

Harrietsham Parish Council
Environmental Committee
Minutes of meeting held on Monday 21st November 2022

1. **Present:** Cllrs Dean (chairman), Luck, Stanley, Mrs S Amos and M Cuerden [MC] (RFO/Amenity Manager)
2. **Apologies:** Cllr Dayes **Members of the public:** None
3. **Minutes of the last meeting** (26th September 2022) were signed (without amendment) at the following Council meeting, another copy was signed for our records.
4. **Disclosures:** None.
5. **Amenity Contracts (Update):** MC reported that he had recently walked round all the contracted areas, and that they were all looking well maintained and litter-free. Various points were raised :

- The New Burial Ground and Garden of Remembrance seemed to be neat and tidy, with no litter. Cllr Stanley commented that the footpath from the gates down to the road, past the war memorial, was quite hard going, with very uneven ground. MC said that he had walked that route and not noticed it, but he would have another look, checking especially for that.

MC also took the opportunity to note that at last week's meeting of the Parochial Church Council (PCC), the churchwarden of St John's had estimated that the churchyard had only another two or three years worth of burials left at which point it would be full. The church intends to start discussions with the Council regarding the use of the New Burial Ground (the clue being in the name) during the early months of next year – in theory, we have plenty of time, but as we have discovered, anything to do with land transfers can drag on. The committee very quickly discussed some of the options, but accepted that a more detailed discussion would need to wait.

- The Glebe Field was also looking very neat and tidy. MC reported that the play equipment providers – HAGS – had finally done what they should have done a long while ago, and installed anti-wrap fittings to the swings, clearing the way for us to pay their bill.
- The Medical Centre and Church Road verges are looking ok, but the contractors – MBC Landscapes – have decided to withdraw from doing commercial work, and, as reported to F&GP, have asked that we find a replacement contractor for April next year onwards. MC reported that he has approached our other three contractors to see if they would be interested; so far, two have said yes, and we await a reply from the third. (They were given until the end of November to let us know.)

Woodlands Walk is also looking ok, but the duck houses are now looking very sorry for themselves. MC reported that MBC have said that they will have the houses out of the water by the end of this week. Cllr Dean noted that Mr Chandler has volunteered to lock and unlock the gates to the Walk, an arrangement that seems to be working well. She also noted that there is a large pink balloon on the lake, trapped in some branches – MC said he'd ask MBC to remove it while they're retrieving the duck houses.

- All the benches are looking in good condition.
- The war memorial was in a good condition for the Remembrance events a week or two ago.
- The A20 road side verges continue to be well maintained.
- The Saxon Place amenity land is also looking ok – MC noted that the contractors are cutting slightly more of the grass than actually required, leaving less to grow longer, but that was alright. He also noted that the community orchard is due to be strimmed this week, and he would also ask the contractors to cut back the brambles growing in to the footpath from the Fairbourne Lane entrance.

6. **Teers Meadow:** MC reported that he had walked the field and all looked ok. The cows have now been removed, and we have asked the Medway Valley Countryside Partnership to cut back some of the remaining growth, (this being a job we had considered asking the contractor who has cut the meadow in the past, but they can do it cheaper, and probably more sympathetically).

Mrs Amos reported that the maintenance day, on the 12th November, had been very poorly attended, with just herself and Derek, from the Medway Partnership, present. It had been advertised on Facebook, but had clearly generated no response. It was suggested that we try a “Future Events” laminated poster, with additional contact information, tied to each of the meadow’s access gates to see if that helps. MC will talk to our consultant to find out what events are left.

7. **Woodlands Walk water quality:** The committee considered the water quality report recently commissioned to assess the lake. The overall finding was that the water quality is poor, although wildlife continues to occupy – and seemingly thrive – in and on the lake. Recommendations for improving the quality had been made, and were considered. It was agreed that MC would ask the tree surgeons who are due to work in the area in January to also cut down the poplars that are growing along the south bank (by the public grass area), leaving the roots in place. He would also ask them to remove branches overhanging the lake in the Shaws – both might require TPO permission, but the surgeons would have to apply for that anyway. It was also agreed to consider the planting of some aquatic vegetation at our next meeting, in January, ready for doing so in the spring. There was a recommendation concerning putting in some floating islands, but the committee was concerned that, with three duck house, two aerators and a proper island, the lake was beginning to get congested, and it was agreed not to proceed with that.
8. **Glebe Field bins:** The council has received a request from the church to consider putting a bin on the Glebe Field, opposite the gate into the churchyard. This is an attempt to stop people putting plastic dog-poo bags in the church’s garden waste bin, causing MBC to refuse to empty it. After some discussion, it was agreed to **Recommend to Council** that we buy a new bin to supplement the one by the bench, located as suggested, subject to MBC agreeing to empty it. (If they insist on making a small charge, then we would accept it if necessary).

9. **Date of next meeting** – Monday 16th January 2023 at 7:30pm in the parish office.

Meeting closed at 9:00 pm.