

Meeting notes

Present:

Cllr Phil Seeva (Chair) (PS)

Cllr Eve Easterbrook (EE)

Jennie Harrison (JH)

Cllr Jerry Tucker (JT)

Jim Cock (JC)

Rev Margot Davis (MD)

Wendy Thompson (WT)

John Hesketh (Clerk & note taker)

Date

29 September 2016 7pm

Location

Menheniot Parish Hall

The purpose of this meeting was to fulfil a motion passed by parish councillors in April 2016 that 'that the PCC work alongside representatives from the parish council to identify alternative sources of funding and management of the graveyard.'

These minutes were approved on 3 November 2016.

Minute	Agenda Items	Action
1	Chairman's Welcome And explained that his expectation was for an open conversation that would find solutions to the issue. People attending introduced themselves and explained which organisation they were representing.	
2	PARISH COUNCIL STATEMENT EE: referred to the position statement that had been circulated with the agenda, and emphasised that the parish council was committed to working with the church to maintain the graveyard. The motion passed by councillors in April 2016 when they last awarded a grant, arose because of concerns that the level of financial support being requested by the church had increased substantially, and they wished to explore other ways of maintaining the space. This meeting was not called as a way of removing any future funding of the graveyard by the parish council.	
3	PCC STATEMENT MD&WT: explained the reasoning behind the increase in maintenance costs. The previous contractor had deliberately kept his charges at a low level because it enabled him to keep his income below the tax threshold. The church was aware that his charges were out of line with market rates, and for this reason, invited other people to tender for the work in order to obtain competitive quotations. The new cost for annual maintenance is £3,800, increased from £1,900. The figure of £1,520 in the annual expenses circulated prior to the meeting was only an indicative cost.	
4	CURRENT FUNDING ISSUES EE: £3,800 is the equivalent of 15% of the council's precept income. Councillors thought this figure was high, and there had been concerns expressed in the council meeting about how sustainable an annual award at this level could be. There are local elections due in May 2017, and EE noted that any new councillors elected may not share the same view.	

	<p>JC: the only cost increases they might expect from the current contractor would be cost of living.</p> <p>MD: showed a photograph of St Mary's churchyard in Liskeard which has received many complaints about the poor state of maintenance. She did not want St Lalluw's burial ground to become like this, and wants there to be a partnership between the church and the parish council to maintain the ground properly.</p> <p>PS: agreed that the burial ground was an asset for the whole of the parish, and no-one would want to see it in any other way.</p> <p>JC: reminded the meeting that grass cutting is only one part of the work of maintaining the graveyard. There are many other tasks involved (for example, hedge cutting, tree maintenance, safety checks on headstones) that are carried out by volunteers.</p>	
5	<p>CURRENT GRANT APPLICATION</p> <p>A discussion followed about the current method of grant application that the church had had to follow in order to obtain its current award.</p> <p>JC: the current application form was better suited to groups who were organising events because many of the questions did not apply to them.</p> <p>Clerk: Reminded the meeting that all the questions had been satisfactorily answered, which is why the councillors had made the award for £1,900 in April. He asked for specific examples and then explained how they had been answered to provide councillors with the information they needed to make their decision.</p> <p>MD: why does the council need to know how many people benefit from the grant and how can we calculate it?</p> <p>Clerk: one of the reasons behind introducing a grants system was for councillors to improve their understanding of how grants would benefit the parish. Having an idea of how many people benefit is one way to report back. We don't expect an exact figure, but an indication of the range would be helpful. For the church, a reasoned guess might include figures on the number of weddings and funerals you have each year, other event, the capacity of the church (and how many times that has happened). Your final answer might then be something like 'between 2-3,000' or '5-10,000'. This is sufficient for the councillors.</p> <p>PS: what is the status of the award that was made in April 2016?</p> <p>EE: the award was allocated in the council's budget and would be paid over to the church once the terms and conditions attached to the award had been accepted.</p> <p>JC: church had taken legal advice that it should not accept terms and conditions. Will send copy of advice to Clerk who can then discuss this with Cornwall Association of Local Councils if necessary.</p> <p>EE: the council is obliged to manage all its funds to create community benefit. Using part of its reserves helps to keep the precept at a low level so that every household in the parish directly benefits. Grants were introduced as an additional way to provide benefit and as a way to manage donations. Councillors need to be able to assess the benefits that grants can bring to a group or project. Terms and conditions are a way to ensure this happens. CALC have advised parish council to enforce T&Cs consistently to all grant applicants.</p>	<p>MD</p> <p>JC</p>

	<p>JC&WT: there are three conditions which church cannot accept. Publicity to acknowledge receipt of the grant Equalities Statement Safeguarding Statement</p> <p>JT: all other recipients of grants acknowledge the council. This is important so that taxpayers are made aware of what their money is being spent on.</p> <p>EE: the church already has equalities and safeguarding policies in place, as does the parish council. It is reasonable to ask that the graveyards committee, which is made up of representatives from each organisation, accepts the policies.</p> <p>MD: suggested that a way forward would be to bring the graveyards committee (currently independent of the church) is brought back to the PCC.</p> <p>WT&MD: will organise a special meeting of the PCC to agree changes to the organisation so that terms and conditions can be accepted and the award paid over.</p> <p>Clerk: the deadline for grant applications that would be awarded in November 2016 is 30 September 2016. The next opportunity to receive an award would be at the April 2017 meeting, with a deadline of 28 February 2017.</p>	MD
6	<p>FUTURE MAINTENANCE The meeting had a discussion to explore alternative ways of supporting maintenance in the future.</p> <p>MD: the council currently employs a contractor to maintain playing fields and grass verges. Could this include the graveyard? JT: confirmed that we employed a contractor for this work, and we would explore whether there could be economies of scale in using his services.</p> <p>Clerk asked if she could sent the specification for the grass cutting contract so that we could discuss this with the contractor.</p> <p>MD: is there any other church maintenance work that could be incorporated into parish work? JT: there is a proposal from Cornwall Council to devolve further highway maintenance work to parish level. There may be opportunities then.</p> <p>JT: does the church need funding to purchase any equipment that could then be used by volunteers? WT&MD: lawn mowers used to be but there were problems in recruiting volunteers and training them.</p> <p>MD: there will be a new contract available for tender in October. This may give the opportunity for a lower cost of maintaining the burial ground.</p> <p>JT: what are the alternatives to manual grass cutting? Is it possible to use goats or sheep to keep the grass trimmed? There is a chemical spray available that can retard the growth of grass. We can investigate this.</p>	Clerk MD Clerk
7	<p>FUTURE FINANCE PS: the shortfall between what the parish council is awarding and the current cost of the contract is £1,900. Can the council commit to making up this shortfall?</p>	

	<p>Clerk: the parish council cannot commit itself to awarding a grant every year although there was a clear willingness on the part of all councillors to continue funding graveyard maintenance.</p> <p>PS: as a unitary councillor, he has a budget (Community Chest) that can be used to make grants to local organisations. He will investigate his own terms and conditions, and will provisionally commit £500.</p>	PS
8	PS: summarised the meeting by reminding people attending of their actions and thanking them for their time.	
9	A further meeting to follow up on the actions agreed would take place on Thursday 3 November at 7pm. Venue to be arranged.	Clerk
10	Meeting ended 20.35	

Summary of actions

5	Estimate of numbers of people visiting church and burial ground to Clerk	MD
5	Copy of legal advice received by the PCC forwarded to Clerk	JC
5	Special meeting of PCC to agree changes to organisation	MD
6	Explore options for extending existing parish council contracts to include burial ground maintenance.	Clerk
6	Copy of current grass cutting contract and specifications sent to Clerk	MD
6	Chemical alternatives to grass cutting	Clerk
7	Investigate possibility of unitary councillor making donation to maintenance costs	PS
9	Arrangements for follow up meeting on 3 November.	Clerk