

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

**Minutes of an Extraordinary Meeting of Ovingham Joint Burial Committee held on
6 March 2024 at Wylam Institute**

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

Also present: T Wood (Clerk to the Committee)

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).

1. Quorum

The meeting was declared quorate.

2. Apologies for Absence

No apologies.

3. Declarations of Interest in Items on the Agenda

T Skelly informed members that he was employed part-time as a caseworker for Guy Opperman MP. As a member of the OJBC, T Skelly had recused himself from any casework relating to Ovingham Cemetery Lodge.

4. Works to Ovingham Cemetery Lodge – restoration of mains gas supply and replacement of bathroom.

Members confirmed that they had received copies of Documents A and B. The Committee reviewed and fully discussed the new information (not available at the Extraordinary Meeting on 20th February) contained in Document B relating to OJBC's forecast cash reserve at 31st March 2024 and 31st March 2025.

It was noted that the forecast cash reserve at 31st March 2024 was expected to be £28,844.17, sufficient to enable spending on restoration of the mains gas supply and replacement of the bathroom at the Lodge. It was further noted that, should the Committee agree to implement these works, the OJBC's cash reserve going into 2024/25 would be reduced to £10,110.77, considerably less than OJBC's normal cash reserve of between £20,000 - £25,000. It was reported that confirmation is awaited as to whether the work to restore the mains gas supply to the Lodge is fully covered by OJBC's insurance policy. If this work is fully covered by OJBC's insurance, then the cash reserve going into 2024/25 would be restored to £19,094.17. It was noted that OJBC's core operations (managing and maintaining Ovingham Cemetery) were forecast to show a modest deficit in 2024/25. After full discussion, and having regard to OJBC's forecast current and likely future cash balances, it was:

Signed: *Diana M Carney* Date: 16/04/2024
Chairman of Meeting

Unanimously **Resolved** that:

- i. The quotation of £8,983.40 + VAT from PWG Connections be approved and the Clerk be authorised to commission the requisite work and communicate accordingly to the tenant.
- ii. The quotation of £9,750 +VAT from Blaydon Bathrooms be approved and the Clerk be authorised to commission the requisite work and communicate accordingly to the tenant.

5. **The Future of Ovingham Cemetery Lodge**

The Committee noted that, on the basis of the financial information reviewed at Item 4 above, OJBC would go into the 2024/25 Financial Year with a cash reserve of between £10,110.77 and £19,094.17, depending on whether the gas repair is covered by OJBC's insurer. Information contained in the building condition report received from Building Surveyors Ltd of Newburn, Newcastle Upon Tyne in November 2021 was also reviewed. The report detailed the improvement works that would be required to the Lodge in the next 3 – 5 years, with indicative costings, to meet the Committee's obligations as a residential landlord under the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 and under the Renters Reform Bill which is predicted to become law in 2025/26.

In this context, the Committee then considered and fully discussed the future of Ovingham Cemetery Lodge. In the light of the financial information just reviewed (see Item 4 above), and the likely necessary future cost of the Lodge, it was concluded that it was no longer financially viable for OJBC to continue to act as a residential landlord in addition to carrying out its core responsibilities to manage and maintain Ovingham Cemetery, and consequently that the Lodge should be sold as soon as possible.

It was unanimously **Resolved** that:

- i. As soon as possible, OJBC is to cease to be a residential landlord.
- ii. As soon as possible, the Lodge is to be sold.
- iii. The Clerk be authorised to commission an appropriate valuation exercise for the Lodge involving three independent, suitably qualified estate agents.
- iv. Following the result of the valuation exercise, OJBC to consider the basis on which to sell the Lodge.
- v. The Clerk, D Carney and D Jordon to meet with the tenant to make them aware of the OJBC's above-noted decisions and the Clerk to communicate these decisions in writing to the tenant.
- vi. The Clerk be authorised to inform the tenant that they would be given first preference to meet the selling price as determined by the OJBC.

Additionally, it was unanimously **Resolved** that:

- vii. The service of a Section 21 Notice to be held in abeyance for the time being.
- viii. No rent to be charged from 1 February 2024 until the mains gas supply to the Lodge is restored and the bathroom is replaced.
- ix. From 1st February 2024, until the mains gas supply to the Lodge is restored, OJBC will pay for the tenant's electric heating costs.

Signed:

Chairman of Meeting

Date:

16/04/2024

6. Consideration of any urgent items and items for a future agenda

Resolved that:

- i. The sale of Ovingham Cemetery Lodge to be added to the agenda of the OJBC's next scheduled meeting on 16th April 2024.

7. Date of next meeting

The next Ordinary Meeting of OJBC will be held on 16 April 2024 at 7p.m. in Wylam Institute.

The meeting closed at 9.00pm

Signed: David McCarney Date: 16/04/2024
Chairman of Meeting