

Joint Burial Authority of Bramber, Steyning & Upper Beeding Parish Councils

Minutes of the Meeting of the Joint Parishes Cemetery Committee held on Thursday 29 January 2026 in Beeding & Bramber Village Hall commencing at 7.00pm

Present: Councillors: S. Blakelock & S. Green (Bramber PC); I. Alexander (Steyning PC); R. Harber & C. Warren (Upper Beeding PC)

In attendance: Colette Harber - Cemetery Clerk

Public: None present on this occasion

J:0126:01 Election of Chair

In view of the agreement reached at the previous meeting that the role of Chair and Vice-Chair should rotate between Parish Councils, the Committee unanimously appointed Cllr. Alexander (Steyning PC) to the role as Chair of the Joint Parishes Cemetery Committee for rest of the current municipal year ending in May 2026.

It was further agreed that given the short time until the end of the current Municipal year, Cllr Alexander should also remain in office for the following municipal year, ending in May 2027.

Proposed: Cllr. Harber; Seconded: Cllr. Green; Agreed by all Councillors.

J:0126:02 Election of Vice-Chair

Given the absence of Cllr Linfield, it was agreed by all Councillors that the election of a Vice-Chair for the Joint Parishes Cemetery Committee be deferred.

Proposed: Cllr. Harber; Seconded: Cllr. Alexander; Agreed by all Councillors

J:0126:03 Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr. Linfield (Steyning PC) prior to the meeting

J:0126:04 Declaration of Councillors personal or prejudicial interest

It was noted that all previous declarations of personal or prejudicial interest still stood. Cllr. Harber and Colette Harber had pre-purchased a grave plot in the Cemetery in August 2015.

J:0126:05 Minutes of the meeting

The Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 2 December 2024 were received and accepted as a true record of the meeting.

Proposed: Cllr. Alexander: Seconded: Cllr. Warren; Agreed by Councillors present at the meeting.

J:0126:06 Public Adjournment - No member of the public was present on this occasion.

J:0126:07 Matters Arising from the Minutes

The Clerk advised the Committee that all matters relating to various sets of ashes, headstone and tablet, as raised in Agenda item J:1224:10 on 2 December 2024 had been

satisfactorily completed.

She also advised that, as agreed, she had purchased a four-shelved slimline, lockable metal cabinet which would safely store all necessary documentation relating to Botolphs Cemetery and located at the Clerk's home office.

J:0126:08 Draft Management Accounts

Draft Management Accounts to year ended 31 March 2025 and to 31 December 2026 were received and noted.

In the discussion that ensued, it was agreed that the transfer of monies to both the Cemetery Long-term Maintenance Reserve and the Cemetery General Reserve would be reviewed regularly, and that the new Building Society account, opened purely for the purpose of purchasing a new Cemetery or extending the current one, should be used to the maximum of the banking deposit protection scheme.

Proposed: Cllr. Alexander; Seconded: Cllr. Blakelock; Agreed by all Councillors

J:0126:09 Cemetery Reports

Councillors discussed matters relating to the following reports:

a) Cemetery Clerk's report

The Cemetery Clerk provided Councillors with a written update regarding the freak weather event at Botolphs Cemetery during the morning of Wednesday 24 December 2025 which caused a large section of the top of a poplar tree, on the eastern side of the cemetery to break away from its trunk and crash into an ash tree. This was split vertically in two and the poplar tree landed on the ground across cremation plots and graves in the two burial rows nearby.

It was noted the Clerk immediately notified Botolphs Cemetery maintenance man, who visited the site and commenced the clear-up process directly after Christmas. But in the meantime, the area had hazard tape around and over the fallen tree and warning signage placed on the gates, the shelter and near the trees notifying members of the public.

She also contacted a Stonemason, who visited the site after the initial clearance of the poplar tree and who provided his professional assessment and photographs of all the damaged memorials in the sum of £3,931.50 plus VAT, as well as contacting the Cemetery's insurance company who provided written advice regarding the Burial Authority's position.

In the discussion that ensued, it was noted that all repairs to the cremation plot tablets would be repaired on-site with the ground being re-levelled at the same time; as would, repairs to headstones which just needed re-fixing for safety. However, a few headstones would need to be removed from the cemetery for more in-depth repair or possible renewal.

It was agreed that all repairs should be completed as quickly as possible; however any cosmetic repairs would not be undertaken. It was suggested that, in future, should memorial headstones become broken or unstable, they should be laid facedown. Additionally, it was felt that when grave owners requested permission for a memorial headstone, advice be given that it might be prudent for them to take out insurance against any risks, including climatic changes that may arise.

It was further agreed that, going forward and in line with local Parish Councils policy, a yearly inspection of all trees, in and around the cemetery, should be undertaken by a tree surgeon, with a written report being provided to the Burial Authority.

Proposed: Cllr Alexander; Seconded: Cllr Green; Agreed by all Councillors

b) Botolphs Cemetery update

Councillors received and noted a copy of the Cemetery Plan to together with a paper detailing the number of burials and cremated remains interred in Botolphs Cemetery to 29 January 2026.

In the discussion that ensued regarding the number of spaces available within the cemetery, it was suggested that a further letter should be sent to a local landowner making a substantial offer for land to extend the cemetery. It was also suggested that, at the same time, the South Downs National Park Authority be approached for pre-application advice that the cemetery could be extended.

Furthermore, Councillors felt that it was time to engage a professional land agent who could search for and negotiate with landowners on behalf of the Burial Authority.

The Chair offered to initially speak with Angus Hamilton, of Hamilton Graham Estate Agents in Steyning, and report back to the Clerk, and with all matters being emailed to Councillors between meetings.

c) Cemetery Fees

Councillors received and noted the current Scale of Fees and Charges for Botolphs Cemetery. In the discussion that ensued, it was agreed that all cemetery fees and charges should be increased each year.

It was also agreed that with effect from 1 April 2026, Botolphs Cemetery fees would be raised by 5% to the nearest £10.00 and with proportions and multiples remaining the same.

Therefore, the new Fees and Charges would be as follows:

Burial Plots Category	Fee per single/double depth	Grant of Exclusive Right of Burial and Maintenance Fee for 50 years
Residents aged 18 and over	£790/£1,580	£1,580.00
Children under 18	Free	Free
Former Residents	£1,580/£3,160	£3,160
Non-Residents	£2,370/£4,740	£4,740

Cremation Plots Category	Fee per single/double depth	Grant of Exclusive Right of Burial and Maintenance Fee for 50 years
Residents aged 18 and over	£320/£640	£320
Children under 18	Free	Free
Former Residents	£640/£1,280	£640
Non-Residents	£950/£1,900	£950
Family Ashes Grave Category	Fee for up to four sets of ashes in a single-depth grave	Grant of Exclusive Right of Burial and Maintenance Fee for 50 years
Residents aged 18 and over	£790	£1,580.00
Former Residents	£1,580	£3,160.00
Non-Residents	£2,370	£4,740.00

Proposed: Cllr. Harber; Seconded: Cllr. Warren: Agreed by all Councillors

d) Botolphs Cemetery Website

The Cemetery reported that Botolphs Cemetery website was no longer operational and that she felt rather than go to the expense of having a new website made, it was preferable that each constituent Parish Council have a page or two on their own website, detailing Botolphs Cemetery.

It was also noted that the Cemetery Clerk required a new laptop as Windows 11 was not compatible with the one she currently was using.

J:0126:10 **Correspondence** - None on this occasion

J:0126:11 **Matters for information and discussion, or inclusion in a future Agenda**
The extension of Botolphs Cemetery would continue to be an agenda item, as would discussions re the long-term Maintenance Reserve.

J:0126:12 **Date of Next Meeting**
The next meeting of the JPCC will be held in June or July avoiding dates of scheduled Parish Council meetings.

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 8.50pm.

Signed:

Dated: