

## Harrietsham Parish Council

### Environmental Committee Minutes of meeting held on Monday 18th July 2022

1. **Present:** Cllrs Dean (chairman), Dayes, Luck, Stanley, Mrs S Amos and M Cuerden [MC] (RFO/Amenity Manager)
2. **Apologies:** Cllr Dayes **Members of the public:** None
3. **Minutes of the last meeting** (23rd May 2022) were signed (without amendment) at the May Council meeting, another copy was signed for our records.
4. **Disclosures:** None.
5. **Amenity Contracts (Update):** MC reported that he had that day walked around all our open spaces with exception of the A20 verges (which he had driven along).

New Burial Ground & Garden of Remembrance – Everything here was neat and tidy. Cllr Stanley had previously reported signs of a barbeque in the Ground, and sure enough, there were two patches of burnt grass (side-by-side), probably from a couple of disposable barbeques. This generated a discussion on whether we should put signs up (like the Glebe Field conditions), or maybe a “polite request” sign, similar to the one on the Garden’s gate. No conclusion was reached, so we shall just have to wait and see if it happens again. Of more concern was that the chance of a wild-fire from the barbeque in the Ground was remote because the grass is kept so short – but the same cannot be said for Teers Meadow. MC also reported that in walking the path back to the war memorial, he noted that parts are getting overgrown, so he has emailed the contractor(s), asking them to have a look.

MC then raised the question of the Burial Ground’s future, observing that according to the churchwarden at St John’s, the “New Burial Ground” would, within about three years, become just the “Burial Ground”. He outlined some of the main options, (mostly revolving around whether or not burials should become a civil matter rather than one for the church), and clarified, in answer to a question from Cllr Luck, that, so far as he understood, the parish had a legal obligation to ensure that a suitable burial site existed for the community. Cllr Dean asked that we write to the incumbent, Rev Huggins, to enquire as to the church’s preferences in the matter. MC said he’d draft something.

Glebe Field – is similarly looking good and well-kept.

Medical Centre & Church Road – MC noted that although the Church Road verges were being done, it seemed that the medical centre part of the contract was being overlooked, as there were quite a lot weeds all round the building, and the shrub beds needed attention. He had written to the contractor and we are now awaiting a response.

Woodlands Walk – this is looking neat and tidy too. MC observed that he had counted the duck houses several times, and kept concluding that there were two, not three. He has emailed the contractor to enquire as to when the missing one will re-appear. Cllr Dean asked if she could be told when they would be on site, as she wanted to get them to clear the tops of the aerators which had become favourite nesting places for some coots.

Benches – all those that are in the contract have now been done, and are looking good.

War Memorial – is also looking neat and tidy. The Amenity Manager had asked the contractor to remove the (rather tired-looking) wreathes and wooden crosses. They should have been removed earlier, but had been overlooked.

A20 verges – This contract now appears to be running well, with almost everything required being done.

Saxon Place Amenity – MC reported that in his walk round, he had noted that the community orchard is looking very dry, with some trees suffering more than others. He will ask the contractor if they have any means of watering them, and if not, and if the weather doesn't break soon, then he would look at pumping some water out of the stream. Cllr Dean noted that she had seen someone watering the HIB planters from a bowser, and wondered if we could use the same people. MC said he'd try and find out. Other than that, it is all looking pretty well kept. The exception is that we are continuing to have problems with some allotment tenants not caring for their plot. We have had to trim one plot a couple of times now to assist the holder, which each time costs a substantial amount of money. The Clerk and Amenity Manager would like the discretion to pass on the costs to the tenant after suitable warnings. Following a brief discussion, it was agreed to **Recommend to Council** that we would charge for each clearance of a plot, (estimated at £200), at the Clerk's discretion.

6. **Teers Meadow:** MC reported that there had been a meeting with Mike Phillips, Mrs Amos and Cllr Luck to discuss the Meadow. Basically, there is a full programme of events planned, and the budget is pretty much spot on for completion in March next year. The budget includes a way-marked route round the village, pointing towards the Meadow, a proposal for which we have received from Clarity Interpretation. Whilst it was generally felt that this would be a good thing to have, Cllr Stanley wondered if we might make better use of some of the money by having an additional board on the meadow to assist children in understanding the surrounding habitat. MC observed that this might cause issues in the budget, but that we could put one up if we wished at any time at our cost. He therefore suggested that we accept Clarity's proposal, with a view to considering this additional board in April, once the Lottery Funded project is complete. This was acceptable, so it was agreed to **Recommend to Council** that Clarity's proposal be accepted, and that the extra board be discussed at the May 2023 committee meeting. MC also reported that he has asked a contractor to repair the vandalised bench in the meadow. Cllr Stanley had previously expressed concern at the apparent bending down of the eastern wire fence – MC had a look, and noted that it was along almost the entire length, and was very similar to damage he had previously seen by livestock eating something on the wrong side of the fence, in this case, probably, the cows. The integrity of the fence is still intact though.
7. **Tree Survey:** MC reported that we had received a report from Treeventures following a periodic survey of the trees in Woodlands Walk. This had identified a number of items, mostly of a minor nature, but with one tree removal. He also noted that the surveyor had specifically omitted a dead tree opposite Mr Trussler's property, as it wasn't considered a risk to health. However, it was felt that should it come down, it might cause harm to the lake's ecosystem, and possibly even reach Mr Trussler's property. During the discussion, it was suggested that we ask the same contractor we used last time because (a) they would be familiar with the site and (b) they were the most cost-effective when we got quotes. It was therefore agreed to **Recommend to Council** that we commission the previous contractor to undertake the work recommended by Treeventures, together with removing the omitted dead tree.
8. **Annual Show - prizes:** MC read out the email of thanks for the grant recently provided towards the costs of running the annual show in September. He then read out "We also wondered if the council would like to use this occasion to present the Best Kept Allotment prize and also for the council member to present one of our Society trophies." Cllr Dean suggested that we ask Cllr Griffiths – so long as he doesn't win the prize! (MC also suggested that he makes sure he's not involved in judging as well.) It was therefore agreed to **Recommend to Council** that we ask Cllr Griffiths, and if he isn't available, we would consider asking someone else. The Show's date is believed to be 3rd September.
9. **Date of next meeting** – Monday 19th September 2022 at 7:30pm in the parish office. It had previously agreed that we should hold future meetings on the third Monday of the months of May, July, September, November, January and March in the year.

Meeting closed at 8:45pm.