



GAMLINGAY PARISH COUNCIL

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Policy and Procedures relating to closed churchyards in Gamlingay

1) Principles and responsibilities

1.1 The Parish Council has accepted responsibility for the maintenance of both St Marys churchyard, closed by order in Council and transferred to Local Authority care, and also for the Baptist Church burial ground since 1974. Both churchyards remain in the ownership of the respective churches. Council has to assess the suitable level of maintenance in both churchyards to a 'decent order'. The Council has to make judgements upon how public money is spent for these purposes.

1.2 The Council has actively maintained both churchyards by including them in their annual grass cutting contract, which includes a minimum of 7 cuts a year to all grassed areas. The contract also details additional works to spray weed killer to paths and minor control of trees/shrubs on request etc.

1.3 This policy identifies Parish Council procedures for putting forward funding priorities from both churches regarding works required in each financial year. It should be read in conjunction with the Tree Policy.

2) Risk Assessment and management

2.1 The Council operates a risk assessment of all Council owned land and buildings and closed churchyards. This policy identifies that one/two Councillors are specifically identified and carry out a 'walkabout' four times a year. Issues of concern from a health and safety perspective are reported to Clerks/Council.

2.2 Urgent items are then reported to Full Council meetings, which are generally in June, September January and March. Urgent or dangerous issues are then dealt with by the Clerk. Medium term issues are reviewed in November/December for determination and priorities for action for the following year (Financial year April onwards)

3) Budgetary process and control

3.1 The Council sets its budget in January each year, and begins the review process in November each year. Clerk/ Council identifies projects/issues throughout the year and these are brought to the meetings in November when the review takes place, and a preliminary budget identified. Budget is agreed and request made to the District Council who also advise what level of funding is given for the next financial year.

3.2 The Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) prepares the draft budget for Council and reviews the budget at Council four times a year.

3.3 The RFO has advised that any budgets retaining over £400 at the end of the financial year can be transferred to an allocated reserve account, if a request is received in writing from the churches, on an annual basis. Requests are required by 30th November annually.

4) Requirements for Major works

4.1 Council is also responsible for maintenance of hard landscaping, but is no expert on specifications of hard landscaping requirements, particularly in the setting of Listed Buildings, where additional care needs to be taken, in consultation with the District Councils Conservation team.

a) Hard Landscaping-pathways

4.2 Larger scale projects- such as pathways- need careful management and agreement with regard to materials, width and specification. The Council is to work in partnership with the churches and the District Council in order to identify an appropriate specification of works, which will have to be agreed with all parties.

4.3 Budgetary provision will have to be in place before works commence. Projects of this nature have to be identified as a priority, and full agreement to specification needs to be made before work commences.

4.4 The Council will liaise with the churches to ensure that works are carried out at a convenient time, to offer least disruption to parishioners using the buildings.

b) Walls

4.5 The Council has been aware for some time with regard to the state of St Marys Churchyard wall. The Council annually allocates resources in order for a reserve to be built up to be used for match funding for ongoing repair.

4.6 As the Council does not own the wall it is prevented from making applications for this project.

4.7 The Parish Council can progress funding applications in liaison with the PCC .

4.9 The Council can offer support, and will complete patching up on weak areas, as an interim measure.

c) Gravestones

4.10 These are assessed as part of the Council's risk assessment on all gravestone memorials.

5) Liaison between churches and the Parish Council

5.1 Council will ensure that its policy and procedures are available to the Churches of Gamlingay.

5.2 Parish Council can involve member/s of the churches in its risk assessment walkabouts which are quarterly.

5.3 Parish Councillors can attend church meetings to discuss aspects of maintenance levels or priorities on a quarterly basis.

5.4 Parish Council can arrange to prepare supporting information for grant funding applications

5.5 Parish Council can actively review maintenance of churchyards annually as part of its budget review process if prices/estimates are supplied relating to proposed works.

5.6 Parish Council wants the relationship with the Churches to be transparent and clear to ensure that the needs of parishioners are addressed in a fair and consistent manner.

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