ELLESMERE TOWN COUNCIL
CEMETERY WORKING GROUP

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ELLESMERE TOWN COUNCIL CEMETERY WORKING GROUP
MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 24th September 2026
at Ellesmere Town Hall.

Members Present:

Chair: K. Egerton
V. Chair: P. Goulbourne

Councillors: A. Wignall, S. Jackson, J. Gargiulo, E. Peers, G. Elner, J. Howard.

Officers: Andy Chatting, (CCO)

CWG 09/26/01 **To receive apologies and reasons for absence.**

Apologies were received from Cllrs HUtchinson and Proffitt. Acceptance of these apologies were proposed by Cllr Goulbourne and seconded by Cller Elner. All members voted to approve them.

CWG 09/26/02 **Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests**. To receive declarations under consideration on this agenda in accordance with the Localism Act 2011 s32 and The Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012.

Members are reminded that they are required to **leave** the room during the discussion and voting on matters in which they have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest, whether or not the interest is entered in the register of members' interests maintained by the Monitoring Officer.

No disclosures were made.

CWG 09/26/03 **Grant Dispensations**. In pursuance of the Localism Act 2011, s31 (4) to report on any dispensations requested/granted.

No such dispensations were requested or granted.

CWG 09/26/04 **Minutes.** To read and confirm the minutes of the Cemetery Working Group Meeting held on Thursday 23rd July 2026.

These minutes were approved. Proposed by Cllr Goulbourne and seconded by Cllr Elner. Agreed unanimously by the remainder of the Committee.

CWG 09/26/05 **Finance. (a) CWG Payments**. To note payments made during July and August 2026.

These payments were noted.

CWG/09/26/06 **Cemetery Report.** To note.

This was noted with the Cttee making three suggestions for the attention of the CCO:

1. To try to establish what design was used for the last Memorial Garden Extension.
2. To re advertise the tender for the painting of the Lodge.
3. To place a poster on the noticeboard at Swan Hill signposting people to the information about War Garves.

CWG 09/26/07 **Memorial Safety Inspection conclusions**. To discuss considering the CCO report.

The Cttee members had read the report into memorial safety and the requirements of the Council's own adopted safety policy and those of the Diocese of Lichfield relating especially to headstones that had been laid down for safety reasons (rather than propped up and signed).

This discussion focussed on the fact that laying down of headstones should be temporary and that, ideally, they should be re-buried down to a height to make them safe.

The suggestions from the members ranged from simply removing the unsafe headstones, laying them flat so that they were legible in their entirety, attempting to allow time for owners to come forward, (especially as this would encompass the Christmas period) and taking a view on whether to have the memorial buried as 'monoliths', removed and stacked somewhere so they were still visible or taking them away altogether.

It was proposed by Cllr Elner and seconded by Cllr Goulbourne that a period of 12 months should elapse to allow for the identification of owners and to assess the situation once that period had elapsed. This suggestion would fulfil the temporary nature of the' lay-down' and give the best chance of people becoming aware that their memorials were unsafe.

This is strategy was accepted with the full agreement of the other committee members.

CWG 09/26/08 Non-compliant **plots.** To discuss considering the CCO report.

The discussion around this subject produced a wealth of comments. The report compiled for the Cttee had identified 48 plots which were being managed other than in accordance with the cemetery regulations.

On the one hand the cemetery's own regulations were found to be clear in that Swan Hill is a lawned cemetery so no 'gardens', shrubs and non-compliant adornments or alterations should be permitted.

On the other hand, there were suggestions that during the grieving process a period of grace might be acceptable as a way of allowing families time to pay respects and that during this time they might be permitted to maintain their plots outside of the regulations.

Suggestions were made about taking a phased approach beginning with the plots where shrubs were becoming an issue. Another suggestion was to start by enforcing the regulations beginning with the oldest non-compliant plots first and working forwards.

The CCO said that when the first attempt had been made to ask people to restore to requirements this experiment had been based upon the 17 most obviously non-compliant plots identified by the CCO and TC in June 2025. Between the first time of writing to owners and now 7 of the 17 had been restored to what was expected. 3 independently and 4 with the assistance of the CCO; once families had responded to his letters.

Some of the plots identified amongst the 48 being discussed included the 10 that were subject of discussion and activity in 2025.

The CCO suggested that before and remedial action was taken that the CWG should write again to the owners of the 48 plots because acting to restore plots could give rise to a situation where the owners of the plots might claim that they were unaware of the regulations in the first place.

The CCO gave assurance that during his time in post the owners of every new plot had received with their Deed of Grant a document taken directly from the full regulations drawing their attention to how plots were supposed to be maintained.

Before that time the CCO was unable to give that assurance and suggested that if funeral directors had been expected to supply copies of the regulations there was no guarantee that that had been done.

For this reason, the CWG acting for ETC and ERPC might need to exercise caution before taking any steps amounting to enforcement.

Eventually it was proposed by Cllr Elner that the CCO should compose a letter to all the 48 plot owners advising them that their plots did not comply with regulations. The letter should say for how long the regulations had been in place (i.e. before these plots were purchased). The letter should request that the owners restore the plots and that a deadline for compliance should be included.

CWG 09/26/09 **The Old Workhouse report.** To note.

This report was noted. The CCO provided an explanation of what the legal position was, that the land was now confirmed as being within the ETC parish boundary and not within the boundary of the ERPC and that a separate working group would be established to look at the possibilities relating to the land. The subject of the Old Workhouse would no longer form part of the remit of the CWG.

CWG 09/26/10 **Future Agenda Items.**

To receive any items to be considered for a future agenda.

Two items were proposed for the next meeting in November 2026.

- Cllr Wignall requested that at the next meeting an item be added to the agenda relating to the development of wildflowers in the cemetery. It will be Cllr Wignall's intention to propose that a guest speaker be invited to speak to the CWG.
- Taking the points made about people claiming not to be aware of the regulations; Cllr Elner suggested that a future agenda item should include a discussion about how the CCO or another Council representative might meet with family's proposing to take ownership of a new plot and ensure that these people sign something to say that they will abide by the regulations.

CWG 09/26/11 Next **Meeting.** Thursday 26th November 2026, at **19:00** at Ellesmere Town Hall. To note.

Noted.

AGC