

**Friends of Marple Memorial Park Meeting
Monday 10 January 2022
Marple Library**

Present: Mick Thompson, Lorraine Thompson, Micaela Wood, Bob Wilson, Cllr Malcolm Allan (part-time), Mark Whittaker.

1.0 Apologies: Joyce Reed, Patrick O'Herlihy, Terry Wood, Diane Jackson.

1.1 Minutes of last meeting 11 October 2021: Agreed.

3.0 Matters Arising:

Due to the limited attendance and Cllr Allan only being able to stay for the first half hour it was agreed to focus on a reduced agenda covering ASB and other key items.

3.1 Antisocial Behaviour in the Park / Arson / Criminal Damage / CCTV

The first signs of unusual activity in the park were noticed during the spring of 2021 with damage to flowerbeds and soil thrown all over the war memorial. Since then Antisocial Behaviour in the park has escalated to an unprecedented level.

Criminal Damage and Vandalism

Extensive criminal damage has been done to buildings including Hollins House, the Police Station, the Scout Hut, the Band Room and the Library. Hollins House has so many boarded up windows it looks like a war zone. *(PMN: 4 more windows in Hollins House and 3 more in the Scout Hut were broken on Tuesday night 11th January.)*

Two attempted break-ins to our Bowling Pavilion Store shared with TLC have done severe damage to the doors. They've been repaired twice but are now having to be completely replaced as they can no longer be opened and closed properly.

Fencing between the Mess Room and the Bowlers' Hut has been ripped off the wall.

The Infants Play Area fence was vandalised earlier this year and the sections around the swings area had to be completely replaced. Just before Christmas the new section of fence was attacked again, all slats being kicked off, and had to be rebuilt again.

Arson

At least four commercial bins have been pushed into the park and set on fire. These arson attacks have resulted in damage to the main tarmac path into the park and serious damage to the new top section of the skatepark. A temporary repair was carried out to the skatepark but an expensive permanent repair is still needed. Remaining bins were moved over Christmas to prevent them being used for further arson attacks, so the temporary barriers at the skatepark were set on fire instead. *(PMN: We note some time this week the council has returned the bins to the park without extra security measures and hope it does not lead to further arson attacks.)*

Abuse and assaults

Although we have limited details we understand that park users have been subject to verbal abuse and assault, as have some TLC Operatives and even the police.

CCTV

We've had concerns about the performance of the CCTV in the park, which has failed to help with any of these incidents, and have been asking for a review of the CCTV coverage incessantly for over 12 months. We were promised that a review would take place numerous times but it has continually been met with resistance and excuses.

A council review finally took place just before Christmas. We were excluded from this on grounds of privacy, despite being extensively involved in the purchase and set-up

of the new dome camera in 2014/15. We've received the conclusion of the review today and it states that several of the older cameras are no longer working and even the newer camera purchased in 2015 by Marple Area Committee is said to be obsolete and not fit-for-purpose. A partial video clip of the camera cycle was provided and this demonstrates that we were right to be concerned as it seems to spend most of its time focused on the benches near to the Bowling Green. It's no wonder that the existing CCTV has been of no help in resolving ASB in the park.

We are also being told that as there is a review of the CCTV Contract currently underway any requests for upgrades or changes will not be processed. We agreed with Cllr. Allan that this is totally unsatisfactory and he proposes to challenge that.

Lack of feedback and communication

We have little knowledge of what actions are being taken by the council and especially the police to address these issues. We cannot see any positive results and are given limited information, making us feel like we are being kept at arms-length.

We do not know what special efforts the police have made or why they have so far failed to put a stop to ASB in the park, especially when their own operational police station is so close by and also subject to regular attacks of vandalism.

We are concerned that reporting of incidents seems to be hap-hazard and as far as we are aware nobody is collating a log. We get the impression that when TLC discover vandalism and damage in the park they often don't report it to the police.

We note that floodlights have been fitted all around the sides of Hollins House but we do not know if these are temporary or permanent installations, or if they need / have received listed building consent to install them. We did note that during our meeting the lights enabled the car park in front of the library to be used as a floodlit football pitch while the MUGA / Skatepark lights are turned off early to combat ASB.

We don't know the council's plans to repair the broken Hollins House windows or how long they intend to leave it all boarded up. Cllr Allan agreed to ask about this.

What can we do?

We explained to Cllr Allan how last time we had unusual levels of ASB in the park (in 2014/15) a working group was formed with two councillors (Ingham and Alexander) and representatives of the police, Community Safety Unit and Friends of the Park would meet on a monthly basis to share information and formulate plans to deal with the situation we found ourselves in. It was then that we arranged for the new pan and tilt dome camera to be installed at Marple Area Committee's cost and we were involved in every level of detail including the setting of the camera's operating cycle.

At that time all ASB in the park was logged using forms provided by the CSU and all information was shared. It felt like we all had the same aims but it doesn't now.

A newspaper report on the 50th anniversary of the dedication of the park in 1972 reveals that it was patrolled by guard dogs to combat the unacceptable levels of ASB. What goes around comes around and we are very concerned that our plans to commemorate the 100th anniversary will be ruined if things are allowed to continue.

Cllr. Allan agreed to explore the idea of setting up a working party again.

3.2 Bowling Green and Buildings

Pavilion Art Project Phase II:

Mark met with Pete Kelly and Tracy McGuinness-Kelly over Christmas to develop ideas for the phase II artwork, which will commemorate the 100th anniversary of the dedication of the park on 22 July 1922. He tabled a draft design that uses many of the photos taken during the pageant and in the park at the original dedication event.

Mick and Mark have already had some provisional discussions about the design and there is a concern over the visibility of the artwork due to the cage around the pavilion canopy and the bowling green fence. In order to assess this Mark has asked Pete to produce some A0 full height mock-ups so that we see how it looks in situ.

The estimate comes just within our original budget of £4,100.

The next step is to carry out the trial of the full height mock-ups in the park.

3.3 Task Days

This year it is proposed to revert to our regular Task Days on the last Saturday of each month. We will review later in the year whether to reintroduce the second regular Task Day two weeks back from the last Saturday between April to November.

Unfortunately due to health issues both Mark and Gill may not be able to lead the Task Days as normal but we do have a good number of other volunteers with Team Leader training and Power-tools Training, so this shouldn't generally be a problem.

The next Task Day will be Saturday 29th January. *(Post meeting note: Bernard has confirmed he will be able to lead the Task Day if Mark and Gill are unable).*

4.0 Funding - Status of Funds

Mark is preparing the 2021 YE accounts for audit and gave the following update:

4.1 Main Bank Account (Barclays): Balance = £20,982.41 at 31/12/2021.

2021 totals Income: £8,961.84; **Expenditure:** £3,402.33

Income since the last meeting on 11 October 2021:

£825.00	50-50 Club Draw income.
£573.62	Handcrafted Christmas Fair.
£500.00	Magic Little Grant (towards the School Gardens Competition).
£304.00	Local Giving.
£250.00	Kevin Dowling book royalties (donated by Kevin's wife).
£115.00	Marple Community Council donation.
£108.00	The Marple Website donation.
£37.50	Veterans' Bowling Club donation.
£30.00	Marple Band Room garden maintenance payments.

Expenditure since the last meeting:

£100.00	Poppy Wreath.
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Mark has receipts totalling £25.77 for key wrenches and bolts to claim.

Committed future spends:

- c£1,750 on new springers.
- £4,100 on Pavilion Art Project Phase II.
- £750 on Canal Frog.
- £10,000 Ring-fenced for Exercise Equipment.
- £500 for the School Gardens Competition.

Working balance:

£3,882	Not allocated from 31/12/2021 balance.
£326	December 50-50 Club Draw income.
£15	Marple Band Room income.
£4,223	Current unallocated working balance.

5.0 Any Other Business

5.1 Canal Frog

Currently stored in the Bowlers' Hut. We will need to get it out of the Bowlers' Hut before the new Bowling season starts on 1st April 2022.

5.2 Exercise Equipment

We need to arrange a meeting with Jon Headlam and the Friends of Brabyns. A £10k grant application has been submitted to the Stockport Fund and outcome is awaited.

5.3 Marple School Gardens Competition

Sarah is waiting for responses from local schools, she has given them a deadline of 31 January 2022 and followed up her initial enquiry yesterday.

We've received a £500 "Magic Little Grant" towards this from Local Giving and the Postcode Lottery Fund. A £500 grant application has also been submitted to Stockport Hydro and we should learn the outcome of this one in March 2022.

An overall Method Statement has been drafted and reviewed and will now be submitted to the council to hopefully alleviate any concerns and get them inside.

5.4 100th Anniversary of the park's dedication

Mark met with Marple Local History Society today and asked them to consider an exhibition in Marple Library to commemorate the anniversary. They were enthusiastic and a theme covering 100 years of the Park at the Heart of our Community quickly developed. They will check if the library is available and start work on ideas.

Provisional plans are for the School Gardens / Treasure Hunt on Saturday 23 July and a Picnic in the Park style event on the Sunday with the Marple Bands.

The MLHS exhibition would span this period around a week either side.

Other ideas bounced around at the meeting include inviting the Makers' Market to be involved and also the Music in Hospitals organisation to provide buskers. We will consider and investigate these suggestions.

6.0 Next Meeting

Monday 14 February 2022 at 6.15pm in Marple Library.

Future meeting dates scheduled for 2022 (library booked):

Monday 14 March and Monday 11 April 2022.