

A SPECIAL MEETING OF THE EAST BRENT PARISH COUNCIL CEMETERY COMMITTEE, WAS HELD ON MONDAY 2nd July 2012 AT 7.00PM IN THE EAST BRENT PARISH HALL.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Councillors J. Bowden (Chairman), Cllr E. Champion, Cllr V. Clapp, Cllr A. Gilling and Cllr B. Walker together with the Clerk M. Shobbrook were in attendance, together with the Rev. Simon Lewis.

APOLOGIES: None

MATTERS ARISING:

2179: PLOT 31 IN GARDEN OF REST: email from Rev. S. Lewis advising that he is trying to avoid paying out another vast amount of money for a new memorial to be made.

In his email, Rev. Lewis advised that unfortunately, Mrs. Browning had a memorial made, which in the mix up (instigated) by the Funeral Directors, he inappropriately sanctioned. This has cost Mrs. Browning a large amount. Rev. Lewis advised that its' dimensions are: 36" height, 23" wide, and 3" depth and "because of the intransigence of the rules and regulations that govern the cemetery, he understands that this memorial cannot be used". "This leaves us with a financial issue that cannot be solved easily", he said. Rev. Lewis further advised that the stone mason has been asked if he can shave the already made memorial to the dimensions required for the cemetery, but this is not possible without damage.

Rev. Lewis requests that Cemetery Committee be generous and show goodwill on this occasion.

Having discussed the issue at length the committee felt that the error was made by the Church.

As the Church must have liability insurance in place for such eventualities, the committee felt that it should adhere to the rules and regulations of the Cemetery regarding Headstones. The committee members were anxious to avoid setting a precedent in making an exception to the Cemetery Rules and Regulations.

The Chairman asked the Clerk to invite Rev. Lewis to attend a meeting at 7.00pm on Monday 2nd July, prior to the full Parish Council meeting on that evening, in order that this matter is discussed in person in an attempt to finally resolve it.

The above is a record of the minute previous meeting held on the 11th June 2012.

Rev. Lewis addressed the Committee members and outlined the situation relating to this problem on behalf of the Church. He explained the anguish being felt by his parishioner, Mrs. Sandra Browning, over the placing of her late husband's headstone. She still "had issues" with the Church, which could result in a claim for compensation being made to the Church's insurers for financial compensation. He asked the Committee to exercise its goodwill and compassion, towards his request for special permission to be given for the sitting of the "oversized" headstone in the Cemetery.

The Chairman, Cllr. John Bowden, explained the difficulties being faced by the Committee over this issue and its desire to adhere to the Rules and Regulations of the Cemetery over headstones generally.

He advised Rev. Lewis of the permitted size of headstones (17 inches wide x 26 inches high) and a discussion followed about the possibility of reducing the overall size of the already made headstone.

Rev. Lewis advised the Committee that the headstone could not be reduced in width as the engraving upon it had been extended to the edges. It could however, be reduced in height, to the permitted 26 inches.

Due to the over-run of time available (the full Committee meeting was scheduled to commence at 7.30pm) it was decided that this meeting would be suspended until after the subsequent meeting had ended.

At 9.00pm the Cemetery Committee reconvened.

A very detailed debate ensued, where the Committee tried to establish exactly how and why this most unfortunate situation arose.

The result was that it was felt the Undertakers were at fault by not following the correct procedure for the interment of Mr Browning's ashes.

Financial liability would therefore rest with them for the subsequent reparation costs, incurred by all parties.

However, they will say that they were given permission by the Church and they paid the appropriate fees (initially to the Church) in an attempt to avoid liability.

Their mistake was not to find out which plot they should have used.

They took it upon themselves to use the next plot in the row which was unmarked.

Regrettably, that plot had already been allocated to another.

The Committee Members were very concerned that if they showed special dispensation to the request by the Browning family for the siting of the "oversized" headstone (which they have had made and paid for) they would be creating a precedent which could be repeated in the future.

The overall uniformity of all headstones in the Cemetery is the clear aim of the Committee members, for the good of the Cemetery generally.

The Committee members asked the Clerk to record in the minutes of this meeting, the fact that they were very sympathetic to the anguish and upset caused to the Browning family over this whole issue.

On this basis and without prejudicing the Committee's position generally, the Chairman, Cllr. John Bowden proposed that special permission to allow the siting of the reduced height headstone should be given on this occasion. This was seconded by Cllr. Val Clapp. The motion was then passed unanimously.

However, all other rules and regulations appertaining to the Cemetery's code of conduct must be adhered to.

The Clerk was directed to pass this information onto the Rev. Lewis who had withdrawn from the initial meeting at 7.25pm.

There being no further business to discuss the meeting ended at 9.25 pm

2183: DATE OF NEXT MEETING:

The next meeting of the East Brent Parish Council Cemetery Committee will be held on 3rd September 2012 at 6.45pm in the East Brent New Cemetery.