

**Friends of Marple Memorial Park
Thursday 13 April 2023
Marple Library**

Present: Mick Thompson, Lorraine Thompson, Micaela Wood, Joyce Reed, Bob Wilson, Diane Jackson, Alan Darnell, Mark Whittaker.

1.0 Apologies: Patrick O'Herlihy, Terry Wood, Cllr. Malcolm Allan.

2.0 Minutes of Meeting 9 February 2023: Agreed.

3.0 Matters Arising:

3.1 Antisocial Behaviour / CCTV / Police

ASB Update

Lowlight since the last meeting has been significant ASB in the library, to the extent that a security guard has been in attendance over the Easter holidays.

Local Police had an engagement session in the park on 22 March.

CCTV Update

Cllr Allan was not able to attend but has provided an update that Mark read out.

The gist of this is that the council's Estates Department are meeting with Stockport Homes to assess the "damage" (whatever that means) and a cost of reinstatement will soon be provided. Cllr Allan will be sticking to the stance that Area Committee paid for the repositioning of a camera on the basis that it would improve things (and work) so should not be charged for any remedial works to get back to that position.

This was the status in early March and Cllr Allan is chasing a further update.

It seems clear that we have been right all along and the CCTV has had major issues since the camera was relocated but we were fobbed off for several years.

[Post Meeting Note: The following update was received from Cllr Allan on 16 April: Good news is that the council estates team have agreed to fund the re-connection of the camera system. The new camera system on Hollins will then link back properly to the control room now run by Stockport Homes. I'm led to believe that this work will allow the control room to use each of the 11 cameras. I've not yet had confirmation as to whether the work has been completed, but I would hope, once it is, we can get back to arranging a view ourselves of what the cameras scan.]

Actions ongoing from Crime Survey recommendations

Artwork to Bowlers' Hut: Timber for framing and varnish for boards has been purchased and delivered to the park. We now need to get ourselves organised!

3.2 Buildings and Infrastructure

Pavilion Art Project Phase II:

Pelmets still to paint and install, this will be the next job after the artwork to hut.

Skatepark Jump-box repair:

A drawing and 3D mock-up image have been provided by Bendcrete, it is effectively like a "crown" over the existing Hubba. Programme timings are awaited as progress at Torkington Park skatepark has been delayed by the wet weather.

Drainage at woodland behind library

The drain cover has been overflowing with sewage again and this has been reported.

[Post Meeting Note: The blockage has again been cleared by UU and they have now agreed to carry out a permanent repair to the fault in the drain line under the pathway. A meeting was held between UU and SMBC attended by Mark on Wednesday 26 April and the work is expected to be carried out by the weekend.]

Long grass areas, reduced weedkiller usage, log seating

We have asked for the triangle of grass near to the band room to be an extra area left not mowed and this has been added to the maps. We will mow the edges of the area so that it looks like it has been done intentionally, rather than neglected.

We have agreed that the four oak logs we have stored at Brabyns Park Depot will be relocated in the centre of the park as informal seating. Mark is currently talking with Jon Headlam and TLC about them doing this for us but unfortunately their tractor has been out of commission for some time. We will give them a bit longer to sort the tractor problem out but may end up having to organise transport for ourselves.

Park Benches

Almost as soon as the base saga was resolved the next issued raised its head.

Mark asked the council when proofs would be available for the plaques and was told that they wouldn't be – plaques would be made to the provisional details provided.

Despite all the draft plaque inscriptions being labelled “proof required from supplier please” and it being mentioned in our emails too, it was also claimed that this had been agreed to by us. This was never the case and a very strongly worded response was sent explaining that the council would have to take full responsibility for errors.

Proofs were eventually received on 27 March and shared with the families. Approvals were returned to the council on 5 April and were acknowledged as passed on.

We are told delivery is 8 to 10 weeks from plaque approval, so this can be expected between 31 May and 14 June. We are also told there is a 4 week lead time for installation, so we can expect them to be installed mid to end of July 2023.

So far the whole process has proved to be much more difficult than expected with problems every step of the way. It was agreed that there will be no further discussions with potential donors on our waiting list until after the current batch have been satisfactorily installed. In the event of further difficulties during the remaining stages we will withdraw our involvement and refer donors families direct to the council.

We've had more enquiries about benches redirected to us via the council recently. We have 8 bench locations left and 9 potential donors on our waiting list so the council has been asked to stop referring enquiries to us and advise that the waiting list is full.

Community Hub

On 16 March it was announced the council has secured £20M funding. This is good news for the community and hopefully good news for the park but we remain unsure as we have been trying to get them to talk to us about their proposals for two years.

On 25 March the council advised that they will shortly announce timescales for pre-planning engagement with local stakeholders and residents, followed by the submission of a formal planning application and indicative timescales for construction.

We believe we are considered to be stakeholders and will therefore be consulted soon but we haven't heard anything yet. We remain concerned that we will soon be on a roller-coaster with no time for carefully considered discussion or change.

Hopefully we are wrong but we feel we face many uncertainties about the park's future well-being followed by an unknown period of considerable disruption.

The old pool is now being demolished. We wonder what is happening to things like the Macnair Memorial Plaque and Mark will make enquiries with councillors.

Toilet Block Bed

Unfortunately the wall was painted a contrasting colour over graffiti that was far less visible than the "solution" by the council. We despair at the lack of intelligence used.

We planted the replacement plants during our task day on 25 February and they seem to be taking well and will hopefully soon obscure the dark brown painted areas.

With the community hub going ahead it seems likely that the toilet block will be demolished, which is why we put our plans to refurbish it on hold. It is therefore likely that the planting at the back of the block will need to be relocated at some point.

Roundabout in infants play area

A new spindle is required at a cost of £980 plus installation. Richard Booker is raising an order but it is very frustrating at how long it has been out-of-order.

With the community hub going ahead and including a new play area (for which we have no details whatsoever) there will soon be a point when it may be no longer viable to continue spending money on existing equipment maintenance.

We wonder how long the park will be without play areas during construction?

3.3 Projects

Outdoor Exercise Equipment Project

A CAD site plan and further details were passed to Kompan, who have provided prices for a Phase I (City Bike with screen + Magnetic Bells c£17.1k), Phase II (Street Combi 2 c£10.6k) and Phase III (Cross Trainer + Arm Bike c£21.8k).

Prices have been provided for supply and installation and supply only (for installation by others). They also cover options for Phase I & II together (c£27.5k) and all three Phases (c£49.3k). Surprisingly the savings for doing Phase I & II together are limited.

Richard has issued a tender seeking prices from several potential contractors for the installation element of the works to see if we can save money this way.

Tenders are due on 28 April, after which we should be able to analyse the best option financially. If there are limited savings then it may be best to go for supplier install.

Better savings may allow us to opt for extra / better equipment in Phase II and Richard has asked Kompan to provide costs for the Street Combi 3 and 4.

Project Funding

It was agreed that we can increase our ring-fenced funds by £2,000 to £24,000.

Our application to the Macnair Trust for a contribution of £1,500 has been successful and the funds are currently awaited. [**PMN**: Now received.]

We have submitted an application to Marple Area Committee for a contribution of £1,000 that will be considered on Wednesday 19 April. [**PMN**: This was successful.]

With contributions offered by the council totalling £3,500 we should reach our budget target of £30,000 in the very near future. This will put us in a very good position to proceed with a combined Phase I plus an improved Phase II very soon.

Alternatively, we could possibly push ahead with an order for Phase I only while continuing to fund-raise for an even better Phase II to follow on a bit later.

It's likely the full Phase III (Cross Trainer + Arm Bike) will be beyond our reach but final decisions can only be made once the tenders due on 28 April are analysed.

Skatepark Art Mural

Our close-out report for the Magic Little Grant has been submitted to Local Giving.

We haven't been able to paint the ramps due to the weather but can hopefully get this done soon. Helen wants to start at the end of April and we should be OK for that.

Helen still needs to submit her PLI and a risk assessment to the council and Jon has clarified what is needed to her. [**PMN: Helen's paperwork is now approved.**]

Allotment beds

Our award of £500 from Stockport Hydro's Environmental Challenge 2023 was received at their award ceremony on Friday 17 March at Otterspool.

Construction of the beds has been completed and planting up started. We've also had a good tidy-up of the front bed during the last task day. Further planting will be done as the seasons dictate but we would still benefit greatly from some volunteers or supporters with allotment / vegetable growing knowledge to guide us.

Mark will look at closing out the award spends with Hydro sponsor Frank Thompson.

Mick advised that John Thompson (no relation) may be interested in supporting.

Infants Play Area picnic benches

Marple Area Committee kindly awarded the £800 requested from their Highways Delegated Budget for installation of a new synthetic surface on 6th March 2023.

Richard has advised that the work has been tied in with a larger bonded mulch job at Highfield Country Park that is due to be done by mid-May.

As mentioned earlier, a point when further maintenance spending on the play areas becomes uneconomical because of the plans for the Community Hub may soon be reached. We could possibly look at relocating the benches and play tops once we have more details about what will be happening in the park and when.

Refurbishment of the stocks

Terry was not able to attend but has said he will soon be purchasing the timber.

Covid Commemoration Project: Flag Pole & Memorial

Jon Headlam, Cllr Allan, Gill and Mark met with Maysland on 22 February and agreed that the new monument should be closely matched to the small war memorial.

We received a design based on this that is good but the proposal for a small flowerbed behind it doesn't work. After building a full-size mock-up we have concluded that the small flowerbed would work much better in front of the monument instead.

A report on progress so far was prepared on 7 March and issued to Cllr Allan, who has subsequently shared this with his Marple North colleagues Cllrs. Senior and Gribbon.

A copy of the report plus photos of the mock-ups were shared with attendees.

The report includes the proposed draft wording for the inscription on the stone:

This memorial remembers the lives lost in Marple during the Covid19 Pandemic, celebrates the way our communities came together and thanks NHS & Key Workers for their efforts to keep us all safe.

We are not sure if the amount of text can be accommodated yet but it was agreed that a date should really be included on the monument.

It was suggested that a thought provoking quote could be included if there is room and Larry will put forward ideas for something suitable.

It was suggested the planting could include rosemary, which is for remembrance, plus

white flowers for mourning and purple too, which has become associated with COVID. It has been agreed that it will be easier to fine-tune the design of the monument if the new flag pole is in place, so Jon has recently place an order for this. *[PMN: the new flag pole was installed on Wednesday 19 April but there are some technical issues that have prevented the work planned for the war memorial flag pole maintenance. The latter is now pending an update and more details from the installer.]*

3.4 Task Days

Last task days were 25 February and 25 March. Next Saturday will be our first mid-month one this year and we'll have two per month going forward until November.

We're expecting several new volunteers to attend on Saturday 29 April.

4.0 Funding - Status of Funds

Income since last meeting:

£45.00	Band Room Garden Maintenance.
£35.00	Donations from Coffee Bean Dream.
£20.00	Easy Fundraising.
£74.82	Local Giving.
£100.00	Donation from Chris Hague.
£540.00	50-50 Club (including donations).
£100.00	Donation from Marple Carnival.
£500.00	Stockport Hydro Award.

Expenditure since last meeting:

£25.98	Tools and Materials (2 x shears).
£13.93	Plants & Seeds.
£383.65	Allotment beds (sleepers, brackets and fixings).
£86.15	Timber and varnish for gable-end artwork.
£172.80	Topsoil for allotment beds.
£163.16	Public Liability Insurance.

Balance in main account: £25,179.70

Committed future spends:

£24,000.00	Ring-fenced for Outdoor Exercise Equipment.
£180.00	Local Giving annual fee.
£200.00	Budget for replacement of stocks timbers.

Unallocated working balance: £899.70

The 2022 Year End accounts have been certified by the McInnes Partnership.

Di now has access to the main Barclays bank account and we have been able to make our first dual approved transactions on reimbursement of expenses above.

5.0 Any Other Business

5.1 2022 Proud of Marple Awards

Well done to all our volunteers for winning the Volunteer Team of the Year Award!

5.2 Family Treasure Hunt: 27 May 2023

We will hold the Treasure Hunt on Saturday 27 May this year, which is also a task day.

Diane and Mark will be launching promotion and sponsorship very soon.

Hopefully we will have Face Painting and a Cake Sale too, and maybe some new ideas.

5.3 Little Growers

Joyce is proposing to ask children to grow wallflowers from seed for the park this year. They could be sown in June / July and then planted in the park in autumn.

This sounds like a great idea and hopefully can be progressed, perhaps at the Family Treasure Hunt on 27 May as well as on normal or special task days.

5.4 Carnival and Makers Markets

Mark will speak to the Carnival Team about having a stall and showing them the proposed locations of new benches and exercise equipment so that they can take this into account in their site layouts and plans.

We also need to let Kala know which Makers Markets we would like to attend.

5.5 Hiroshima Survivor Tree

At the suggestion of Larry and Stockport Peace we have asked for our park to be considered as the recipient of Stockport's Hiroshima Survivor Tree, which is part of an initiative by the Mayors for Peace in Greater Manchester.

We have registered our interest with Anthony Crook, who has advised that the location of the planting has yet to be decided as Stockport has several war memorial parks and so needs to be fully reviewed. We have asked to be kept informed.

5.6 Open Gardens in Marple

Open Gardens in Marple is over the weekend of 8th and 9th July this year. Mark and Gill will be opening their garden but we have also been asked to do what we did in the park last time, which was to be an information point and ticket seller.

Mark will be able to help set-up the gazebo and flit between home and the park but we will need other volunteers to staff the stand throughout the two days.

5.7 £500 Magic Little Grant 2023

The Magic Little Grant scheme is open again but we cannot apply for a contribution toward a larger project like the exercise equipment as the £500 has to be at least 10% of the total project cost. We need to review suitable projects in the park.

5.8 Greenspace Volunteer Awards

There is a new council scheme for groups and individuals. Mark will nominate FoMMP.

5.9 External changes to Hollins House

Mark recently noticed new fire escape doors have been fitted to Hollins House along side the car park that are not in keeping with what was there before and look quite industrial and unsightly. It has been reported to Councillors and the Conservation Officer Paul Hartley and Paul has given verbal assurances that the doors will be replaced with ones that are in keeping with what was there previously.

We will keep this on our agenda so we can monitor progress.

6.0 Next Meeting

Thursday 11 May 2023 at around 5.50pm for 6pm start in Marple Library.

Dates for 2023 (library bookings all confirmed):

Thursdays: 11 May, 8 June, 13 July, 10 August, 14 September, 12 October, 9 November & 14 December.