

**Friends of Marple Memorial Park AGM
Monday 14th February 2011
Marple Library**

Present: Micaela Wood, Bob Wilson, Jonathan Long, John Boardman, Cllr. Andrew Bispham, Adrian Ellis, Mark Whittaker.

1.0 Apologies: Patrick O'Herlihy.

2.0 Minutes of the last meeting: Agreed.

3.0 Matters Arising.

3.1 Improvements to the Park Entrance

Carver Commemoration – The final artwork for the new display sign was reviewed and approved by the group. It was agreed to add a note identifying the park keeper's cottage as the Charles Ingham Band Room. This has been agreed with the Brass Bands of Marple.

Paul Howard Menswear and Marple Local History Society have also reviewed the final artwork. MLHS are particularly pleased that the panel will be dedicated to the late Peter Bardsley, who was a well-known member of the history society as well as a Friend of the Park.

Mark will approve the artwork and finalise arrangements with the supplier. The cost will be £2,140 + delivery + VAT but as the order has been placed through the council we will not need to pay the VAT.

Drainage Improvements – Not discussed at this meeting – waiting for the new financial year to see if Jonathan can find funding to cover it.

Existing Notice Board – Adrian agreed to remove the existing notice board within the next few weeks, ready for the arrival of the new one. It will be stored for refurbishment and re-use elsewhere in the park.

3.2 Ornamental Flowerbeds

Woodbank Park Nursery is being closed. It has now also been identified that as part of the response to budget cuts many of the flowerbeds throughout Stockport's parks are to be grassed over to save money.

The council's plans for Marple Memorial Park were to keep the main circular bed with the birdbath and two of the others (one either side of the path running from Hollins House towards the war memorial). The remaining seven ornamental beds in the same area were to be grassed over. The three flowerbeds that were to be kept will be planted up by the council with herbaceous shrubs, perennial plants and bulbs so that it is no longer necessary to replant the beds once or twice each year, as has been the case in the past.

Mark met with Jonathan and Adrian last Friday to discuss these plans and a "stay of execution" has been agreed for the seven beds. They will not be grassed over for at least a season to allow the Friends of the Park the opportunity to adopt them and keep them going.

Jonathan and Adrian have also agreed that some of the beds could be put to different use – growing vegetables for example.

A budget cost for planting a bed with herbaceous shrubs, perennials and bulbs in the same way as planned by the council is £250 - £300 each.

Mark proposed the following, which was agreed by the group:

Two of the beds will be offered to children's community groups to grow a mix of plants and vegetables and to maintain the beds themselves. Leaders of Marple Beavers and Marple Rainbows have both expressed an interest in this and further discussions are to be held with them.

The remaining five beds will be planted in the same way as the three being done by the council but will be funded and maintained by the Friends of the Park. The budget cost of this is £1,250 to £1,500.

We have sufficient funds in place to do this but it would make a big dent in our reserves, so it was proposed to seek help from a variety of sources for additional money to fund these costs wherever possible.

Mark has submitted an Area Flexibility Fund application to Marple Area Committee asking for £600 towards the cost of plants for two of the beds. Cllr. Bispham advised that there was money left in this year's flexibility budget and this was a use that the committee would consider.

Micaela has also been making enquiries via a contact at the Lions to see if they would be interested in making a contribution towards planting.

Mark suggested that donations might be encouraged if they could be acknowledged by installing a discrete low wooden rail in one of the beds that could be used to display engraved plaques. This would also present an opportunity for donations to be made in memory of a loved one, in a similar way that benches have been donated in the past. Jonathan will investigate if there are any constraints in respect of businesses making donations and this being "advertised" on a plaque.

In order to achieve the benefits of bulk ordering it was agreed that plants and shrubs for the five adopted beds should be ordered through the council at the same time as those for the three beds being done by them. Jonathan will firm up the price for this and confirm the details before ordering. The council would then invoice the group for their share of the costs.

Cllr. Bispham advised that it might be possible to get help with planting and maintenance via the Princes' Trust Volunteers. Fire fighter Jon Bintliff is the local contact for this.

3.3 Park Toilets

Cllr. Bispham advised that he would be attending a meeting later this evening to discuss and vote on the decisions to be taken regarding the closure of public toilets. He and Cllr. Candler would be doing their best to ensure that the Memorial Park toilets remained open but could not give any guarantees of success.

Cllr. Bispham also advised that the information with regard to a public toilet having to be replaced by access to three others has proved to be misleading. He and others who voted for the Community Toilet Scheme believed that the three toilets had to be in the vicinity of the existing public toilet for its closure to be allowed but they are now being told that a toilet in Mellor could be closed if three new ones were added to the share scheme anywhere in the borough: Cheadle for example. The group agreed with Cllr Bispham that this was ludicrous.

The group rejected the possibility of the toilets being adopted and kept open by the Friends of the Park. The suggestion of purchasing the toilet block and putting the building to alternative use was also discussed but was thought unlikely to be viable either.

Jonathan and Adrian will check on ownership of the building, as Adrian thought it might belong to Parks and Recreation.

3.4 Park Benches

Terry and Mark conducted a survey of the park's benches during the last task day. A full report is still to be written up but in summary, the park has 33 benches needing varying levels of maintenance. 24 of these are commemorative, having been donated by organisations or members of the public in the past, and 9 are not. One of the non-commemorative benches needs to be replaced but all others are serviceable.

A problem with many of the benches is that water-based treatment has been applied to them in the past and this is now badly flaking off. It was agreed that most of the hardwood benches would need extensive sanding and preparation followed by treatment with oil-based solutions to bring them back to good condition. The Friends group are prepared to take this on as a long-term task and asked if the council would be able to provide the materials needed. Jonathan was hopeful that this will be possible and will speak to Gareth of Playground Maintenance about it.

It was agreed that there is little room in the park for new benches and anyone getting in touch about a commemorative bench for friends or family will be asked to consider replacing or adopting one of the non-commemorative benches already in the park. In the majority of cases

this would entail replacing the wooden slats with good quality hardwood and fitting of a commemorative plaque. This is work that Terry could arrange through the David Lewis Centre charity. People will also be offered alternative suggestions for commemorating loved ones, such as donations towards shrubs and plants for the ornamental flowerbeds or picnic benches (see next item).

3.5 Picnic Benches

Potential sites for two or three picnic benches were identified in the park during the meeting between Jonathan, Adrian and Mark last Friday. In addition, it was felt that there was a shortage of seating inside the infants play area and a picnic bench in there would be of benefit to families using it. Jonathan will speak to Gareth about this to identify if it would be permitted and if there are any particular specifications that would need to be complied with inside the play area.

Once again, these can be provided by Terry through the David Lewis Centre, who supplied the excellent benches in use at the Ring o' Bells.

3.6 Sculptures and Wooden Features

There is now a long list of wooden features in the park that require treatment and work on this can commence during the next task day if the weather is suitable and volunteers sufficient. Mark will discuss this further with Patrick, who enjoys this particular task but was not able to attend the meeting.

Initial priorities are the infants play area sign and the Breathing Places bird box but the following items will also need to be treated during the year:

Owl sculpture and ground sculptures.
Apple and Pear sculptures.
Stocks.
Breathing Places sculpture.

3.7 Painting of Bowling Green Buildings

It was proposed to target the April task day for recommencing the painting of the Bowling Green buildings. Plenty of painting materials remain and it will simply be weather and volunteer dependant.

3.8 Task Days

Previous Task Days

29 January 2011

The first task day of the year went well with a tidy-up of the Park Cottage garden, the memorial beds and pruning of saplings near to the composting heap and along the boundary with the canal. Two new volunteers joined in, including John who attended tonight's meeting.

John highlighted that raising awareness of the group's activities could help to gain more volunteers, explaining that although he lives close by he had not been aware of the group until talking to Bob in the park.

It was agreed that this would benefit from further effort, as new volunteers are a rarity. As we are proposing to take on additional work with the ornamental beds and maintenance of benches then extra pairs of hands will be most welcome and make lighter work of these tasks.

It is a long time since the last newsletter was published and distributed to the houses surrounding the park and a new one would help to raise awareness amongst the park's immediate neighbours. The new web site should also help to attract new visitors and "Social Networking" could also be of benefit in raising the profile of the groups' activities.

Next Task Days

26 February 2011

It is proposed to focus on getting the ornamental beds ready for planting and commencing preservation of the wooden features in the park.

Free parking for specific vehicles has been arranged and the task day email has been sent out.

3.9 Park Cottage

Latest news from the Brass Bands of Marple is that they are currently studying the small print of the final draft lease. They are also dealing with building regulations and obtaining quotes for the work on refurbishment of the cottage, which should commence in the near future. Fundraising for the extension will get underway in parallel with this and discussions are ongoing regarding residential planning permission for the site behind the Edge that is owned by the Bands.

4.0 Funding

4.1 Status of Funds

| | |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------|
| Current bank balance: | £4,408 |
| Committed Funds: | £2,140 (Entrance Display Panel*) |
| Working balance: | £2,268 |

* Delivery charge will also need to be covered.

Income since the last meeting includes £57 from the Ring o' Bells Quiz Nights and £185 from Ian Hilton. Ian's donation results from his generous gesture of paying for everyone's meal at the belated Christmas Party on 8 January at the Hare & Hounds, Mill Brow. This allowed everyone else's contributions towards the bill to be donated to the park. A formal letter of thanks has been sent to Ian on behalf of the group.

The 2010 yearend accounts have been submitted to The McInnes Partnership for the annual audit needed prior to the AGM.

5.0 Any Other Business

5.1 Rotary Club Crocus Sign

Playground Maintenance has erected the crocus sign on the nature post in the Breathing Places area. This is not where it was expected to be put but is a satisfactory location and our thanks are extended to Gareth.

Micaela reported that the crocuses are now beginning to show.

5.2 Marple Civic Society Design Awards 2010

The group has been invited to the Civic Society's Design Awards presentation in Marple Library at 7.30pm on Thursday 24 February. The park as a whole was nominated in the Urban Landscape category and the Tree Sculpture was nominated in the Public Art category. Mark, Gill and Gavin will attend on behalf of the group and Terry may also attend – Micaela will ask him to confirm.

5.3 Canal Display Panel Damage

Bob advised that the display panel near to the Lock 10 entrance has been subject to further vandalism recently. Unfortunately this panel has received more attention than others, probably due to its remote location. The group will check and consider replacement of the panel.

5.4 Skate Park Extension

Mark advised that he has asked Jonathan to discuss the development of proposals for extending the skate park with the Parks and Recreation Landscape team so that funding to do this could be investigated. Users of the existing facility will also need to be engaged to establish their aspirations. Jonathan has contacted Vanessa and understands that the Landscape Team will be busy with the final stages of "Playbuilder" until end of March but was hopeful that they would be able to help with this early in the new financial year.

5.5 Meeting about Tree Work on Dan Bank

Cllr. Bispham identified that he has arranged for an extended councillors' surgery / meeting at 10.15 am in Marple Library on Saturday 19th February to discuss issues raised by the tree works on Dan Bank.

Cllr. Bispham would like to see better communication with residents before tree work is undertaken in the future and hopes that this meeting will be the first step towards understanding how to achieve that aim.

Cllr. Bispham requested support from the Parks and Recreation Team at the meeting and also from anyone else with experience or positive ideas and suggestions that would be helpful.

7.0 Date of next Meeting:

Monday 14th March 2011 at 6pm in Marple Library.

The AGM is normally held in March but due to the impending arrival of a new grandchild at around the same, Mark asked if it could be postponed until the April meeting date to avoid a potential clash of loyalties! This was agreed and the AGM will be Monday 11 April 2011. A normal meeting will still be held on 14 March.

Future meeting dates in 2011:

14 March
11 April (AGM)
09 May
13 June
11 July
08 August
12 September
10 October
14 November
12 December