

**Harrietsham Parish Council**  
**Environmental Committee**  
**Minutes of meeting held on Monday 13th May 2024**

1. **Present:** Cllrs Brown (Chair), Stanley, Mrs S Amos and M Cuerden (RFO/Amenity Manager)
2. **Apologies:** Cllrs Dayes, Luck, **Members of the public:** None
3. **Minutes of the last meeting** (18th March 2024) were signed (without amendment) at the following Council meeting, another copy was signed for our records.
4. **Disclosures:** None

MC, as Amenity Manager / RFO, reported that all the open spaces contracts appeared to be going well, and then proceeded to go over each of the areas in turn, making supplementary comments as required:

5. **New Burial Ground:** The County Archeologist had, it seemed, responded with a request for an extensive programme of trenches encompassing the whole of the NBG, plus approach road, which had resulted in a quote from CDS for £18.5K. This seemed to us to be excessive, so we approached the KCC Officer responsible, who responded in both a timely and positive manner, suggesting that she would, in fact, be happy with 5 or 6 trenches, halving the programme. We have now asked CDS to amend the plan and provide a new quote. MC noted that, at £18.5K, which is close to doubling our expenditure to date, there had to be a question of Value for Money for public funds, and maybe we should consider abandoning the project entirely – which would leave the parish without a burial ground, and the council possibly receiving quite a lot of criticism from parishioners. To over-ride the VfM concern would require a political decision from councillors to proceed. However, he hoped that, with the pared-back scheme, such a decision would not be required.

Cllr Stanley enquired as to whether the intention was to pass the whole of the NBG over to the church, or just part of it. MC responded by saying that the original plan had been to treat it as a whole, although a part-transfer remained a possibility. He also noted that the Garden of Remembrance had not yet been considered.

6. **Garden of Remembrance:** Nothing to add to the above.
7. **Glebe Field:** MC reported that the contractors, JB, had indicated that the new entrance matting and post-sockets would be done in August, with a possibility that it might be July. JB had observed that the same sort of matting is already in place, but was degrading, possibly either through use or not being laid properly (or both).
8. **Play Area:** SB had found a supplier of play area signs on-line, and showed the committee one of their standard layouts. He had also been talking to the Clerk, who is doing a similar exercise for her other parish, and a copy of her proposed layout was circulated. The general view was that the “West Farleigh” sign would be preferable, so MC undertook to ask the Clerk to see if we could borrow and adapt her layout!
9. **Medical Centre & Church Road:** No further comment, aside to say that the verges where there are spring flowers are starting to look very untidy, and MC hoped that they would cut soon, although he appreciated that there is still some dying-back to be done.
10. **Woodlands Walk:** MC reported that there had been a problem with both of the two new aerators failing. They had now been replaced, but that we had also received an invoice for this. MC had written to the contractor to raise some concerns, and we were now awaiting their response.
11. **Benches:** So far as MC is aware, all benches under contract are in good shape.
12. **War Memorial:** MC reported that he had attempted to contact the RBLI (via their contact form) to enquire about new footings for Tommy, but had received no reply. The Clerk thought she had a direct email (or telephone number) for a contact there, and she would try. MC had supplied photos of the damaged fixings on Tommy, which didn't seem to correlate with what was being described by the RBLI, so it may be that we have a Tommy Mk I and they have since been changed. If all else fails, one option is to buy another one, but a quick search suggests that they cost around £650 – a fix would be better!
13. **A20 Verges:** MC reminded the meeting that we had received a request from a parishioner at the APM to leave the verges to grow, for the benefit of the environment. In the discussion that followed, it was noted that we had previously discussed this, deciding to leave the cutting programme as it is, but that we were open to re-consideration. MC also pointed out that now was a good time to review the decision because we shall shortly be re-specifying the contracts, ready to start the new ones in April 2025. In the end, it was agreed that we

should maintain the West Street Green and the area outside Lee Davy's Caravans as we do currently, but that the rest should be allowed to grow, and we rely on the KCC 90cm verge cut, with occasional visits to maintain sight-lines. This would actually mean that we should expect to do one or two cuts per year to encourage wild flowers etc, and that we might need to position some signs on the verges to explain why the council is leaving the verges to do their own thing. MC undertook to have a closer look at the verges to see if there are any other areas we should continue to cut as we shall need to put them in the new specification.

Cllr Stanley raised a concern about the big new yellow box and cabinet (ready for the new mast) on the south pavement just along from Lee Davy, in that he felt that they could easily be walked into, especially at night, as it intrudes on to the pavement. MC responded by saying that this would be a matter for installers / operators of the mast in the first instance, and then KCC Highways. If the parish council wanted to put some railings round it, then he was sure that KCC would be happy to let us pay to do so!

**14. Saxon Place Amenity Land:** MC has now received the report from Brogdale, in which they reported three dead trees and made some recommendations for further care and maintenance. The latter, in particular, seemed to involve quite a lot of work for volunteers, but Brogdale had offered to provide a price if we wanted them to do it instead. MC had asked for the price, but had not yet received it – he has chased them, and is waiting to hear.

**15. Teers Meadow:** MC reported that the tables had been repaired and secured with substantial chains and larger sunken blocks of concrete. Whether this will be sufficient remains to be seen. The fence in the top NE corner – believed to be the cows' escape route – has now been renewed and repaired in a manner which appears to be more substantial than the original. He also noted that a further straining wire has been run along the top of the netting, making it stronger. So far as he is aware, the meadow is now ready to re-host cows again, if required.

It was noted that the Medway Valley Conservation Partnership had not been in touch since their last visit, but MC felt that they would be in due course. It was, however, agreed to **Recommend to Council** that we should ask Mike Phillips to re-visit and assess the meadow's progress, and maybe commission some re-runs of the studies held during the lottery work for the same reason. There would be an expected cost of around £750 - £1,000 for this work.

**16. Best allotment award:** SB had produced a template against which the allotments could be judged. He ran through the list, and it was agreed that it seemed to suit the need. It was agreed that this list should be used.

**17. Date of the next meeting:** Monday 8th July 2024 at 7:30pm in the parish office.

Meeting closed at 9:00 pm.