

## Minutes

### Community Service Scrutiny Panel

5<sup>th</sup> September, 2007

**Present:** Councillors Howarth (in the Chair) Crooks, Laverick, Lightley, Mavin, Moderate, Norman, Robinson, D Smith, and Young

**Also Present:** Councillors: Kelly, Lodge, Thompson,  
Mr Roger Norris – Durham Diocese Vice Chair of Churches  
Peter Lee – Street Scene Technical Officer,  
Mrs Ann Boll – Parish Clerk to Belmont Parish  
Mr Drinkwater – Member of St. Mary Magdalene PCC Belmont

**1. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillor Walton

**2. Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 3<sup>rd</sup> July, and 30<sup>th</sup> July 2007 were confirmed as a correct record. The Chair advised the Panel that the recommendations on Council Garages had been approved by Cabinet at today's meeting.

**3. Scrutiny of Graveyards**

Mr Roger Norris from Durham Diocese had been invited to give the Panel a Diocese perspective of closed graveyards. The Street Scene Technical Officer and was in attendance for discussions.

Mr Norris advised the Panel that he had read the draft report and thought that it would be useful if the Parochial Church Councils received a copy. Members also asked if a copy of the final report could be sent to the Parish Councils. This was agreed by the Panel. He went on to inform the Panel that City of Durham Council had led the way with closed graveyards.

Mr Norris advised of the procedure involved in gaining the diocese permission to repair or alter anything in a closed graveyard, e.g, gravestones, lighting, footpaths etc.

The relationship between the Diocese and City of Durham is good, however Mr Norris thought it would be useful if an informal meeting could take place with himself and the Street Scene Technical Officer to produce a short statement regarding the working Diocese/City Council relationship. It was suggested that Heritage and Design Manager and a representative from Legal Services should also be in attendance. This was agreed by the Panel.

A question was asked relating to closed graveyards being used as nature reserves. Mr Drinkwater advised that this was a delicate matter as researching family history was so popular now it is common for descendants of people to go to closed churchyards and expect to see the graves of their ancestors.

**NOTE** 6.18 p.m. Councillor Thompson left the meeting

A false impression may be given in graveyards where there are no markers in place and an appearance of open space is given. Questions were asked about the re-using of grave spaces. Mr Norris advised that the National Synod had discussed this but there was no clear direction. Thus the Diocese tries to avoid re using burial yards, even though this was the practice in the middle ages. However, At St. Mary's Church, West Rainton the north side of the church has dedicated an area for the burial of ashes.

### **War Graves**

Questions were asked about repairs to War Graves and War Memorials. Councillor Lodge advised that repairs would only be undertaken by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) if the graves were in fact registered war graves, all war graves are made out of the same material.

The Chair thanked Mr Norris for coming along to the Panel meeting and for the information that he had given. Mr Norris, Mr Drinkwater and Mrs Boll left the meeting.

#### **4. Review of Playing Pitch Strategy**

The Panel agreed that subject to mentioning of the protective nets at Esh Winning Cricket Ground the report was agreed to be set to Scrutiny Committee and Portfolio Holders as laid out in the new instructions.

#### **5 Any Other Business**

The Chair advised the Panel that Anne Delandre – Strategy & Development Manager Housing would be at the next meeting to discuss homelessness together with Catherine Bleasdale, Durham PCT and a representative from Stonham Housing..

The Meeting terminated at 6.30 p.m.