**City of Edinburgh Council/ Friends of Cemeteries Groups Meeting**

**Tuesday 16 March 2021 at 6:30pm via MS Teams**

**Agenda**

1. Introductions
2. Governance
3. Investment
4. Friends of Group (FoG’s) guidance document – attached draft for discussion.
5. AOCB

**Note of Meeting**

**Present** - Ted Duvall (Morningside) Paul Smyth (North Merchiston) Susan Buckham (Caltons & Canongate) Neill Walker (Queensferry) Tim Parker (Warriston) Carolyn Walker (Newington) John Fowler (Warriston) Tony Harris (Newington) Caroline Gerard (Warriston)

Peter Gentleman (CEC) Alan Thomson (CEC) Jane Matheson (CEC) Robbie Beattie (CEC)

**Item 1 & 2**

Robbie thanked everyone for taking time to attend and discussed the background to the meeting. He outlined where Cemeteries service sat within Bereavement Services after a move from Parks and Greenspace. He provided information of the new Scottish Government Burial Regulations that were expected later in the year or early next year. Bereavement Service are working on a strategy report for Council committee approval. As part of that process we are compiling in the coming months a Cemetery Management Plan, Cemetery Management Rules and Friends of Group guidance. It is hoped this may go to committee in June.

**Item 3**

**Capital investment**

The Council as part of its budget setting in February announced an investment of several £million of capital spending in Parks & Greenspaces and also Cemeteries to improve the condition of walls, gates and paths etc Structural condition surveys have been completed in the last 18 months which identify areas where investment is required.

Tim asked - How long will the works take. RB – it’ a 1-year capital budget

John F asked - Can the council provide a list of improvements that it plans to make. RB - We will provide an update as soon as we can once the priority list has been developed Action RB

**Heritage Lottery Funding Application**

 RB Raised the issue regarding a lottery funding application. It was agreed that the council could lead/co-ordinate a joint bid and if successful it would be spread around the Friends Groups. It was agreed that all FoGs should submit a half page wish list soon of projects they would like to be considered. Send to bereavement@edinburgh.gov.uk Action All FoGs

Ted- Could the lottery money be used to re-erect monumental headstones in Morningside Cemetery? RB/PG - We would need to look further into it and take a balanced view on safety implications.

**Item 4 Friends Group Guidance**

RB asked for feedback on the draft document circulated. Discussion took place around supported and unsupported activities within the cemeteries mostly regarding trees and planting. Comments in the chat function suggested some focus on the historical, archaeological and heritage aspects and not to focus just on biodiversity. Guidance might work best in it was in four segments rather than two to include areas that were supported and areas that were supported but would need advice/permission first eg work on headstones. General agreement this was a welcome proposal to provide guidance to FoGs. Tony asked about the document status. It is a guidance document. Cemetery Management Rules are still in force which have sanctions such as exclusion for those that do not comply.

**AOCB**

Insurance Policies - Ted will have a discussion at the end of April at the Greenspace Forum as to the benefit of one insurance policy covering all FoGs and will advise the outcome

Overflowing Bins – The Council are working on this at present. Jane requested can you please be our eyes and ears and call us on 0131 664 4314 when the bins are needing emptied.

Edinburgh Graveyard Friends - Susan Buckham advised there is also a roundtable group for Edinburgh graveyard friends groups convened by Caroline at Warriston and Susan at Edinburgh World Heritage - All welcome to join.

Greyfriars Kirkyard interpretation and education - Susan Buckham of Edinburgh World Heritage has received funding for a two-year project focussing on graveyard interpretation and education at Greyfriars Kirkyard but the free training is open to all Edinburgh FoGs. Email susanb@ewht.org.uk for more details

Podcast on trees - Carolyn Walker at Newington are planning podcasts on trees and birds and perhaps suggesting routes that visitors can follow to notice wildlife etc.