

Friends of Marple Memorial Park
Thursday 9 February 2023
Marple Library

Present: Mick Thompson, Lorraine Thompson, Micaela Wood, Terry Wood, Bob Wilson, Diane Jackson, Cllr. Malcolm Allan, Mark Whittaker.

1.0 Apologies: Patrick O'Herlihy, Joyce Reed.

2.0 Minutes of Meeting 12 January 2023: Agreed.

3.0 Matters Arising:

3.1 Antisocial Behaviour / CCTV / Police

ASB Update

Following the last meeting we were advised by the Police that they are dealing with an assault in the park by one young person on another. There has also been a spate of graffiti on the Boules Court lectern, the back of the toilet block and the library. The Boules Court Lectern was cleaned up using our graffiti removal spray and the others will be actioned by the council's hygiene team as soon as possible.

CCTV Update

Cllr Allan advised there is still no news or known progress on the CCTV situation. Our conclusion at present is that the problems are technically challenging and there has been something wrong for several years that was covered up by the previous contractor. It would be better if the new contractor was to make it clear what the issues are, rather than continue in a similar way. As Marple Area Committee money was involved Cllr Allan proposed to ask for a report to MAC explaining the issues.

Actions ongoing from Crime Survey recommendations

Artwork to Bowlers' Hut: Targetted to complete by early spring 2023. The funding for this was included in our bid to Stockport Hydro. *[Post Meeting Note: The Hydro bid has been successful but our award has been scaled back due to high demand. This will not prevent us going ahead with this item and materials have been ordered.]*

3.2 Buildings and Infrastructure

Pavilion Art Project Phase II

No change - pelmets still to paint and install.

Skatepark Jump-box repair

Richard Booker has begun a dialogue with contractor Bendcrete about repair to the original jump-box. They are proposing to develop a design that overlays the existing one, a bit like a crown on a tooth. More details are awaited from the council.

Drainage at woodland behind library

No change and no problems so far. Monitoring ongoing.

Use of weedkiller in the park

A copy of the agreement on use of weedkiller and the plans of areas not to be mown have been placed on the wall of the Mess Room shared with TLC Operatives.

Due to problems experienced by other groups the plans have also been requested by the Neighbourhood Team and shared with Jon Headlam for onward transmission.

It will be interesting to see how things develop this year with the reduction of weedkiller use agreed and several areas being left for the grass to grow long.

Park Benches

The situation with the bases for the benches has been resolved and we can have the paved option we requested, albeit with an additional charge of £140 per bench.

This has been accepted by all four families we are currently speaking to and all details have been agreed with them and passed onto the council to implement.

Since then the council has advised that there is a delivery issue with oak slats at present, so we have agreed that Iroko is an acceptable alternative.

Town Centre Benches

Nothing new.

Community Hub

The second round Levelling Up bid was not successful. The next steps are unclear at present but our concerns about engagement remain and we submitted the following Public Question to the Marple Area Committee Meeting on 25 January 2023:

In March 2021 Friends of Marple Memorial Park wrote to the Community Hub team suggesting an alternative location within the park for the scheme and explained the advantages we felt this would give over existing proposals.

We asked for discussion asap and followed up again in October 2021 when this didn't happen. Since then we have regularly asked for further dialogue but that has been refused. We have become increasingly concerned since we got wind in 2022 that our suggestion may have been partly implemented but misunderstood.

Now that the outcome of the Levelling Up bid gives time for pause and reset, can Councillors please ensure the team engage with us urgently to determine if our suggestions have been misinterpreted and to avoid potential conflict with our group during the next round of consultations and planning for the scheme?

There is no formal response yet but comments on the night were encouraging.

Cllr Allan advised that a dialogue with Government about levelling up is ongoing but he couldn't say more at this stage. He was able to confirm that the council team working on the scheme consider us to be stakeholders and have given him assurances that engagement with us will be resumed as soon as possible.

It was suggested that it may be more practical to build a new pool on the existing Stockport Road site, which could potentially be used much more efficiently.

3.3 Projects

Skatepark Sign

Complete and installed during the last task day. A page has also been added to the projects section of our web site and Earl has confirmed he is happy with the outcome.

The cost was £147.60, which was a small saving on the £190 we budgeted.

Outdoor Exercise Equipment Project

Mark and Mike have visited additional installations at Bradford Park in Manchester, Werneth Park in Oldham and Mersey Vale Park in Stockport. They were impressed with the Magnetic Bells at Werneth Park and even more so by the City and Street Bikes there that include screens to enable the resistance settings to be changed.

Mark met with Richard and Jon on 23 January to go over our findings. We concluded a strong preference for the high quality (but high cost) of the Kompan equipment.

On Monday this week Richard, Jon and Mark met with Kompan's representative Millie to develop our options and preferences further. We took the opportunity to emphasize that our park could be Kompan's first in Stockport, a borough with more than 70 Friends Groups, and could potentially offer a them a good show-site.

We have asked for further pricing and options to see if we can develop a scheme that could be built in phases, as we are able to raise the funds. We are also proposing to change the layout to facilitate a phased build by creating a series of exercise stations off the main path, rather than building on a single site as originally planned.

It is proposed that the core of phase one should be the Magnetic Bells and a City Bike with screen, which have limited variables. The bikes do work without a screen by using a smart phone to adjust the settings but we feel the built-in screen is a big advantage for inclusivity and also security. The next phase would probably be a Street Exercise station, which could have more options and variables depending on budget.

We are also looking at Kompan possibly supplying only, with the council doing the installation with their own contractor if this will save money.

We are currently waiting for Richard to prepare a CAD site plan of the exercise station locations along the path, which can then be passed to Kompan for them to update our prices and options as discussed with them at the meeting on 6th February.

Project Funding

With the recent donation of £450 from Marple Stationery Supplies we can now ring-fence a further £1,000, taking our own funding for the project to £22,000.

We have submitted an application to the Macnair Trust for support to this project.

Stockport Homes has done some grant investigations and made recommendations for us to follow-up. We also need to talk to other local groups who may help.

Stockport Council has agreed to allocate £2,500 in support of the project.

Skatepark Art Mural

The ramps have been cleaned by the council.

It is proposed to paint the ramps grey again on the next task day.

Helen still needs to submit her PLI and a risk assessment to the council.

We can now close-out the Magic Little Grant following an update from Helen.

Allotment beds

Work started on the first half of the raised beds using the materials recycled from the School Gardens Project during the last task day. Paving was laid and foundation begun. Bernard and Mark continued the foundation last Thursday and today. They plan to return on Saturday morning to install the first set of sleepers.

We now have all the recycled paved slabs we need from the council.

We have spent £36 on some seed potatoes, onion sets, vegetable seeds and fruit bushes at the Marple Allotment Seed Potato Day last Sunday.

The second half of the raised bed will go ahead if our Stockport Hydro 2023 Environmental Challenge Award application is successful. We should hear in March.

[Post Meeting Note: The Hydro bid was successful but our award has been scaled back from £675 to £500 due to high demand. The first bed was completed on Saturday 11 February. Sleepers for the second bed have now been ordered and other materials will follow. A Project page has been set-up on our web site and shared with the Hydro. The cheque presentation will be Friday 17 March at the Hydro. We have appealed for volunteers interested in getting involved on the web site and social media.]

Infants Play Area picnic benches

We have now agreed the best solution to resolve the problem of the loose stone under the benches, which is to cover with a synthetic surface at a cost of £800.

A report will be submitted to Marple Area Committee requesting that councillors please consider supporting this from their Highways and Delegated Budget.

The second bench top will be installed after the above work is done.

Wildflower meadows

No change – we look forward to developing new ideas this year.

Covid Commemoration Project: Flag Pole & Memorial

The overall budget for this project is £5,000 (the sum available to each Ward).

Jon Headlam has obtained a price of £1,400 to install a replacement flag-pole. This includes refurbishment of the war memorial flag-pole, which is in better condition but is in need of some maintenance. We are very pleased that this is included too.

We launched a new page on our web site about the project today seeking comments and feedback from the local community and will update this as the project develops.

<https://marplememorialpark.org.uk/projects/covid-commemoration-project.html>

Jon is now talking to Maysland (who repaired the small memorial) about costing for a small monument to go in front of the flag pole. If we have more than one option we may consult on this and will also seek comments and feedback on the inscription.

We have already had a comment that we should include white flowering plants such as lilies. Micaela mentioned that the colour purple is associated with Covid and that could be considered too. Cllr Allan will investigate if there are figures available for Marple losses during the pandemic but we probably won't include numbers on the memorial.

[Post Meeting Note: Jon, Cllr Allan, Gill and Mark met with Maysland on Wednesday 22 February and agreed that the new monument will be matched closely to the existing small war memorial. We are now awaiting a sketch for review and comment.]

Replacement of the timber on the stocks

The replica timbers on the stocks in the park were made for us by Tony Heginbotham in 2004. Considering they are softwood they've lasted well but are now decaying.

Terry has looked into replacement of these and feels that it would be better to use hardwood if we can afford it. He has found that oak would be ridiculously expensive but Tomlinson Parbans have recommended a less expensive hardwood called Sapele at a cost of £148.72 including VAT for two 9" x 3" x 5ft sections.

This was debated and then agreed that Terry would proceed with this using hardwood and a total budget of £200 would be set aside to cover the timber and ancillary costs.

It was agreed that the design of the existing timbers will be followed as this matches photos of the first replica timbers that were fitted when the stocks were moved from the Ring o' Bells to the park. There are no known images of the original timbers and even back in 1899 Joel Wainwright sketched them at the Ringers without timbers.

The existing ironmongery will be reused wherever possible but the existing modern padlocks will have to be cut off. We will see if we can find some vintage versions.

3.4 Task Days

We are now up and running for 2023 with an excellent turn-out of 20 volunteers on Saturday 28 January. The next one is 25 February. Our Task Day application has been approved and parking needs to be arranged. *[PMN: completed to End of April.]*

4.0 Funding - Status of Funds

Income since last meeting:

£62.96	Local Giving.
£450.00	Stationery Supplies donation (2023 calendar sales).
£233.00	50-50 Club Draw for January.

Expenditure since last meeting:

£147.60	Skatepark sign by HB Printing.
£36.00	Allotment seeds etc.
£21.96	Peat-free compost for potting-up.
£8.00	Bulbs.
£13.00	Paper bags for craft sales (from last year).

Balance in main account: £24,710.49

Committed future spends:

£22,000.00	Ring-fenced for Outdoor Exercise Equipment.
£300.00	Budget for Allotment Bed.
£200.00	Budget for replacement of stocks timbers.

Unallocated working balance: £2,210.49

Mark and Diane visited Barclays in Stockport on Friday 3 February to confirm her ID so that we could submit the mandate change to add her to the signatories.

A cheque for £226.56 covering the expenditure above was signed at the meeting.

Mark is currently working on the 2022 Year End accounts ready for submission to The McInnes Partnership for their examination and certification.

5.0 Any Other Business

5.1 Toilet Block bed

The council has ordered and received the replacement plants we requested. They will deliver to the park ready for our 25 February task day.

5.2 Dead tree in car park

The trunk has now been cut-down to around 30" and is much less of an eyesore. Cllr Allan advised that as well as finances, the council need to do a proper soil survey of the location to see if it is OK to replant there, which will be next year now. We agreed to accept this situation, although we did wonder if it is a good location to plant a new tree and maybe a substitute location should be considered.

5.3 Volunteer recruitment

Diane and Mark will have a chat about this at the next opportunity.

5.4 Carnival and Makers Markets

It was agreed to have a stall at the Carnival and we need to let Kala know which Makers Markets we would like to attend. A craft sub-group was suggested too.

6.0 Next Meeting

Thursday 9 March 2023 at 6pm for 6.15pm start in Marple Library.

Dates for 2023 (confirmed library bookings shown in bold):

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