

**OVINGHAM JOINT BURIAL COMMITTEE**  
(WYLAM, HORSLEY, OVINGHAM AND OVINGTON PARISH COUNCILS)

**Minutes of a meeting of Ovingham Joint Burial Committee Extra Ordinary Meeting**  
**20 February at Wylam Institute**

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**Councillors present:** D Carney (Chair) (Wylam PC), S Glover (Horsley PC), M Jones (Wylam PC), D Jordon (Ovingham PC), T Skelly (Ovington PC) and I Swinburne (Ovingham PC)

**Also present:** T Wood (Clerk to the Committee)

**1. Quorum**

The meeting was declared quorate.

**2. Apologies for Absence**

L Marshall (Ovington PC), M Senior (Horsley PC)

**3. Declarations of Interest in Items on the Agenda**

None declared.

**The Committee passed a resolution excluding the press and public from the meeting in accordance with Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted (sensitive information).**

**4. The Future of the Cemetery Lodge**

The Clerk had prepared a paper (Document A) giving background information on the current situation in relation to the Lodge and setting out future options and recommendations. (See below). The Lodge had been without a gas supply since a significant leak was discovered on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2024. The bathroom at the Lodge needs complete replacement due to leaks from the bath and the toilet.

- **Option 1: Reinstatement of gas to Cemetery Lodge by converting gas supply to LPG and refurbishment of bathroom**
  - Conversion of gas supply and replacement LPG boiler - £1,950.00 (+VAT).
  - Repair to bathroom floor and supply and fit new bathroom - £9,750.00.
  - **Total cost including VAT - £12,090.00.**
- **Option 2: Reinstatement of mains gas to Cemetery Lodge and refurbishment of bathroom**
  - Installation of approx. 60 metres of gas service pipe using directional drilling - £8,983.40 (+ VAT).
  - Repair to bathroom floor, supply and fit new bathroom - £9,750.00.
  - **Total cost: £20,530.08 (Including VAT)**

Signed: *Diana M Carney*  
Chairman of Meeting

Date: *16/04/2024*

- **Option 3: Closure of Cemetery Lodge**

- The financial viability of the Cemetery Lodge is clearly now in question in the light of the significant and costly repairs which would be required immediately in order for the building to meet the standard stipulated in the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 together with any future repairs likely to be required to an outdated building.
- Issue of a Section 21 Notice to the tenants.
- Boarding up of the Lodge pending a decision by the Committee on the future of the Lodge.
- **Total cost: Minimal.**

**D Jordan (Ovingham PC) proposed that a fourth option be considered:**

- Repair the gas leak.
- Allow the tenants to continue to live in the Lodge until they find alternative accommodation.
- No other repairs would be carried out, the cost being £8,983.40 (plus VAT) for the gas repair.
- Once the tenants were rehoused the lodge would be closed.

The Committee considered this proposal, but agreed that this was not a viable option as it did not include the replacement of the bathroom in the lodge. This work would need to be done as well, as a Northumberland County Council Environmental Health Officer had become involved following a complaint from the tenant. This option was therefore rejected by the Committee.

The Committee then noted and fully discussed Options 1, 2 and 3. The Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer gave details of the OJBC's financial position. She indicated that the proposed repairs to the Lodge would significantly deplete the Committee's financial resources and unless the maintenance grant from each of the four parish councils was steeply increased, there would not be sufficient funds to adequately maintain the Cemetery. She reminded the Committee of their collective responsibility to ensure that public money raised from the Council Taxpayers of the four parishes was spent correctly and prudently.

A vote was taken on the three options. Members asked for their names to be recorded against their votes. This was agreed. The result of the votes was as follows:

- Option 1 – No votes in favour.
- Option 2 – No votes in favour.
- Option 3: **In favour:** D Carney (Wylam PC), M Jones (Wylam PC), S Glover (Horsley PC), T Skelly (Ovington PC). **Against:** D Jordan (Ovingham PC). **Abstention:** I Swinburne (Ovingham PC).

The vote to close the Lodge (Option 3) was agreed by the representatives of three of the four parish councils (Wylam, Ovington and Horsley).

The Clerk reported that, since the gas supply was disconnected on 31<sup>st</sup> January, the tenants have used an increased amount of electricity to heat the Lodge. It was agreed that, subject to presentation to the Clerk of the relevant receipts, the Committee would reimburse the tenants' electricity costs until the end of their tenure. It was further agreed that the tenants would not be charged rent from 1 February until the end of their tenure. The end date for the tenancy is yet to be confirmed.

Signed: Diana M Carney Date: 15/04/2024  
Chairman of Meeting

The Clerk then proposed that the Committee should issue a public statement in respect of the closure of the Lodge. This would be publicised via social media and village notice boards in each of the four parishes. A public statement would enable clear and consistent messaging from the Committee. This approach was agreed by representatives from Wylam, Ovington and Horsley Parish Councils. The representatives from Ovingham Parish Council expressed concern about the use of social media to convey this information.

**Resolved:**

- i. The Clerk to inform the tenants of the Lodge of the Committee's decision to close the Lodge.
- ii. The Clerk to instruct the Committee's Solicitor to issue the Section 21 Notice to the Lodge tenants.
- iii. Subject to presentation to the Clerk of the relevant receipts, the Committee to reimburse the tenants in respect of the additional electricity costs incurred since the cessation of gas supply to the Lodge from 1 February 2024 to the end of their tenure. (Date to be confirmed).
- iv. The Clerk to inform the tenants that no rent is payable from 1 February 2024 to the end of their tenure. (Date to be confirmed). Any rent paid since 1 February 2024 will be reimbursed.
- v. The Clerk to arrange to have the Lodge boarded up once the tenancy has ended. (Date to be confirmed).
- vi. The Clerk to draft a public statement for approval by the Committee in respect of the Committee's decision to close the Lodge. Once approved, the statement is to be publicised via social media and on village noticeboards in each of the four parishes.

**4. Urgent items and items for future agenda**

None.

**5. Date of the next meeting of the Committee**

Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> April at 7pm in Wylam Institute.

The meeting closed at 8.00pm

Signed:

*Doreen McCarney*

Date:

*16/04/2024*

Chairman of Meeting