of the Cemetery Volunteers could be tasked to clear kerbs (older memorials) and individuals/groups could adopt specific graves and keep these maintained.</li> </ul>
10.	<b>1990’s Headstones</b>	The ICCM noted there are a number of relatively recent memorials in close proximity to the chapels – this is interesting. Did something happen? e.g. Re-use of land. One would expect there to be older grave’s in this location.
11.	<b>Grave Shoring</b>	ICCM advised that all graves should have shoring; this is vital to maintain a safe environment and to protect both staff and members of the public.
12.	<b>Wildlife</b>  <b>Maintenance</b>	<p>ICCM:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>advised that the Town Council may wish to think about the management of wildlife; perhaps not cutting the grass so frequently or leaving segments of grass as dedicated uncut areas.</li> <li>suggested the Council may wish to consider encouraging and developing dedicated wildlife areas e.g. butterflies, bees (perhaps with hives), hedgehogs etc. This is great for the environment. NB: Devon Wildlife Trust can offer advice. Information boards and maps are helpful and the Council should advertise its plans.</li> <li>suggested the Town Council adopt a cemetery maintenance regime.</li> <li>advised if a grave is in a denoted grass cutting section, the Council could offer to cut the grass or suggest this is denoted as a wildlife section (whereby the grass would no longer be cut).</li> </ul>
13.	<b>Memorial Stability Testing</b>	<p>ICCM advised</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>it recommends not referring to memorial testing as ‘topple testing’.</li> <li>a visual and push test (by hand) should be initially carried out. If memorials are unsafe they will move under this pressure and will continue to move; majority of dangerous headstones will move straightaway.</li> <li>crosses tend to be tiered and 90’s gravestones and later tend to be the most dangerous as are not as robust as say Victorian heavy memorials which tend to be more stable and secure. The British Standard came into force in the year 2000. The ICCM’s experience is that more modern memorials pose more of an issue.</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• should an issue be identified, the memorial should be immediately cordoned off e.g. tape with signage stipulating 'unsafe memorial' or similar. Standard wording should be approved.</li> <li>• recommends staff are trained to test memorials. NB: ICCM offers a Memorial Stability Testing course.</li> </ul> <p>NB: It was demonstrated that one of the cross headstones in the (old) cemetery did have quite a bit of movement and could potentially be a health &amp; safety issue; it was advised by the ICCM representatives that this should be taped off ASAP. Outdoor Team Supervisor advised this would be actioned accordingly.</p>
14.	<b>Ornamental Features on Graves</b>	<p>ICCM:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• advised grave owners should be informed that if they wish the grass to be cut on their grave/s, that any ornaments on their plots should be removed by themselves, prior to staff carrying out the work; Council staff cannot be expected to remove ornaments each time the grass is cut.</li> <li>• suggested the Town Council looks at this topic historically as these expectations will need to be managed.</li> <li>• advised that sometimes, the best way is to have a clear policy on ornaments; should any complaints be received e.g. that grass has not been cut, then individuals can be directed to the policy.</li> <li>• recognised this is an emotive subject and also, that if staff were to temporarily move ornaments, there is a chance these could be placed in the incorrect place or even damaged.</li> </ul>
15.	<b>Lawn Memorial Spaces</b>	<p>ICCM advised that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 18" in front of a lawn memorial traditional grave is appropriate as a grave space (i.e. for grave owners to place ornaments) as long as this is adhered to and owners do not extend out of this boundary.</li> <li>• the Town Council should manage its ornaments straightaway e.g. the Stonemasons and Memorial policy states there should be no ornaments on the grassed (laid to lawn) areas.</li> <li>• it is certainly advised that the Council consult the public in terms of what it wishes to see e.g. with multiple options given. It is important to know your demographic and consultation is key.</li> </ul>
16.	<b>Ashes/Income</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Columbarium (a room or building with niches for funeral urns (ashes) to be stored above ground) could be introduced to the cemetery which could be leased for a period of time; this would give a renewal income.</li> </ul>
17.	<b>Garden of Remembrance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Garden of Remembrance would be a good idea for the cemetery and would allow a quiet space for reflection.</li> </ul>
18.	<b>Overall</b>	<p>ICCM representatives made comment that they <i>"were extremely impressed with the cemetery's general appearance and standard of maintenance of the grounds; this shows that the staff take pride and do a great job and the cemetery is a credit to the Town Council. It is also great to hear about the Council's plans to make improvements, and its desire to make the cemetery the community asset it deserves to be"</i></p>