

Harrietsham Parish Council
Environmental Committee
Minutes of meeting held on Monday 10th March 2025

1. **Present:** Cllrs Brown (Chair), Dean, Dayes, Luck, M Cuerden (RFO/Amenity Manager)
2. **Apologies:** Cllr Stanley, Mrs S Amos **Members of the public:** None
3. **Minutes of the last meeting** (13th January 2025) were signed (without amendment) at the following Council meeting, another copy was signed for our records.
4. **Disclosures:** None

MC noted that we are now in the last month of the current open spaces contracts, with the new ones due to start in April. He commented that the areas under contract were all looking in good shape, so it appeared that the contractors are honouring their commitments to end of the term. On specific areas, he reported as follows:

5. **New Burial Ground:** He had not received any further reports of unauthorised metal detectorists digging holes in the field, and he now hoped that they had indeed got bored and gone elsewhere. He also undertook to ensure that the History Society had been sent a copy of the report, and if that had been overlooked then he would do so. We might wish to consider placing a couple of information boards at the NBG entrances, explaining what had been found – a future project.
6. **Garden of Remembrance:** A parishioner wishes to plant a tree in the Garden – which has already been approved. It is now imminent, with them being put in direct touch with the contractor to make the necessary arrangements – the council has already received its money.
7. **Glebe Field:** No further comments required.
8. **Play Area:** No further comments required.
9. **Medical Centre & Church Road:** No further comments required.
10. **Woodlands Walk:** MC reported that we had received the latest tree survey, which had highlighted one tree that should be cut down at some point, plus quite a lot of ivy to be removed. Other than that, the area seemed to be in good shape. We will contact the specialist tree contractor we use to get the work done.
11. **Benches:** Cllr T Sams had reported that the bench situated beside the stream on the Green had deteriorated, along with the surrounding brick-work. MC had then checked this, and asked Cllr Donley to seek some prices to repair it (being outside the scope of the contract). Cllr Donley had got one quote so far, which was very high – we will be seeking others.
12. **War Memorial:** No further comments.
13. **A20 Verges:** No further comments required about the contract. Cllr Brown, however, raised the question of the unofficial footpath that has been created between the traffic lights and the Co-op store, and how it both looks unsightly and is dangerous when wet. It was agreed that although this is nothing to do with the Council, it is in a prominent position, and does affect the appearance of the village. It was therefore agreed to ask the Clerk to write to the management company to enquire what they proposed to do about it.
14. **Saxon Place Amenity Land:** Cllr Luck enquired as to how the community orchard was doing – MC replied that it was looking good; Brogdale had been in and replaced the four dead trees and provided the necessary groundwork/fertilizer. He also noted that there is a long-standing gap in the fence, for which we had been quoted quite a lot to repair. The new contractor, on looking at it, had suggested that we instead turn it into a gate to provide ready access for machinery – we agreed to look at this once the new contracts are in place.

The question of vacant allotments came up again. We now have one, and on discussing it with the tenants, it was felt that a better solution to just regular strimming might be to put down black plastic sheets – something else to talk the new contractor about. Cllr Brown then raised the question of the annual allotment prize, noting that the current shield is full, so we would need to acquire another one, and that the Gardening Society, who had overseen the prize for us, had now withdrawn from it. After a brief discussion, it was agreed to stop awarding the prize – proposed Cllr Brown, seconded Cllr Dean, all in favour.

MC also mentioned the path from Fairbourne Lane in to Amenity Land, saying that it becomes very narrow and very muddy in wet weather. He likened it to the path out of Teers Meadow to the New Burial Ground before we had it rough-surfaced. He thought we should look at doing something similar here too – another discussion with the contractor!

- 15. Teers Meadow:** No further comments required on the upkeep of the meadow. Cllr Dean reported that she had spoken to the school about using it. The school had responded positively, but without any concrete suggestions.
- 16. Future contracts:** These had now been awarded to the winning contractors. Unfortunately, one, who had only won a single contract, had expressed the view that this made visiting Harrietsham uneconomical, and so had withdrawn. MC, in conjunction with the clerk, had offered the contract to next lowest bidder, who had accepted it.
- 17. Items for future work:** MC explained that this was primarily a list of work that we were aware needed looking at as the weather improves, and had been prepared mainly to ensure that nothing got forgotten.

The sole exception was the Hedge Cutting Invoices item, which related to one parishioner who was proving reluctant to pay. The outstanding amount was £50, which MC, as RFO, indicated wasn't worth the trouble of formally pursuing. Instead he proposed that next year, if the same person wanted their hedge cut, they should be required to pay the outstanding amount in full, and pay for the that year's cut, both in advance of the work being done. Councillors unanimously agreed with this approach.

- 18. Date of the next meeting:** Monday 12th May 2025 in the Parish Office at 7:30pm.

Meeting closed at 8:15pm.