

# Sutton St. James' Church Graveyard Submission to the PCC by the JWP

## The Joint Working Party

### 1. Who are the Joint Working Party?

The Joint Working Party (JWP) is made up of three representatives from the PCC: John Evans (Warden), Liz Davis, and Rev Anna C-P (Curate). Rev John was on the committee but stepped down in April, (substituted by Anna). They are joined by four representatives of a group of community members who are interested in finding a way to continue burials in the Churchyard: Tony Greenham (Chair), Richard May, Simon Pearce and Jane Clarkson (Secretary). And two representatives from the Parish Council: Tim Whiskard and Ruth Chamberlain.

### 2. What have they done?

The JWP have met since the open meeting in September 2021 and discussed in depth the issues surrounding the graveyard at Sutton St. James. A major part of that discussion was the preparation of the 'Have Your Say' community consultation. The questionnaire went out to over 1200 homes and received 126 replies (the results can be seen in appendix 1). From the results of the questionnaire, further research and some animated debate the JWP put forward this proposal to the PCC for your consideration.

## Main Points of Debate

Before getting to the proposal it is important to outline some of the issues the JWP have been discussing.

### 1. PCCs Decision

Rev John summarised the principal reasons for closing the graveyard as:

- a. The results of the 2006 ground survey

- b. The unsustainable costs which the Church were no longer able to bear
- c. A requirement in the Parish for some form of Memorial Garden for the scattering of ashes and a 'quiet space'.

## 2. Updated Environmental Information

Enquiries made to the Environment Agency suggest that burials would be possible on Glebe field one based on existing geological surveys / maps etc. which they hold. However, a full Environment Agency site specific risk assessment would still need to be done.

## 3. Community Feeling

The petition, the open meeting and the results of the questionnaire all show that there were nearly 100 families for whom burial is very important and the church's lack of effective communication at the time of the initial PCC decision has left a number of people feeling very unhappy and uncertain of the future, given the background to the 1983 Gift Day Appeal for funds to help replenish church funds after the PCC had purchased the fields.

## 4. The Importance of the Memorial Garden

The PCCs decision to focus on a Memorial Garden was borne out by the results of the questionnaire as something that is also popular in the community.

## 5. Governance

To respect the original decision from the PCC the suggestion was made to set up a separate trust with a separate governance structure. However, the questionnaire results show that whilst some were keen, it was not something that had sufficient support at present to take it forward, however could be reconsidered when more information was available.

## 6. Finance

As a result of the questionnaire, a number of people have donated toward the land survey and there is hope and expectation from the JWP that the community will fund the set up costs of whatever is decided. It is to be made very clear that any gifts towards the graveyard DO NOT in any way constitute the guarantee of a burial plot, nor buys the person a burial plot if the extension goes ahead.

## 7. The Future

The JWP agreed that an extension about the same size as the existing extension could provide for approximately 30 years and perhaps 140 graves subject to design and planning.

However It is important to publicise that any other further extension is unlikely for the following reasons:

The original PCC decision was about money, suitability and sustainability, but it was also about the church's mission; where and how we see ourselves in the future and how we use our resources and funds, getting the balance right. That decision currently stands. However, the final decision will lie with the PCC of the time and they will consider the needs of the village at the time.

The current proposed extension on Glebe field one represents the most likely, viable, sustainable and cheapest option for a graveyard- any proposals for Glebe field two would require a lot more work and cost. If the current trend towards a preference for cremation over burial continues there is unlikely to be enough support for any future extension or sufficient funding.

We cannot see into the future, and decisions will be made at the appropriate time; however, it is important to communicate the current expectations to allow people to make alternative arrangements due to the expected unlikelihood of future extensions.

## Some Assurances

The JWP feel they can give some assurances to the PCC in regard to the three main reasons given for the closure of the graveyard.

- 1) A new survey, with the PCCs permission, will be undertaken and paid for by donation from the community and at no cost to the PCC; to conclusively show the suitability of Glebe field one for burials.
- 2) The JWP are confident that money to fund the start up of an extension, will be covered by the community at no cost to the PCC. No work will be done until funding is secured. However, the JWP ask that the PCC will take on the maintenance of any extension that will be as cost effective as possible. The PCC would keep control of the governance of any extension and use the current criteria and cost structure for burials.

- 3) A Memorial Garden will be integral to any plan set out. Submitting the Memorial Garden with a graveyard extension for planning permission will overcome some of the obstacles the first submission faced.

## The Proposal

In short the JWP are asking the PCC to consider:

- 1) Allowing a new survey to be done on Glebe field one.

And

- 2) If the ground survey results are favourable for burials, to allow an extension to the current graveyard, of about the same size as the present extension. The final layout etc. would come back to the PCC for approval.

And

- 3) That the PCC will take on the maintenance of the extension as part of the current graveyard.

The conditions of the agreement will be that:

- None of the costs of the survey and setting up of the graveyard extension would fall on the PCC.
- All money donated toward the cost of the graveyard will represent a gift to the church and be recognized by all as such. Payments/donations when received will be paid into a dedicated bank account. It will be understood that money given does NOT in any way constitute the guarantee of a burial plot, nor buys the person a burial plot in the future.
- All proposals will include a Memorial Garden (that funding has already been pledged for) and all the costs of which would be borne by the PCC.
- All plans for any future graveyard use would be considered by the PCC at the appropriate time and discussed with parishioners (However, see point 7)

Agreed Submission – 24 June 2022

Proposal Accepted by PCC - 18 July 2022