

Harrietsham Parish Council

Environmental Committee

Minutes of meeting held on Friday 11th March 2022

1. **Present:** Cllrs Dean (chairman), Luck, Stanley, Mrs S Amos and M Cuerden (RFO/Amenity Manager)
2. **Apologies:** Cllr Foster and Dayes **Members of the public:** None
3. **Minutes of the last meeting** (21st January 2022) were signed (without amendment) at the January Council meeting, another copy was signed for our records.
4. **Disclosures:** None.
5. **Amenity Contracts (Update):** The Amenity Manager reported that the current contracts were now in their final month, with the new ones taking over at the start of April. He noted that

The New Burial Ground and Garden of Remembrance was neat, tidy and well maintained. He showed a photograph of the recently cut hedges along the footpath, which had made the whole area look much better.

Similarly the Glebe Field was looking ok, and he especially noted that the shrub bed by the play area had been attended to. Also, the bench has now been moved to the other side.

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

Woodlands Walk also looked ok, although Cllr Dean observed that (a) a duck house had gone walkabout around the lake (again) following the storms, and (b) that – also due to the storms – there was now a large branch in the lake by her property. The Amenity Manager responded by saying that he had asked the relevant contractor to re-fix the duck-house (and maybe suggest a better way of doing it to stop it happening again), and to remove the branch – he had received a reply that they “would look at it”! He also shared a couple of photos of the hedge line between the footpath by the Shaws and the farmer’s field. Some vegetation had fallen over, but, aside from constricting the path a little, it wasn’t causing a problem. Of more concern was that it had also brought down a stretch of barbed wire, which is now lying alongside the path. It was agreed that we should ask the fencing contractor to remove the barbed wire, and at the same time give us an estimate for (a) removing – without replacing – the existing fence, and (b) replacing it with a similar post-and-wire fence.

The benches were still looking pretty good, with another treatment due in the next two or three months.

The War Memorial was very neat, tidy and well maintained, with the Amenity Manager sharing a photo of the heather behind the memorial. 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.

The Saxon Place Amenity Land was looking neat, tidy and well maintained. The Amenity Manager reported that the saplings had now received their compost.

6. **Teers Meadow:** There was a general discussion about the Meadow, with the Amenity Manager noting that our consultant, White Horse Ecology, had produced a plan of activities for the forthcoming year. Cllr Stanley asked if we had to keep the padlocks on the gate between the Meadow and the Access Road, as he sometimes wanted to use that route to avoid mud – The AM answered that the gate was locked because of problems with the cows – he supposed that if there were no cows, it could be left unlocked if desired. In the end, Cllr Stanley (and the rest of the committee) were provided with the combination code. It was also observed that the paths in the field get very slippery, and tended to “grow” sideways as people walked along them, trying to avoid the mud. The AM responded that the stone chippings used to improve the entrance to the field had cost £2,000 for a relatively short stretch, so it seemed unlikely that we could afford to do much about this, but that we could keep it mind if there was any spare lottery money going. Cllr Dean asked what the exact amount of the grant was (for the annual Environmental report) – the AM said he’d check and get back to her.
7. **Allotments:** The Amenity Manager reported that allotment 3 had been the cause of a dispute between three tenants. Having been divided into three plots, there was now a discussion going on about boundaries. The AM and the Clerk had been to have a look, and produced a proposal that they wished the Council to endorse before putting to the tenants. Basically, it involved moving a runnerbean frame back by about a foot, and then establishing an 18” no-man’s land between each plot, emphasising that this was to allow free access to their own plots, and the central path had to be kept open to allow access to the stream. Councillors were in full agreement with the suggestion.
8. **Litter Picking:** Cllr Stanley opened the conversation by deploring the state of the village with regards to litter. Whilst there was general agreement, the AM pointed out that in his walk round of the areas covered by the Open Spaces contracts, he had noted little by way of litter – the problem was everywhere else! He did comment that the worst place in “our” land was the A20 verges, but that he would be emphasising to the new contractor that litter-picking was an essential part of the contract.
9. **New Burial Ground tree survey:** The AM informed the committee that he had been trying to reconcile the memorial trees “on the ground” with the map he had found. This had proved tricky, so he had asked the contractor to conduct a tree survey with a view to at least indentifying what species were where. This had come back with a report showing a number of dead trees, with others needing attention. It was agreed that the AM should get quotes for replacing the dead ones (like-for-like) and doing the required work. This would have to wait until the next growing season (October/November onwards), but that none were big enough to represent a risk to the public.
10. **Items for Discussion:** None.
11. **Date of next meeting** – Monday 23rd May at 7:30pm in the parish office.

Meeting closed at 5pm.