

Harrietsham Parish Council

Environmental Committee

Minutes of meeting held on Thursday 11th July 2019 at 7:30pm

1. **Present:** Cllrs Dean (chairman) Foster Stanley, M Cuerden (RFO/Amenity Manager)
2. **Apologies:** Cllr Dayes **Members of the public:** None
3. **Minutes of the last meeting** (14th March 2019) were signed (without amendment) at the March Council meeting. A second set was signed for our records. The meeting scheduled for 16th May was cancelled.
4. **Disclosures:** None.
5. **Amenity Contracts (Update):** The Amenity Manager reported that the contracts seem to be progressing well. He noted that

5.1 There is a need to replace a couple of trees in the New Burial Ground, and that at least one request for a new tree had been received, so the group will need to decide on what species we should require, and at what cost. It would help if we could find the original Book of Remembrance.

5.2 The Glebe Field generally is in good order, however there is a pressing need for work on the play area. There is a chunk of S106 money that needs to be spent by September, together with a good chance that we can get a SIPA grant from MBC – totalling somewhere around £20K. Following advice, it seems that we have room in the area for 2 more large items of play equipment, plus one smaller. It was generally felt that the project was in the best public interest, but that time was short. It was therefore agreed to **Recommend to Council** that Cllrs Sam (T&J) and Stanley be asked to proceed with the specification and acquisition of equipment, including applying for the grant. The Council would prefer the cost to be met by the S106 and the grant, but if the grant is not forthcoming, then the council would be prepared to contribute up to £6K towards the cost.

5.3 The medical centre and Church Road verges are fine.

5.4 MBC have been asked to refix the wandering duck house. The aerator is currently working ok, and the lake is clear of algae. Mid Kent Fisheries have been written to, demanding that they stop advertising our lake for fishing (and claiming to be able to issue licences to do so!).

5.5 The benches have all been re-done for the year, and are looking good.

5.6 The war memorial is also looking good.

5.7 Some of the A20 verges have been done, but some are looking quite sorry for themselves. It was thought that some of the topsoil dressing and re-seeding after the highways work (now completed?) might still need doing. Cllrs Sams to be asked if this is the case, and if so could they chase it?

5.8 Teers Meadow – The fencing and scrub clearance is in hand, with a meeting between the Amenity Manager and Fences R Us due on Saturday to discuss the details. Mike Phillips has been busy planning events and other activities. The wildlife walk on the previous Saturday had been successful, with 13 attendees and a large amount of plant life identified, which will assist in future monitoring. It was agreed that starting a Friends of... was a good idea, but would need input from the Cllrs Sams, so it was decided to defer this until they have a bit more time. In the meantime, Mike Phillips had suggested arranging a guided walk (or two, or...) around the council's open spaces, and had asked if councillors would be happy to act as local guides. Cllrs Foster and Stanley volunteered, but any other offers would be welcome!

5.9 Saxon Place amenity land – the Amenity Manager reported that he had met with JB L/scapes, and agreed work required to get the maintenance back on track following the delayed start of the contract. We are now waiting for work to commence, hopefully within the next two or three weeks.

6. **“Wild” Roadside verges:** The Amenity Manager reported on a BBC website article about some councils encouraging the use of roadside verges to become wild flower areas – and then noted that firstly, one of our verges that should have been cut but hadn’t yet been was looking quite attractive with poppies and daisies, and that he had also noticed a couple of wild flower areas that were being left in the Bearsted area. After some discussion, it was agreed that he should be asked to seek advice from our contractors with a view to amending the relevant contract on its renewal in 2022, and that the council should consider a public consultation to ensure that everyone knew what was happening. The Amenity Manager will report back on what the contractors say.
7. **Percy the Pilgrim:** It had been noted that the area round Percy was beginning to look a little tired, with the membrane under the path starting to show through. The Amenity Manager had met with the contractors maintaining the area, and discussed what could be done. JB L/scapes had come back with suggested work, split into two. The first job is to clear, level and re-lay the surface under both Percy’s bench and the picnic table, including new shuttering round the edges. This was priced at £820 (exc VAT). The second is to re-shutter the edges of the footpath, put new stones down and trim off the exposed membrane, at a cost of £590 (exc VAT). It was agreed to **Recommend to Council** that both quotes be accepted. It was also noted that the information board was looking very worn and needed substantial renovation.
8. On the current (old) allotments, it was agreed to **Recommend to Council** that the annual rent be increased by £2, which would make it £17 for the year. As for the new allotments, it was thought that we might shortly be in a position to let out half the area. In anticipation of this, the Amenity Manager had asked the contractors to spray the area to remove the weeds now growing up. After some discussion, it was agreed that the plots should be offered at the same rate as the old ones, with a rent-free period of one year to allow the holders to prepare the land. It was expected that MBC would provide a water delivery service using one of their bowsers, but this meant that the council would need to provide some kind of storage facility. In the long term the costs of this would be shared between the holders, but the first year might be borne by the council. It was also felt that the new allotments might be best administered through an Allotments Association, simplifying life for the council, and providing benefits to the holders. This should be looked at once we start to let the plots. The matter was referred to F&GP for their views on the rental.
9. **Items for Discussion:** None.
10. **Date of next meeting** – Thursday 12th September 2019 at 7:30pm in the Parish Office

Meeting closed at 9:10pm.