

Report to: Hailsham Town Council
Date: 25th January 2012
By: John Harrison, Town Clerk

Title of report: Closed Churchyards

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Council is recommended to:

Notify Wealden District Council that it will withdraw its offer to negotiate taking on the maintenance of the closed St Mary's Churchyard

1. Background

1.1 At the Full Town Council meeting on 19th September 2011 a report was considered detailing Wealden District Council's proposal to charge a "special expense" for closed churchyards in the Wealden District.

1.2 Wealden District Council had put forward three options for the parishes to consider and respond to by the end of September:

1. Do nothing and carry on as is currently happening – this does not help the double taxation issue or the financial pressure.
2. Go forward with special expense route.
3. Parishes take on the maintenance themselves under an agency agreement with WDC.

1.3 Hailsham Town Council resolved that in response to the options made by Wealden District Council that Hailsham Town Council takes on the maintenance of the closed St Mary's churchyard themselves under an agency agreement with Wealden District Council; option 3 as detailed in the officers' report circulated with the agenda, and as Appendix HTC/11/4/213A.

1.4 (Councillors Mrs S. J. Bentley, J. L. Blake, N. A. Collinson, N. S. Coltman, B. Marlowe, S. K. Towner and C. Triandafyllou declared interests as there were Wealden District Councillors and did not participate in the vote).

1.5 Below is the response to Wealden by email on 15 September 2011, following the resolution above.

Hailsham Town Council considered the proposals set out by WDC in respect of the cost of Closed Churchyards at its meeting last night. The Council decided that in the interests of Hailsham residents that it wished to pursue option 3, and to negotiate taking on the maintenance under an agency agreement.

1.6 For clarification: Wealden District Council's consideration on Closed Churchyards was not to cease maintaining St Mary's Churchyard (They legally cannot do this). It was to put

the cost into a special expense and only charge those Parishes who have a closed churchyard the actual costs. As part of this consideration they proposed that any parish may wish to take on the maintenance under an agency agreement from Wealden DC. Wealden would still retain the legal responsibility.

2. Supporting Information

2.1 Wealden District Council has since withdrawn its proposal to charge a special expense for closed churchyards.

2.2 Hailsham Town Council's decision to enter into negotiations on taking on the maintenance themselves under an agency agreement was made on the basis that Wealden DC proceeded with their proposal.

3. Conclusion

3.1 The Town Council is asked to note for information that Wealden DC has withdrawn its proposal.

3.2 For clarity, it is recommended that Hailsham Town Council officers contact Wealden District Council to note that:

- The offer to enter into negotiations to take on the maintenance of St Marys closed churchyard is withdrawn on the basis that Wealden DC's proposal is withdrawn.
- The Town Council will reconsider any options offered by Wealden DC if in the future Wealden DC reconsiders the charging of Closed Churchyards as a special expense.