

Background

All graves at Love Lane cemetery are dug by hand and currently 2 gravediggers are used for this work.

Current Practice

All gravedigging at Love Lane is arranged by the funeral director. When an interment is to take place the funeral director will contact the grave digger and arrange for the marking of a grave to be reopened and make arrangements for digging the grave. The invoice for gravedigging will be included in the funeral directors' final invoice to the family and the funeral director will pay the gravedigger for the work direct. The only Town Council involvement currently has with gravedigging is when staff check the grave prior to burial. The gravediggers are very experienced, and work is to a high standard.

Best Practice

Town and Parish Councils who do not employ their own gravedigging staff often have in a place a contract with a specific gravedigging company, this has several advantages over the current practice at Wem.

- With second interments the margin for error is reduced as the Town Council will be responsible for marking out graves to be reopened, this is particularly important as the cemetery fills up as there are often several family members buried in the cemetery and it is vital to ensure that the correct grave is marked for reopening.
- The Town Council can ensure the contractor carries the appropriate public liability insurance, produces risk assessments and method statements for his work.
- The Town Council has more control over monitoring the quality of work carried out by Gravediggers as they will be working directly for the Town Council.
- This will ensure that the funeral director cannot book an interment prior to agreeing dates with the Town Council something that has occurred in the past.

The introduction of this practice will however result in slightly more work for Town Council staff as they will have to issue invoices to the family to cover the cost of grave digging fees. However, it is anticipated that this should not create too much extra work as the cemetery averages between 15- 20 interments a year and the invoicing can come under the responsibility of the finance officer/ project officer to be appointed.

Recommendation

That the committee recommend that the Town Council draw up a grave digging contract and advertise for quotes from local grave digging contractors.