

28th September 2020

Dear Parish Councillors

We write to you with a request to help us maintain the parish churchyard during a difficult time. The situation is currently that the cost of keeping the churchyard grave areas in the state which the community have come to expect is costing the church as much as the combined running costs of maintaining the Grade 1 listed church building to comply with Health and Safety requirements, this excludes heating costs.

We have an employee who cuts the main areas of grass with a ride-on mower, which we can continue to maintain. In addition, we have to employ a professional to carry out the strimming machine maintenance work around the grave areas; as you will know, this work with machinery has to comply with H & S requirements. We are thinking ahead to the next spring, as the grass won't need much maintenance over winter months.

We plan to ask for community help in two ways:

- 1) Include an article in the spring edition of the Broadsheet to explain the situation and invite community members who enjoy gardening to come along occasionally and help keep the general entrance areas looking as they would like to find them: a bit of light weeding and tidying, using personal hand tools. In the past the church council has received complaints from community members who walk through the churchyard that its upkeep is not good enough. In rectifying this, it has been costing an extra £6,000 pa which we now find an unsustainable cost.
- 2) Starting next Spring, would the Parish Council consider adding occasional strimming grass around the churchyard graves areas to their grounds maintenance worker's itinerary? We feel this may be more cost-effective than applying for a PC grant to employ someone ourselves. If, however, you will not be able to do this, may we apply for a grant?

The church council recognizes the support which the Parish Council gives to maintain the village clock, through regular maintenance checks and I'm sure the community are very grateful for this, as it is a feature of the village centre.

As with some other voluntary organisations, the number of physically active members has shrunk over the years and organizing work parties within our congregation is no longer a viable option either. However, as the community would not wish the churchyard to become overgrown, would the Parish Council members please consider our plight and offer some assistance or advice.

Thank you for your consideration,

On behalf of the Broadclyst PCC