

Harrietsham Parish Council
Environmental Committee
Minutes of meeting held on Tuesday 9th July 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** (13th May 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, apart from a couple of areas, and then proceeded to go over each of the areas in turn, making supplementary comments as required:

5. **New Burial Ground:** The pursuit of an archaeological survey in the form of trenches continues! We have now found a man with a digger who can create the trenches, and then fill them in again afterwards, at considerably lower cost than that proposed by CDS. We have also contacted the church, who are prepared to provide welfare facilities (ie toilets and somewhere to make a cup of tea), so long as the dig takes place in August, when the pre-school is on holiday. The field itself will be closed at all three entrances for the 3-day period. We are now trying to arrange specific dates.

Within this contract is Percy the Pilgrim, up on Pilgrims Way. It had been reported that he was getting very overgrown, so MC had been to have a look. Whilst it wasn't as bad as had been reported, there was no doubt that he was in desperate need of a cut, with at least one clearly having been missed by the contractors. MC had contacted them, and the contractors acknowledged an error and said it would be rectified – which it was within a few days. Percy now looks neat and tidy.

6. **Garden of Remembrance:** Nothing to add to the above.
7. **Glebe Field:** MC reported that the contractors, JB, who had indicated that the new entrance matting and post-sockets would be done in August, with a possibility that it might be July, actually did it in June, two days before the (cancelled) Big Lunch. JB had, though, confirmed that the new matting was ready for immediate use, but would be seeded later in the year, (MC noted that it was already grassing itself over!).
8. **Play Area:** MC reported that he believed that the Clerk had now ordered new signs, but would check. He also reported that, so far as he was aware, all the maintenance items on the play equipment had now been done. SB said that he thought the trip hazards, notably around the roundabout, but also elsewhere, were still waiting to be completed – MC reiterated that he thought JB had completed the work, (and been paid), and we would need to check. It was also noted that the foot entrance to the play area gets very muddy, and causes problems after wet weather. Various alternatives were discussed, but it was felt that following our experience with the vehicle entrance, the best solution would probably be to put some matting down. MC undertook to get a price.
9. **Medical Centre & Church Road:** No further comment, aside from noting that, although the beds in the Centre car park were being tended, there was still the odd sycamore sapling growing in them.
10. **Woodlands Walk:** MC reported that, because of repeated reports of Giant Hogweed, he and the clerk had decided to go “belt-and-braces”. Although the contractor responsible for the area is also seeking to keep the Hogweed in check, we often get a discussion as to whether it really is, or just something that looks similar. The Council is therefore left in the position of not being certain that all has been dealt with. Medway Valley Conservation Partnership have approached us, offering a service to spray all Hogweed in the area. At only £200 per year – fixed for three years – we felt that this was a reasonable price for the certainty offered by having two different contractors seeking to control the problem. Hopefully they will simply duplicate each other's work, but if there is an incident, the Council will at least be able to say that it did it's best!

He also noted that there were a couple of issues on the maintenance of the area – most notably one of the life-rings not having the area round it cleared for easy visibility and access. He would contact the contractor.

11. **Benches:** So far as MC is aware, all benches under contract are in good shape.
12. **War Memorial:** MC reported that we had ascertained that Tommy had been supplied by an on-line company before the RBLI web-shop was opened. Although we suspect that there may have been at least an informal

arrangement between this company (now voluntarily dissolved) and RBLI, there is no proof. RBLI say that our Tommy is not one of theirs, and they are unable to help with parts. MC said that he would see if there was anywhere else in the Garden that Tommy could go – perhaps fixed to the information board - otherwise we might have to consider buying another one.

He also noted that the Garden is looking very untidy at the moment, and he had approached the contractors for both an explanation and immediate remedial action.

13. A20 Verges: Nothing to add to the above.

14. Saxon Place Amenity Land: MC had received Brogdale's report about the community orchard, in which they reported four dead trees and made some recommendations for further care and maintenance. MC had told them that was unlikely that we would be able to find sufficient volunteers to do the work ourselves, and had therefore asked for a price for them to. This had come in at about £1,700, for which they would clear a 60cmx60cm square around each of the 100 trees, add feed and then top with manure and bark, supply and install new tree guards and replace the four dead trees. The committee felt that was a reasonable price, and resolved to **Recommend to Council** that Brogdale's quote be accepted.

He noted that the Community Orchard was in need of a strim – which should have been done a couple of times this year already. He would contact the contractor.

15. Contract Specification: MC went through each of the contracts individually, reading them to the Committee, which made various comments as they were presented. MC undertook to revise the specifications with these comments in mind. The proposed timescale for the award of the new contracts is to have the Committee approve them in the September meeting, with Council ratification at the end of that month. We would then start the process of seeking tenders, covering the period October – November, with a view to having all responses in by mid December. Tender evaluation would then take place in January, with contracts awarded at the January Council meeting, ready to start on April 1st, to run for three years (2025/26, 2026/27 and 2027/28).

16. Teers Meadow: MC reported that the Meadow was starting to get overgrown again. He also thought that the management plan for controlling this was basically down to using cattle, but that eight would probably be insufficient. He hadn't yet contacted Mike Phillips, but he would do so. In the meantime, he and Mrs Amos would dig out the Management Plan and see if it offered a best time to ask Andrew French to come in with his flail mower for a one-off cut, if that is appropriate.

17. Best allotment award: SB said that in his view, the award could go ahead, despite there being quite a high turn-over of holders, who were taking over plots in a variety of conditions. He felt that the scoring methodology would allow for this. MC reported that we had been made aware that the Annual Show by the Gardening Society was going to be much scaled back this year, and not open to the public. Consequently, we couldn't award the prize then, so it was agreed that the best alternative would be to invite the winner to the September Council meeting.

18. Date of the next meeting: Tuesday 10th September 2024 in the Parish Office at 7:30pm. (Note that this a day later than we would usually aim to have it – the committee has been meeting on Monday evenings).

Meeting closed at 10:05 pm.