

Estates Working Party

Report of the Estates Working Party meeting held 5th October 2026.

Present: Cllrs V Armstrong, C Ibbotson, S Kinvig, P Mount, A Spooner and J Thacker, until item 5.

Parish Council Manager: Miss J Leech

Assistant Parish Council Manager: Miss E Frost

1. To receive apologies for absence, if any

Apologies were received from Cllrs M Gillespie and D Shuttleworth.

2. To receive disclosures of interest

There were no disclosures of interest.

3. Grounds maintenance update

a. To review the 2026/27 projects list

The 2026/2027 projects list was reviewed.

Up to date costings for the project to the front of the village hall would be brought back to a future meeting prior to the works being scheduled.

It was noted that machinery would be required to complete works to the bottom of cemetery A where trees had recently been removed. The equipment would also be used to remove all hedges destroyed by box caterpillar, prior to the areas being levelled over and made presentable whilst replacement hedging and the schedule for their planting is considered.

b. To receive the Head Groundsman's report

In the absence of the Head Groundsman, the Parish Manager reported that hedge cutting was now underway although mowing and strimming was also being completed.

c. Ongoing maintenance items including items raised by members of the public or councillors prior to the agenda being distributed

Items raised prior to the agenda being distributed were received and would be actioned.

The Square planter arrangements were noted as being in need of reorganisation as some of the smaller plants were overshadowed in their current location. Similarly, the Hebe's which are planted towards the front of the Buckingham Planter were noted as obscuring view of the plaque and, due to the need to continually cut them back, would not be allowed to flower. As a result, plants would be swapped between the two to allow all plants to flourish and this would be completed prior to the crosses being placed at the Buckingham Memorial planter in November.

The larger Phormium located at the front of the lower level of the planter on The Paddock was noted as being too large for its location. This would be removed and relocated as appropriate, splitting into smaller displays if possible. Strimming would also be undertaken along the pathway which runs adjacent to The Paddock.

The damaged bolt on one of the gates in the new cemetery area would be reported to the Head Groundsman for repair.

4. To discuss the Cemetery, including

a. Cemetery (A) and (B)

i. Necessary works

This was discussed under item 3.

ii. Memorial inspection results

It was noted that all memorials had now been inspected and would not be due for reinspection until 2029/2030. Following the testing, eleven memorials were reported as having failed with the three-month notice for plot owners to come forward to discuss the results now being displayed. A quote had been obtained for the repairs in the meantime.

Recommended for approval

To repair the failed memorials, at an estimated minimum cost of £1800, should no plot owners come forward. This recommendation would be referred to the Finance Working Party for consideration.

iii. Cemetery fees

This item was deferred until the next meeting.

b. Cemetery B layout

i. Potential costings should it no longer be possible to reserve a burial plot in advance

Cost implications, should it no longer be possible to reserve burial plots in advance, were discussed. It was also reported that, legally, it would not be possible to allow the pre-purchase of a plot, but for the plot allocated to be that which is next available at the time of interment, due to the fact that the exclusive rights of burial which is issued with the purchase of a plot requires a plot number to be detailed.

Recommended for approval

To offer burial plots sequentially, at the time they are required for immediate interments, with no reservation of plots permitted, and to only inter in one section of the cemetery at a time.

5. Dog waste bins

The condition and lifespan of dog waste bins within Countesthorpe was discussed. These would be swapped between locations regularly to increase their lifespan.

Recommended for approval

To purchase a 40 litre plastic bin at a cost of up to £260 for installation at The Paddock to trial whether plastic bins may be more durable and to inform future decisions. This item would be recommended to the Finance Working Party for consideration.

To recommend to a resident backing on to Larchwood to raise their concerns with regard to dog waste being thrown into their garden, to the District Council's dog warden service.

6. Budget 2027/2028 – to consider any potential items for recommendation to the Finance Working Party

Initial items for consideration within the 2027/2028 budget were discussed and would be recommended to the Finance Working Party. This would also be brought back to the next meeting of the Estates Working Party once members had chance to consider any other projects or items.

7. Christmas tree/lights

Further to the approval of the Parish Council to spend up to £500 on battery operated lights to be installed on trees in The Square for Christmas, the specific lights were agreed for purchase, costing £260 plus the cost of the batteries. The tree for the Village Hall would also cost £80.

8. To receive any correspondence

There was no correspondence.

9. To receive items for inclusion on the next agenda

The following item was recommended for inclusion on the next agenda:
To discuss options for the box hedging replacements in the cemetery

10. To receive matters arising for information purposes

It was noted that the hanging baskets were due to be taken down on 15th October.

11. Date of next meeting

The date of the next meeting is scheduled for Monday 9th November 2026 at 10am.