

Harrietsham Parish Council

Environmental Committee

Minutes of meeting held on Friday 2nd October 2020 at 1:30pm

1. **Present:** Cllrs Dean (chairman), Dayes, Luck, Stanley, and Powell (guest) M Cuerden (RFO/Amenity Manager)
2. **Apologies:** Cllr Foster and Stanley **Members of the public:** None
3. **Minutes of the last meeting** (12th March 2020) were signed (without amendment) as a true record.
4. **Disclosures:** None.
5. **Amenity Contracts (Update):** The Amenity Manager reported that the contracts seem to be progressing well. He noted that

The New Burial Ground and Garden of Remembrance seemed to be neat, tidy and well maintained.

Similarly the Glebe Field was looking ok, and maintenance work on the play area had been completed. The Amenity Manager reported that we had received an email from a resident of Harrisons Drive, asking about the status of the hedge/tree line between the Field and their road. He noted that we had – so far as he knew – never done any work on the vegetation, and had always assumed that it was part of the boundary planting by the developers and that it was therefore part of Harrisons Drive. However, on closer inspection, it could be seen that, from the Drive to the Field, there is a separate, well maintained, hedge, then a fence (which we have previously maintained), and then another hedge/tree line. On that basis, it was agreed that the fence and vegetation on the field side would be incorporated into the Open Spaces contract.

The Medical Centre and Church Road verges seemed to be neat, tidy and well maintained.

Woodlands Walk also looked ok, although Cllr Dean commented that she was very disappointed that our contractors had failed to respond to several requests to remove a build up of debris in the SE corner of the lake, leaving it for a resident to do it. The Amenity Manager noted that on his various walk-rounds, he had noticed that the missing “No Fishing” sign had re-appeared (although he would double check that, as Cllr Dean hadn’t seen it), and that the life-ring by the dam was slowly disappearing into the hedge. At the moment, it is still visible and accessible, but the hedge does need cutting back.

The benches were still looking pretty good, with no known repairs required. They are due another treatment in May/June next year.

The War Memorial seemed to be neat, tidy and well maintained. Cllr Dean asked if Tommy was still there, and the Amenity Manager confirmed that he was.

The A20 verges and associated areas all seemed neat, tidy and well maintained.

On Teers Meadow, the Amenity Manager updated the committee on the spend to date on the Lottery Grant. We have spent about half of the grant, and he was waiting for the invoice for putting up the information boards. At that point, we should approach the Lottery for the second half of the grant, but we would probably need to provide evidence of spend to date, a plan for the second half, and a request to extend the time limit on it. * Cllr Dean reported that we had received the leaflets, and she was in the process of getting them distributed. She was currently trying to get some prices from Royal Mail for a targeted mail drop to the ME17 1xx postcode area. * The question of cattle grazing the field was then discussed. It was noted that they hadn’t arrived as planned, so it was recommended by our consultant that we should have the field top-cut again. At the Amenity Manager’s request, Mike Phillips had asked for a cost from Andrew French for extending the original contract to incorporate one additional cut, and had received quote of £790. It was **proposed** by Cllr Dean that this should be accepted, **seconded** by Cllr Dayes, with all in favour. There then followed a general discussion about the principle of having cattle in the field at all. It was finally agreed that

we would still want the field grazed, as it represented the most environmentally option. However, the Amenity Manager would again seek confirmation that the cattle to be used would be docile, few, and either cows with no calves or bullocks. It was also noted that we would need to put up signs warning dog-walkers of the presence of cattle – we would need to source these ourselves if the cattle’s owner doesn’t provide them. * Future suggestions for the field – and spending the budget – included more guided walks, a free BBQ to generate local interest (and possibly a Friends of...), the acquisition of wildlife cameras (which would need to be concealed to prevent theft/vandalism) and the provision of further specialist wildlife habitats.

The Saxon Place Amenity Land was looking neat, tidy and well maintained. The Amenity Manager noted that the new saplings had been planted immediately before a three-week spell of hot, dry weather. On inspection, they currently look as though most have died, but it was agreed that they should be left until spring next year to see if they revive.

6. **Open Spaces:** The Amenity Manager noted that the current Open Spaces contracts are due for renewal as of April next year. In normal times, we would be looking at a full review of the specifications, and then launching a full re-tender exercise. However, these are not normal times, and a process that would usually require a number of meetings might prove problematical. He offered three approaches: (a) we carry on as usual, and hope that “normality” proves possible (b) we conduct a limited re-tender, perhaps offering the work to our current three contractors, plus, perhaps, one or two more. This has similar issues to doing a full process (c) as we are happy that the current specification – with a few tweaks – seem to be working well, so we could approach our current contractors and offer a one-year extension to the contracts with an up-lift to the quoted prices (2% was suggested). It was agreed that we wished to keep the activity as low as possible, so option (c) was preferable – **proposed** Cllr Luck, **seconded** Cllr Dean, with all in favour. The Amenity Manager is to approach the three contractors to see if they will agree. (If any don’t, then their contract(s) will be offered for tender to the three current contractors.) It was also agreed that the A20 Verges contract would be extended to start from the “Harrietsham” sign in the west instead of from the bus stop.
7. **Allotments:** The Amenity Manager reported that at least one tenant was giving up their allotment, and there were reports that there may be another two or three that might do likewise. It was therefore looking increasingly likely that the previous decision to not open the second allotment site was proving to be the correct one. * It was agreed that the annual rent increase should be applied, setting the new level at £18 per annum **proposed** Cllr Dean, **seconded** Cllr Luck. * The Amenity Manager also noted that the building previously occupied by Nuttals was now being converted in to flats – this might present a problem with access and parking for the allotments in due course. This is likely to require attention. * On the “new allotment” site – now to be re-purposed – it was agreed that Cllr Dean would try and contact Brogdale to seek advice on the planting of a range of fruit trees, while Cllr Luck would check prices from other sources, with a view to establishing a community orchard instead.
8. **Percy’s Information Board:** It was generally agreed that the board needs either renovating or replacing. The Amenity Manager will see if he can find out who supplied it in the first place (in the hope that the art work is still available), otherwise we will have to think about replacing it.
9. **Items for Discussion:** None.
10. **Date of next meeting** – To be agreed.

Meeting closed at 3pm.