

Harrietsham Parish Council
Environmental Committee
Minutes of meeting held on Monday 13th January 2025

1. **Present:** Cllrs Brown (Chair), Dean, Dayes, Luck, Mrs S Amos, M Cuerden (RFO/Amenity Manager)
2. **Apologies:** Cllr Stanley **Members of the public:** None
3. **Minutes of the last meeting** (11th November 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, noted that we are now in the last quarter of the current contracts, and we had only one more committee meeting before we start the new ones. With that in mind, and considering that not a lot is happening at this time of year, all contracts seem to be running well across the board. He then went through all the contracts, making a few supplementary comments as he went.

5. **New Burial Ground:** MC reported that we had now received the final report from the archaeologists. It was agreed that he would circulate it to all councillors for their information, and ask the Clerk to print off a copy for the office. (It is 53 pages, so councillors will probably not wish to print it themselves.) Once we have had a chance to digest it, we would also send a copy to the History Society, for their information.

Ho noted that there had now been a conversation between CDS (our consultants) and the County Archaeologist, who had said that, as things stand, she would not support an application for planning. If we wished to proceed, it would require a full survey of the land, effectively turning it into one huge trench. Whilst we can get an estimate for the cost of doing this, which may, or may not be acceptable, we couldn't know how much the analysis of any finds might cost. It is this unknown, but potentially huge, cost which means that the project is probably no longer viable.

It was also noted that there have been reports of unauthorised metal detecting on the land – presumably attracted by reports of a dig taking place. MC's comment was that there isn't much we can do about it, unless we put up some wildlife camers, but in any event, the NBG was fully surveyed by geo-physics as well as the five trenches, so there is unlikely to be much to be found – and if there is, it's probably 3 or 4 feet down. His hope was that the detectorists would get bored and move on. If the activity continues then cameras and notices on Facebook etc might be required.

6. **Garden of Remembrance:** No further comments.
7. **Glebe Field:** This area is also looking neat and tidy.
8. **Play Area:** Cllr Brown noted that the new pedestrian footpath to the area was working well – it looked like a good job!
9. **Medical Centre & Church Road:** No further comments.
10. **Woodlands Walk:** MC noted that the lifebelt was now fully visible, and GD noted that the aerators were also working well. MC reported that we had received the latest tree survey, which said there was one tree that was apparently dead and needed taking down, and there is quite a lot of ivy that needs cutting back. We will prepare to action the report – although the RFO in him hoped that the work wouldn't take place until the new financial year!
11. **Benches:** MC reported that the bench on West Street Green was indeed badly rotted, and would need significant repair or replacement. He felt that this was likely to be one for the spring and new financial year.
12. **War Memorial:** No further comments.
13. **A20 Verges:** No further comments on the contract, although MC reported that he had a look at the village sign, and concluded that it was indeed likely to need work – another one for the approaching spring/summer.
14. **Saxon Place Amenity Land:** Again appears to be looking ok. The question of how we are to handle vacant allotments arose, and after a little discussion, it was agreed that we should simply ask the contractors to trim any such plot every two or three months, just to keep it under control.

15. Teers Meadow: The meadow has been cut back, (after the cows were removed), and now looks pretty good. GD confirmed that she'd contact the school to see if they were interested in joining in any activities.

16. Contract Specification: All tenders have now been received and evaluated. We had sent out 5 sets of specification, received 4 tenders and one email declining to offer prices as the work wasn't really for them.

In a divergence from previous practice, MC noted that 3 of the 4 bids were from our existing contractors, so it would not be unreasonable for councillors to know which bid came from which contractor, allowing previous performance to be considered. To that end he specifically checked (twice!) that no councillor had any knowledge or involvement with the fourth, new, contractor.

He then distributed the spreadsheet previously prepared, and talked through it. He noted that the overall prices for each contract were such that our usual three-tender rules would suffice. If we looked at just the lowest price for each contract we find that Contractor A would get 4 contracts, B and C would each get 1 and D would get 2. The general feeling was that we would not wish one contractor to have such a disproportionate number of contracts, so it was decided that one of the 4 should be allocated to another contractor, even though there was an additional cost of about £1,100 in year 1 – it being noted that we don't have to accept the lowest quote, but can choose the most "advantageous" one.

MC undertook to re-work the spreadsheet to show the agreed approach. This could then be considered by F&GP (already on their agenda, and anyway it contributes to the budget consideration), leading to a final recommendation to Council. In the meantime, MC would seek references and a copy of Insurance from the new contractor.

17. Hedgerows: MC introduced an urgent matter. In the last few days, he had received an email from the MCVP saying that, in partnership with CPRE, they were offering grants for the planting of hedgerows. Any interest had to be expressed by the 16th – this coming Thursday. After a brief discussion, it was concluded that the council didn't need any more hedgerows, and we didn't know of any other landowners who might be interested, so it was concluded that no further action was required.

18. Date of the next meeting: Monday 10th March 2025 in the Parish Office at 7:30pm.

Meeting closed at 8:30pm.