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## **ACE Committee Meeting**

### **Agenda Item ACE024F&G: Repairs to Headstones and Old Tombs**

#### **1. Introduction**

This report covers 3 items:

- a. Damage to a memorial slab within the cemetery, caused by a failing bough from a tree overhead.
- b. Identification of a further 40 headstones which have been flagged as failing topple testing.
- c. Identification of several old tombs within the closed churchyard had been flagged as unsafe by IMI (who completed the war memorial cleaning) and therefore raised by Caroline Hansen as requiring repair (appendix 1)

#### **2. Approach**

Myself and Paul Stevens met with Pat Gallagher and Shayne Hilbourne to discuss these items, to establish their advice in these matters in light of their breadth of experience.

To date, repairs to the damaged memorial stone had been explored with our insurers who challenged our responsibility to do this, as the memorial stone is the responsibility of the family who had it installed. Furthermore, discussions with the Diocese had indicated that we would have to pay a faculty to make any repairs.

#### **3. Findings**

The Parish Council is responsible for the cemetery safety, and so are duty bound to make anything deemed as unsafe, safe. This does not mean we have to complete repairs.

- a. Looking at the damaged memorial stone, it was clear that much of the damage to the enclosing low wall likely predated the damage caused by the falling bough. The memorial slab itself had broken into 3 separate pieces, however they are already laid flat and are not at risk of causing any injury.

Clearing away the loose pieces of stone and laying them flat within the area of the memorial stone, can be deemed meeting our obligated to make the area safe.



Picture of memorial stone damaged by falling bough

- b. When headstones fail a topple test, they should be laid flat to reduce the risk of falling. When walking through the cemetery, it is clear that this has occurred several times in the past with some headstones fully integrated into the ground area, looking as if they have always been lying down.

Headstones remain the responsibility of the family who purchased the plot, and so if they require the headstone to be refixed at some point in the future this should be done at their cost and not the Parish Council's.

An estimate of costs would be approx. £5,000, based on the costs to secure 30 stones earlier in the year.

- c. Several large, old tombs – mostly within the closed churchyard – do have broken parts and loose bricks. As referenced about, the duty on the Parish Council is to ensure these tombs are safe, not repaired.

Whilst the Parish Council is responsible for the maintenance of the grounds within the closed churchyard, I am not aware that we are also responsible for bearing the costs to make repairs to these tombs. This is something that could be raised with the Diocese. Many of these tombs are too old to trace the families, whose responsibility it would be to fund these repairs.

An estimate of costs to complete the repairs to the 6 tombs identified was in the region of £15k, however this appears to be to rebuild the tombs rather than make them safe.

#### **4. Recommendations**

My recommendation is that we lay flat any unsafe headstones, and do not fund the repair of any more due to the costs involved. Should a family visit to pay their respects, they can always contact us to enquire why the headstone has been laid down, and be made aware that they are able to reinstate the headstone at their own cost.

Regarding the damaged memorial stone and the old tombs, I propose that other than moving away any loose stones and bricks to make them safe, we do nothing more.

Name: Sam Heynes  
Title: Parish Clerk  
Date: 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2020