

Harrietsham Parish Council
Environmental Committee
Minutes of meeting held on Monday 22nd January 2024

1. **Present:** Cllrs Brown (Chair), Dayes, Stanley, Mrs S Amos and M Cuerden (RFO/Amenity Manager)
2. **Apologies:** Cllr Luck **Members of the public:** None
3. **Minutes of the last meeting** (9th October 2023) were signed (without amendment) at the October Council meeting, another copy was signed for our records.
4. **Disclosures:** Cllr Dayes – on allotment rents and awards as he is an allotment holder (form received).
5. **Amenity Contracts (Update):** MC observed that all contracts appear to be operating smoothly, with no known problems, noting that the growing season wasn't yet upon us. He then proceeded to review each of the various contracts in turn.
 - Burial Ground / Garden of Remembrance: MC reported that both areas were looking well kept. The footpath from the corner and down between Louverne and the NBG had been cleared of the fallen tree. The contractor had also cleared the rest of the path, which now felt much more open. Whilst discussing the NBG, he also updated councillors with the fact that we will need to get some sort of archeological assessment of the ground, as the county archeologist has suggested that there could well be remains that should be investigated before we proceed with the planning permission for the new cemetery.
 - Glebe Field: The area is also looking well kept.
 - The Medical Centre and Church Road Verges: Also looking good.
 - Woodlands Walk: MC reported that the tree work had been completed, and the banks of the lake had been opened up.
 - Benches: All ok.
 - War Memorial: All ok.
 - A20 Roadside Verges: All ok.
 - Saxon Place Amenity Land: MC had contacted Brogdale with a view to getting the community orchard assessed – we believe that there might be some trees in need of replacement. They could usefully prune the trees at the same time. Brogdale had responded with a quote of £400 to do the pruning and report back on the condition of the trees. It was agreed to **Recommend to Council** that the quote be accepted, proposed Cllr Brown, seconded Cllr Dayes, all in favour.
 - Teers Meadow was also discussed. SA noted that she had contacted the 50-odd people who had expressed interest in helping with the meadow – and had 3 replies. So far as organising activities was concerned, there was a brief debate on whether we wished to try and do so, or whether we should just leave the meadow as a place of public access and enjoyment. It was agreed that we probably didn't have the resources to organise events ourselves, but we could consider asking contractors, such as "Anna Outdoors" to do so, to follow on from their previous ones. SA also reported that she had been invited to attend a meeting of the Lenham Meadows charity, which might provide some ideas. We would consider this at the next meeting. MC also noted that we could re-introduce the cattle to the meadow for a month or two – he would ask SL to contact their owner to see if that was possible / desirable.
6. **Woodlands Walk – Access and control:** MC noted that no progress had been made on a "No Entry" sign, but he would get on with it.
7. **Glebe Field access control & matting:** MC had ascertained that there is no depth restriction on the Glebe Field – but there is one on height; nothing could be higher than 90cm, which greatly impacted any plans for a gate. SB had looked for alternatives, and bearing in mind that one consideration was to not highlight the presence of an entrance there, the best suggestion currently is to simply remove the box over the padlocks, allowing easier access. It was appreciated that this would lower the level of security on the entrance, making the padlocks more exposed, but alternatives are hard to come by. It was agreed to **Refer the matter to Council** to see if this solution was acceptable.

On the play-area signs, MC showed photographs of the boards currently in place. It was agreed that they were inconsistent both in presentation and in content, as well as varying wildly between the two entrances. It was agreed that we would seek to design a new board, saying the same thing but in two sizes. The big version would replace the existing big one at the main entrance, the little one being removed, and the small version would replace the one by the field entrance. SB agreed to come up with a form of words for the committee to consider. MC would check with the clerk to see if we knew who had done the existing boards (one has the village logo on, which would be appropriate).

8. **Percy's Information Board:** MC had sought to place the order for a replacement board, but had received no response to his telephone messages. SL had now provided an email address, so he would try that instead.
9. **Allotment Rents 2024/25:** A referral from Council, this was to pre-plan any change to the rents applied. After a brief discussion, SB felt that we had already increased them for this year, and maybe a pause would be a good idea. He therefore proposed to **Recommend to Council** that the rents be held at the current level for one year – seconded by Cllr Stanley; Cllr Dayes did not partake in this item.
10. **Allotment Award:** Also referral from Council, this relates to the annual “Best Kept Allotment” award, previously administered by the Gardening Society on behalf of the council. After a brief debate, it was agreed to **Recommend to Council** that we should continue to make the award. Proposed by Cllr Brown, seconded by Cllr Stanley; Cllr Dayes did not partake in this item. SB stated that he would be happy to judge – or arrange to have judged – the allotments, and to arrange any engraving of a trophy that may be required.
11. **Date of next meeting** – To be on Monday 18th March 2024, in the Parish Office, at 7:30pm.

Meeting closed at 8:30 pm.