

Estates Working Party

Report of the Estates Working Party meeting held on 8th September 2025.

Present: Cllrs V Armstrong, M Gillespie, P Mount, D Shuttleworth and J Thacker

Parish Council Manager: Miss J Leech

Assistant Parish Council Manager: Miss E Frost

Head Groundsperson: Mr P Clarke

1. To receive apologies for absence, if any

Apologies were received from Cllrs C Ibbotson and S Kinvig.

2. To receive disclosures of interest

There were no disclosures of interest.

3. To receive the Head Groundsman's report

a. Projects programme update

The Head Groundsman reported that there was a small amount left to be completed to the chapel repointing and guttering. The decision as to whether to repoint the top section of the chapel would be made at a later date.

It was also reported that the materials had now been ordered for tidying up the area surrounding the second bench on The Spinney.

The Head Groundsman confirmed that he was sourcing costings for resurfacing Willoughby Road car park.

b. Routine maintenance programme

It was reported that hedge cutting season had now begun with St Andrews Churchyard hedging having already been completed. Arrangements would be made for the accumulated debris at the base of the hedging to be cleared. It was also noted that the hedging at Willoughby Road would be included this year and taken down to 4ft to improve visibility and security.

The maintenance projects list was reviewed with the following being noted:

- . The wildlife and wildflower area at the bottom of the cemetery were due to be cut back and tidied up
- . Cremation plots were scheduled to be topped up
- . The cemetery pathways would be sprayed with weedkiller when the weather allows
- . The Parish Council would take part in no mow May on a section of Willoughby Road Playing Field again in 2026

It had been reported that one of the water taps in the new cemetery was leaking. The original contractor had been contacted regarding this, however, a repair had not yet been completed and so would be followed up.

It was also noted that a latch on one of the gates in the cemetery was damaged. Arrangements would be made for this to be repaired.

The fence which runs along the perimeter of The Centenary Paddock on Station Road was noted as likely to need replacing within the next few years.

4. To discuss the Cemetery, including

a. Cemetery (A) and (B)

Following permission being granted for the Commonwealth War Graves Commission to install a headstone for Herbert Swann, a timescale of between 6 and 12 months for its production was confirmed.

i. To review box hedging in Cemetery A

It was confirmed that the box hedging in the cemetery was suffering with box caterpillar, rather than box blight. This was now being treated over a three- month period and would be monitored with the hopes that the hedging will not need to be replaced.

b. Cemetery B layout

There was nothing to discuss.

c. Memorial inspections

The memorial inspections had now been completed with all in St Andrews Churchyard passing the inspection. Out of 252 memorials which were inspected in Countesthorpe Cemetery, five were reported as having failed.

Due to the fact that records for the memorials did not contain up to date details of the plot owners, notices had been put up requesting the owners contact the Parish Council office. These would be left up for three months, during which time, the Parish Council would obtain a quote for the repair of the memorials.

Outstanding memorial inspections would be revisited towards the end of the financial year to assess whether the budget would permit additional memorials to be tested in the 2025/2026 budget.

d. Review of Cemetery fees

Recommended for approval

To refer to the Finance Working Party, the decision regarding the price increase to be applied to the Cemetery fees, however, for it to be noted that the preference of the Estates Working Party would be a 3% increase.

5. To consider any maintenance issues

It was reported that one of the swings on Dale Acre had been twisted, this would be rectified as soon as possible.

The outstanding quote for the overhead barrier repair, including a warning mechanism, would be chased up.

It was noted that planning permission had now been granted for the required repair works to the pathways in St Andrews Churchyard, however, a condition had been imposed which requires a method statement to be submitted to Blaby District Council to confirm that damage to trees and tree roots shall be avoided. Beddows Tree Specialists had confirmed that they could provide this although there would be a delay due to current work demands. The trip hazards would continue to be painted to alert residents in the meantime.

Recommended for approval

For Beddows Tree Specialists to undertake the recommended works by removing branches from four trees infected with Ash dieback at a total cost of £1070, further to their recent inspection and report.

To grant the request for a yarn bomb display to be installed on the fence of The Paddock for a period of one week towards the end of September 2025.

6. Projects and works lists for prioritising

Recommended for approval

To refer back to the Finance Working Party, the list of pending projects which had been further reviewed and prioritised, as requested, for consideration. Any projects approved by the Parish Council would be included in the schedule of works accordingly. The quotations for The Spinney pathway would be revisited to see if the tarmac pathway included concrete edging.

7. Annual play inspection – Play equipment

Recommended for approval

To accept the quote of £1379.60 from Online Playgrounds for the supply of items to be installed in house and for the supply and installation of other items which cannot be completed in house, as per the recommendations from the annual play inspection report.

8. To receive any correspondence

Recommended for approval

To approve the request from Cherry Lane Garden Centre for staff to use the car park at Countesthorpe Cemetery during their bonfire event on Saturday 1st November.

9. To consider matters raised to the attention of the Estates Working Party by non-member Councillors

There was nothing to discuss.

10. To receive matters arising for information purposes

It was noted that the correspondence previously received from a resident regarding the issue of bikes on the Country Park was in fact referring to motorcross bikes. In addition to being forwarded to the local PCSO, both Blaby District Council were notified, with it being their land, and Leicestershire County Council were contacted regarding the reinstallation of the gates at entrances to prevent motorbikes entering the Country Park. Due to issues of vandalism and access, this was not deemed possible, however, the Parish Council would follow up with Leicestershire County Council regarding alternative deterrents as well as Blaby District Council for a referral to their Local Neighbourhood Team.

The issue of a run-down bench located near to the sewage works was raised and would be brought to the next meeting of the Estates Working Party for discussion.

11. Date of next meeting

The date of the next meeting is scheduled for 6th October 2025.