

## Harrietsham Parish Council

### Environmental Committee

#### Minutes of meeting held on Monday 20th September 2021 at 2:30pm

- 1. Present:** Cllrs Dean (chairman), Dayes, and Stanley, M Cuerden (RFO/Amenity Manager)
- 2. Apologies:** Cllrs Luck, Foster, Sharon Amos  
**Members of the public:** None
- 3. Minutes of the last meeting** (30th November 2020) were signed (without amendment) as a true record. (Proposed Cllr Dean, seconded Cllr Dayes)
- 4. Disclosures:** Cllr Dean – personal interest in matters connected with Woodlands Walk.
- 5. Amenity Contracts (Update):** The Amenity Manager reported that the contracts seem to be progressing well. He noted that

The New Burial Ground and Garden of Remembrance seemed to be neat, tidy and well maintained. Cllr Stanley reported that he had been upset on several occasions by the inappropriate use made of the Garden by some people, including barbeques, camp fires etc. He wondered if the people involved hadn't realised that it was supposed to be an area of peace and tranquility. Whilst it was generally thought that it wouldn't make any difference, for the cost of a sign it was worth putting one up on the gate to see if it helped. The Amenity Manager was asked to produce something suitable.

The Amenity Manager noted that the time of year was now right to think about planting more trees in the New Burial Ground – he recalled that there had been two requests to sponsor a tree last year, but we had been unable to source large enough specimens in time. He had now asked the incumbent contractor for a price to supply and plant 3 flowering cherries, and would report back in due course.

The Glebe Field seemed to be neat, tidy and well maintained. The Amenity Manager noted that the shrub bed by the play area was looking somewhat untidy, but that it was due attention in September or October. He had mentioned it to the contractor “just in case”.

The medical centre and Church Road both seemed to be well maintained. The Amenity Manager noted that KCC had completed some drainage works on the run from Pilgrims Lakes up to Court Lodge Road which had left us with a flat verge and posts instead of a mound. Vegetation was coming both across the ditch and up from the ditch, with the result that although the contractor was cutting the verge, it still looked untidy.

Woodlands Walk was also being well looked after. Cllr Dean reported that the aerators seemed to be working well at the moment, and that the lake was mostly clear of algae – but we hadn't had a hot summer. It was now two or three years since we last gave it the chalk-based treatment, and under the advice we were given at the time, we should be doing another in February next year. It was agreed that we should do this, and the Amenity Manager undertook to get quotes from the two specialist suppliers we have used in the past. Cllr Dean also reported that the extension to Mr Trussler's fence – previously approved by the council – was now being erected (at the resident's expense). Once that work is complete, we should then get on with replacing the damaged, low wire fence running from the end of Mr Trussler's extension down to the Shaws gate and probably on to the lake. It was generally agreed that this should be a 2m high chain-link fence, a wood-panel one probably looking out of place. Cllr Dean has asked Fences R Us to provide a quote, and the Amenity Manager will look for two more.

The benches had all been treated, and some repaired by MBC at the same time. We are expecting the delivery of the bench for Cutbush Close shortly.

The War Memorial is looking neat and tidy. The memorial itself has been cleaned and is looking good, whilst the named bricks round the memorial are wearing better than the Amenity Manager had expected. Both Tommy and the new information board are present and correct.

The A20 verges continue to be cut – and continue to give the contractor problems. The area outside Lee Davey had been contaminated during trenching works by various stones, bricks etc. The contractor had then damaged a lawnmower on them, but we have subsequently got KCC to remove their (or their contractor's) rubble. We are now likely to have a similar problem up towards the old Victoria's site, where several mound of earth have appeared, probably as a result of the pavement works on the opposite side of the road. We also have an issue with the new Bellway estate, next to North Downs Cosmetics. Here the verge has been bordered with a low fence along the road, so, as per the contract, nothing is getting cut. Fortunately, we understand from Bellway that the fence is to be removed shortly, in which case we can cut the verge. However, it would only be back to the shrub/hedge line, which is itself very untidy – this is KCC's responsibility, but no doubt the residents will complain to us!

Truning to the Saxon Place amenity land, this too is mostly looking neat and tidy. The Amenity Manager reported that the community orchard, planted in February, was a slight cause for concern, in that the ground seemed to dry out very quickly, to the detriment of the trees. It was hoped that if they could survive this year, then as they grow, they will tap water further down, and it will be less of a problem in future years. He has also asked the contractor for a price to strim the plot as the weeds are getting quite tall.

- 6. Renewal of Open Spaces contracts:** The Amenity Manager explained that we needed to re-let the contracts with effect from April 2022. He had previously circulated draft specifications for councillors to look at. These were substantially the same as those currently in use, with the following main exceptions... (a) the allotments had been moved the A20 verges to the Saxon Place specification, as this seemed a logical way to arrange them. (b) Also on the Saxon Place spec, a new requirement to strim the parish office's back garden once a month had been inserted. (c) the narrow verge between the church wall and the road, opposite the Gelebe Field was KCC's responsibility, so therefore never got cut, and always looked untidy – this had now been added to the Glebe Field contract. It was also agreed that the two play area bins should remain in the contract – although we believe them to be emptied by MBC, we would prefer to ensure that they never get full. It was generally agreed that the specifications were satisfactory, and we could move forward with them. To this end, after final Council approval, we would place adverts in the KM (for two consecutive weeks) and October or November Downs Mail, as well as writing to our current contractors plus any others we know of. The contacts would also be advertised on our website.
- 7. Teers Meadow:** The Amenity Manager reported that we had now received the next grant installment of over £16,000. He would contact Mike Phillips to start the ball rolling on spending it, to ask what news there might be on the cows, and to confirm that we have an extension to the project's deadline.
- 8. Allotments:** The Amenity Manager reported that there appeared to be an issue with the tenants of plots 6a and 6c. (Cllr Dayes enquired as to what happened to 6b – the Amenity Manager didn't know!). Basically, the tenant of the larger portion had scaled back the area he was using, leaving part unused, whilst the tenant on the smaller section admitted to struggling with it, but was just about coping. Each had then started to complain about the other. Ideally, we would have handed this over to the Councillor with responsibility for monitoring the allotments, but unfortunately Cllr Foster wasn't present. After some discussion, it was agreed that we should go back to the tenant on the larger plot and offer him the choice of either returning to managing his whole plot, in line with his tenancy agreement, or reducing his plot to a size that would, together with the already un-used section, give us enough space to create and let another allotment (6d?). If he refused to do one or the other, then his tenancy would be terminated.

The annual rent – currently £18 per annum – was then discussed, and it was agreed to increase this to £20pa.

The clerk's request to purchase combination padlocks for the use of the tenants, allowing the council to have access to the plots, was noted and agreed.

The Amenity Manager noted that there was, at the top of the allotments, a bank which had formerly been maintained by Bam Nuttall before they moved. It seemed that this had not been sold with the building, so – presumably – was still in their ownership. The clerk had written to them to ask if they would continue to

maintain it, would like us to maintain it and bill them, or like to give it to the council, and we would maintain it. We wait for a response.

- 9. Fishing Woodlands Walk lake:** During a general discussion, it was noted that there had been a notable lack of communication from the proposed angling club, with no information about Risk Assessments or insurance being received. We had, though, had a set of draft rules which would form a reasonable basis for discussion. Feeling that this lack couldn't be a good sign, the general opinion of councillors was that the proposed fishing club shouldn't go ahead, and that the permission for a three-month trial should be withdrawn. It was, however, also agreed that this was one for Council as a whole to discuss.
- 10. Saxon Place play area:** The Amenity Manager reported that we still have not gained control of the (small) play area, although he knows that the residents' management company are still keen to do so. Once we have that, we can consider expanding it to make it more useful. Cllr Dean then raised the proposal of a football-type area. Cllr Dayes said that he'd walk down, have a look, and come back with some suggestions. Once we have those, we can think about getting prices and looking for grants etc.
- 11.** The Amenity Manager raised, as an emergency item, the KCC report recently received on the Church Road footpath. He observed that there seemed to be at least two inconsistencies in it, in that it referred to a lamp post on the east (Booth Field) side of the road – he doesn't believe there to be one – and to the KCC ownership of one of the three posts on the west side- he believes that all three are owned by this council. He also noted that, although the money aspects of the report are rightfully within the remit of F&GP, it was worth bearing in mind that the report concentrated solely on the possible costs for just the lighting, but also said that the costs of the other infrastructure were likely to be significant, making this a very expensive project. In the general discussion that followed, it was also noted that it was stated that the road was too narrow for a "proper" painted walkway, necessitating the use of broken white lines instead of solid lines, reducing their effectiveness. It was suggested that the Booth & Baldwin Trust be approached again to see if they would permit a path to be run on the inside of their fence – this being a much simpler and cheaper option. Generally, the committee felt that, from the environmental point of view, the proposal for a path on the road was unlikely to be viable.
- 12. Date of next meeting:** It was proposed to revert to the pattern laid out in Standing Orders, in which case the meeting is due on 18th November 2021, at 7:30pm in the parish office.

Meeting ended at 4:30pm.