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## **ASSETS, COMMUNITY and ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING 15 OCTOBER 2020**

### **ACE016.d - To receive a report on the churchyard tombs and agree next steps**

#### **1. Introduction**

Earlier this year it was noticed that a number of tombs in the church yard were in such poor condition that they could present a danger to visitors and staff. Having recently engaged local stonemason, Lee Bealing, to correct a significant number of unsafe headstones, it was decided that we should also now consider the state of the tombs.

#### **2. Preliminary Assessment**

A brief survey of the tombs located in the church yard by myself and head groundsman, Alex Bull, leads us to think that there are around six that are dangerous, and up to six more that are in need of repair. This represents a significant proportion of a total of around 40 that are located in the church yard.

The majority of the tombs (31) are located in the plot immediately to the south of the church, where the war memorial stands, and this is where all of the unsafe ones are to be found.

#### **3. Hazards and their Causes**

The sort of hazards that are apparent are: missing parts (eg. end panels); broken parts; loose masonry and bricks; and unsafe bases.

These are caused principally by prolonged exposure to the elements (wind, rain, snow and sunshine), but the growth of vegetation (ivy, brambles, grass, etc.) is also a significant factor in loosening the structures and making them unsafe. Continuous use of strimmers over the years may also contribute to the erosion around the base of the structures.

The tombs are not likely to collapse, but where there are loose parts it is possible that if, for instance, children were to be playing near the structure they might grab the part and it could come off causing potentially severe injury. There is adequate signage around the churchyard instructing parents to supervise small children and not allow them to climb on tombs.

#### **4. Future Actions**

Clearly some sort of remedial action is required. To this end I asked Lee Bealing's people to provide us with an estimate to correct these faulty structures and to provide

advice on how to make these structures more resilient and less likely to suffer damage in the future. Lee has subsequently provided estimates to repair two of the worst structures to give us an idea of the sort of costs involved. These estimates are attached along with Lee's covering email message. Clearly there is a lot of work involved and the costs are significantly higher than for the repair of headstones (around £5,000 for these two alone). Each one will necessarily have to be dealt with individually, but if these two are used as benchmarks, I estimate we would be looking at a total bill of between £10,000 and £15,000 to fix six of them.

In the meantime, we should also consider measures to: a) reduce the potential risk to visitors by putting up some sort of warning signs to make them aware of the danger; and b) prevent or at least minimise future deterioration. Note: One measure that has been proposed is the use of herbicides to stall the growth of ivy and other weeds. However, the National Association of Memorial Masons (NAMM) advise against this; the NAMM code of Working Practice page 11.section 5.g reads: *'the use of Weed killers is not acceptable in or around memorials. Root systems hold the ground together to stop soil erosion'*.

**Name:** Paul Stevens  
**Position:** Operations Officer  
**Date:** 25 June 2020

**ANNEX 1 – Photos**



PHOTO 1: MISSING PARTS



PHOTO 2: BROKEN PARTS



PHOTO 3: LOOSE PANELS



PHOTO 4: BROKEN MASONRY



PHOTO 5: BROKEN MASONRY (CLOSE UP)



PHOTO 6: MISSING PARTS

**ANNEX 2 – TEXT OF EMAIL MESSAGE AND ESTIMATES FOR REPAIR FROM LEE BEALING**

1/07/2020

Hi Paul

Please find two estimates supplied.

We have chosen two of the worst box tombs, to price to give you an idea of costs involved. Please let me know what you think.

In regard to the unstable memorials, still left in the churchyard, we stopped making notes of which we thought needed refitting as we think there is more than 20, so it will be worth your groundsman picking out the worst of the rest.

Best regards

Lee

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Lee Bealing

Lee Bealing Stonemasons Ltd

Tel: 01444 235596

LEE BEALING  
**STONEMASONS LTD**

Your Ref:  
1<sup>st</sup> July 2020

Paul Stevens  
Operations Officer  
Cuckfield Parish Council

Estimate

Box Tomb – Joseph son of William & Ann Uwins  
Portland stone.

Take down capping, moulded top edging, side & end panels and corner stones.

Remove stone plinth sides and set all aside for re use. Clean joints and remove rusting iron.

Take down, clean for re use, brick plinth and re-instate 3 courses.

Refix plinth surround.

Consolidate with new Stainless /Steel cramps, upper plinth and re fix & grout in position.

Re fix side, end and corner panels with new S/S cramps.

Re fix upper moulded cap stone edges with new S/S cramps.

Re fix top cap stone.

Total cost £ 3485 + VAT

Consolidate brick core if required. Provisional sum £ 300 + VAT

Deposit of 50% required to confirm order.

Regards  
Mr Lee Bealing

LEE BEALING  
**STONEMASONS LTD**

Your Ref:  
1<sup>st</sup> July 2020

Paul Stevens  
Operations Officer  
Cuckfield Parish Council

Estimate

Box Tomb – James Webber  
Sandstone.

Lift top to expose iron cramps.  
Remove loose corner stones.  
Clean joints and set aside for re use.  
Clean out joints of vegetation as much as possible.

(Treat with herbicides – by others)

Repoint all open joints.  
Re fix corner stones with stainless steel cramps.  
Re bed top cap and repoint.

Total cost £ 1520 + VAT

Deposit of 50% required to confirm order.

Regards  
Mr Lee Bealing