

Harrietsham Parish Council

Environmental Committee

Minutes of meeting held on Tuesday 9th January 2020 at 7:30pm

1. **Present:** Cllrs Dean (Chairman), Dayes, Foster, Stanley and M Cuerden (Amenity Manager)
2. **Apologies:** None **Members of the Public:** None
3. **Minutes:** The minutes of the meeting held on 9th January were agreed at January's council meeting. Another set was signed (without amendment) for our records.
4. **Disclosures:** None
5. **Open Spaces Contracts:** The Amenity Manager reported that he had walked round almost all of the areas covered by the contracts (plus Teers Meadow). The contractors had started this year's work, and he noted that all areas were looking good. He specifically noted the following:
 - 5.1 **New Burial Ground and Garden of Remembrance:** He had been hoping to report that the new bench was in – but when he checked that morning, the old bench was still there (lying on its back), with no sign of the new one. He will chase MBC.
 - 5.2 **Glebe Field:** No further comment. He did, however, note that the HAGS dispute had come back to life, with the annual exchange of emails, (being, they ask what's happening about the outstanding invoice, and we respond by asking what's happening about our anti-wrap chains...).
 - 5.3 **Medical Centre and Church Road verges:** The Amenity Manager had no further comment, but Cllr Dean noted that there is an estate agent's For Sale board on the verge by the Booth Field entrance and asked that it be removed. MBC will be so requested.
 - 5.4 **Woodlands Walk:** The duck houses have been returned, and seem to be ok. The aerators have been looked at, and should be back in place next weekend. The same contractor will also be putting the annual chalk treatment in at the same time. A tree survey has been booked, and will hopefully be done in advance of the formal review deadline of August.
 - 5.5 **Benches:** All are still looking ok, but are due for another treatment within the next month or so (weather dependant). It was noted that the new one on the Glebe Field (and, for that matter, those in the play area) doesn't need doing as it is made of recycled material. The Amenity Manager will check the spec, as it might be that the old wooden one is still listed to be done. The new bench is mentioned above.
 - 5.6 **War Memorial:** The site itself is looking nice and tidy. It was noted that the old (ie 2018) wreathes are still in a pile to one side. The Amenity Manager reported that he had sought advice and been told that an appropriate time to remove the latest batch of wreathes would be after 5 or 6 months – ie March or April. He would therefore contact the contractors and ask them to remove both sets on their next visit. Cllr Dean reported that she had been looking at the History Society's draft of the proposed information board and would shortly make suggestions back to them. Generally, councillors understood that an A2-sized board was suggested, but wondered if an A3 board might be better, giving more room for the information.
 - 5.7 **A20 Verges:** With development work continuing, there is not much to report here; we shall have to continue as we did last year, ie the contractors will have to do what they can – carefully.
 - 5.8 **Teers Meadow:** Having walked round, the Amenity Manager reported that the field is recovering well from the clearance work. The fence still has a small gap by the foot entrance to the south-centre, but he is talking to the fencing contractor to try to address this. He also reported that the Friends of Teers Meadow inaugural meeting was somewhat less than successful, being attended only by Mike Phillips

and himself. However, this presented an opportunity to discuss progress to date, especially with regard to the budget. A supplier has been asked to do 6 sessions with the school at £200 per event, and these should be complete by the end of the school year (so June/July). Meanwhile the contract for the Interpretation Board(s) is about to be let, and these too should be in place by July(ish). That is halfway through the grant-period, and so will be an ideal time to review spend to date and cast new or updated plans for the second year. As to the Friends, one suggestion is that we have another launch on a sunny day, on the Meadow itself, with a free barbeque(!) – which Mike Phillips felt would be ok with the Lottery Fund from a finance viewpoint. On the subject of the interpretation boards, it transpired that not all councillors had seen the email detailing the tenders for the work. It was therefore decided to ask the clerk to circulate the relevant paperwork ready for a discussion and decision at March Council.

5.9 Saxon Place Amenity Land: The Amenity Manager reported that the trees – actually, twigs – had been received at the contractors. He had a meeting with JB L/scapes to discuss where exactly they were to go, and the contractor hoped to have them planted within a couple of weeks. We should end up with two rows of trees, with possibly enough to establish a small copse at the east end.

6. **Renewal of Contracts:** The Amenity Manager noted that the current contracts are about to enter their last year (of the three year period). We therefore needed to consider any amendments we would wish to see, and the timescale for letting the new contracts from April 2021. So far as amendments are concerned, it was generally felt that the new-style contracts were working well, with no obvious additions or changes required. The sole exception here was in relation to Saxon Place, where the current arrangement was still in its first year, and had represented an initial recovery phase. We will need a standard contract for this. (JB had already been asked for their comment, and they had agreed that no changes were required on their contracts, save for Saxon Place.) As to timescale, the Amenity Manager suggested something along the lines of June – September: develop amended specs in consultation with our three current contractors. October/November: seek tenders, which will include advertising the work. December/early January: contractors prepare tenders. Mid-January: evaluate tenders, and make recommendation to January Council. Early February: Let contracts, contractors make any necessary preparations. Start April 2021.
7. **New Allotments:** The clerk had contacted all those on the waiting list for an allotment, with underwhelming results. Some hadn't replied (presumed to be either no longer interested or moved), and all but one had indicated that they didn't like the uncertainty over water bills and would therefore probably not want one. It was therefore agreed by councillors that we should regard the new allotments as a dead idea, and to re-purpose the land, probably as a community orchard, perhaps planted with trees for apples/pears/walnuts/cobnuts/plums. It was therefore agreed to **Recommend to Council** that the allotment land be re-allocated as community orchard and that the environmental Committee be asked to pursue this. It was also agreed to **Recommend to Council** that the council has, as a formal target, the acquisition of some new allotments at a more suitable site, with water provided, to be achieved as part of any negotiations should the opportunity arise from further development within the village.
8. **Hanging Basket Competition:** It was generally noted that the take-up over the last two or three years for the competition had been disappointing at best –despite considerable effort being expended. It was therefore agreed that it probably isn't worth pursuing, and so no competition will be run this year.
9. **Items for Discussion:** None.
10. **Date of next meeting:** Was set for Thursday 28th May 2020, at 7:30pm in the parish office. However, the Amenity Manager noted that the Standing Orders do actually state when meetings should be, and that he was by no means sure that this date was in accordance with the schedule. He would check with the clerk, and let councillors know.