

Friends of Marple Memorial Park
Thursday 11 May 2023
Marple Library

Present: Mick Thompson, Lorraine Thompson, Micaela Wood, Terry Wood, Joyce Reed, Diane Jackson, Greg Pike (part-time), Mark Whittaker.

1.0 Apologies: Patrick O'Herlihy, Bob Wilson, Malcolm Allan, Cllr Becky Senior.

2.0 Minutes of Meeting 13 April 2023: Agreed with following typo corrections:

- Item 4.0 Balance in main account was £25,279.70, not £25,179.70.
- Bob Wilson should have appeared under apologies rather than attendees.

3.0 Matters Arising:

3.1 Possible Accessible Community Woodland Scheme

Greg Pike from Marple Civic Society was welcomed to the meeting.

Greg came along to share the Civic Society's provisional ideas for developing an Accessible Woodland Area in the park and to seek the group's support for the next stage, which would be to begin engagement with Stockport Council.

A set of draft plans were presented showing increased tree and hedge planting in the area of the existing woodland walk that begins at the main entrance, then runs alongside the boundary behind the cinema as far as Kingfisher Mews.

The proposed new woodland would extend and widen the tree coverage further into the park and encompass the first existing shrub bed and several existing trees.

The intention would be to create a short circular hard-surfaced path running through the new wood. It would be suitable for disabled access, including wheelchairs and mobility scooters, and feature a seating area within the trees at a mid-point.

Greg explained that MCS view the scheme as an opportunity for collaboration between themselves, the council, Cheshire Wildlife Trust and the Friends of the Park. They see themselves taking the lead and having overall responsibility for funding-raising, planning, creation and ongoing management and maintenance of the area.

It was agreed that this is an underused area of the park due to it often being very wet and planting trees may benefit this as well as improving tree cover and biodiversity.

This area was once the route of the canal arm to the Hollins Mill and it was felt important that this history was retained somehow. This and the visible remains of the canal bridges near to the park entrance and near the tow path should if possible be revealed more and the subject of interpretation to be included in the scheme.

Greg advised that he would not expect planning permission to be required but it was agreed that neighbours of the park should be consulted in a similar way as if it were.

A couple of concerns were identified, these being the risk of providing cover that may encourage rough sleepers into the park and facilitating antisocial behaviour during later hours close to the park boundary impacting the park's residential neighbours.

Greg left following a Q&A session so that the group could debate privately. Discussions continued briefly and it was concluded that Friends of the Park are generally very supportive of the idea. However, we do have serious concerns that placing seating so close to the park boundary and the property at the rear of the cinema could lead to ASB problems in the evenings. We think this aspect must be considered carefully to avoid issues with neighbours and the seating moved further into the park or omitted.

3.2 Antisocial Behaviour / CCTV / Police

ASB Update

We seem to be having a relatively quiet time as far as ASB is concerned at present, although the police have advised that riding of illegal e-bikes has been reported.

The main news on this topic is that PC Matthew Mayers is leaving the Police Force for a new job in the private sector. Matt's communication with our group while he was our main contact has been exceptional and we hope that his successor(s) can match his level of input and support. Of course we wish Matt great success in his new career.

CCTV Update

The last update we had on this was from Cllr Allan on 16 April 2023:

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.

Malcolm Allan has been an exceptional councillor in our view and it is a concern that now he has stepped down we may have nobody to champion our position on this and other key issues in the park as effectively as he managed to do.

Cllr Becky Senior has indicated that she would like to come to our meetings more often but was unable to attend this time due to another commitment. We look forward to Cllr Senior joining us and hopefully working together for the benefit of the park, as she did to help us raise the priority of the drainage behind the library.

Actions ongoing from Crime Survey recommendations

Artwork to Bowlers' Hut: The boards have been varnished and the timber framing is partly installed. We are planning to install the boards on Saturday. This is our last action to complete from the March 2022 Crime Survey Report. *[PMN: The boards were installed on Saturday 13 May with just the edging trims to be added now.]*

3.3 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 image have been provided, it is effectively like a "crown" over the existing Hubba. We are still waiting to be advised when the work will be done.

Drainage at woodland behind library

The drain has been properly repaired by UU. They managed to do it without digging up the path by accessing the fault from the woodland side. Our thanks to Cllr Senior for helping to raise the priority of this long-term problem and get it resolved.

Long grass areas, reduced weedkiller usage, log seating

The grass on the triangle near the Band Room is growing fast, other areas less so at the moment. Grass cutting has been delayed due to problems with the tractor. Much less spraying of weedkiller has been done as agreed and is much less noticeable.

The transporting of the log seating and clearing of the green waste area are pending repairs to the tractor, which has now been taken away on a trailer.

[Post Meeting Note: The tractor is now back in action and the park has had its first cut of the season. The areas of long grass have generally been left as agreed.]

Park Benches

New Commemorative Benches

Based on information last provided we expect delivery of the four new benches between 31 May and 14 June. Installation lead time is up to 4 weeks, so this should be mid-to-end July. Future benches are on hold until these are fully installed.

MacFall family Bench

The MacFall family have asked if the plaque on "Mac's Bench" can be replaced with a new one that includes another family member who has recently passed away.

We have received one quote plus proof but the family have changed their minds about what they want twice since then. We are now waiting for Streetmaster to revise the quote. *[Post Meeting Note: chased up on 19 May as nothing received yet.]*

Rainbow Bench Trial

Last year we discussed painting one of the 3 ugly brown metal benches on the main path in rainbow colours. Mark will speak to Patrick about this as a mini-project for him to lead. If it works out well we could do the other two benches to match.

Town Centre Benches

Ideally we should clean and repaint the black cast-iron ends as well as sanding and retreating the slats this year. We're struggling for the time to do this at present.

Community Hub

No change, we are still waiting for the council to consult with us as stakeholders.

We remain very concerned about what may be planned, the quality of consultation that we will be allowed and the time pressures we envisage being in place.

We understand they may have been holding off consultations due to the elections but don't really see why this would have effected consultation with us.

Roundabout in infants play area

The roundabout has been out of action for weeks because a new spindle is required at a cost of £980 plus installation. Richard Booker has ordered this and we have asked for an update. It is very frustrating at how long it has been out-of-order.

Flying the Ukrainian flag

At the end of the last task day on 29 April a complaint about flying the Ukrainian flag in the park was received from a park user. The gist of this being that the Marple Community didn't support it, "don't be blinkered" and "don't believe the hype".

We conducted a social media survey on the Marple Website Facebook page and the Marple Community Hub Group. All comments received were in favour of continuing.

It was agreed to fly the Ukraine flag again when the Coronation flags are taken down.

[Post Meeting Note: The flag was put back on 12 May. The following day we received an email complaint from the same person. The details of this were considered by the committee and we engaged with Marple's Local Councillors on the matter. They in turn made enquiries on our behalf with Democratic Services. Our conclusion was that there is widespread support for continuing to fly the Ukraine flag in the park and that this is in full compliance with the council's cross-party statement to stand together with the people of Ukraine. Our group is united with Stockport Council in the hope that a lasting and peaceful solution for the Ukrainian people can be found soon.]

3.4 Projects

Outdoor Exercise Equipment Project

We have received the £1,500 award from the Macnair Trust and £1,000 from Marple Area Committee. A total contribution of £3,500 is pledged from the council, meaning that with our £24,000 ring-fenced for the project we have reached £30,000.

We received the updated prices and options from Richard Booker on Friday and on Saturday we published a range of options on our web site and asked for feedback:

Phase I: Core Option: Magnetic Bells + City Bike with touchscreen

Phase II: Combi 2 but with following options:

1. Upgrade to Combi 3 possibly with some extra small equipment.
2. Upgrade to Combi 4 possibly with some extra small equipment.
3. Upgrade to Combi 5 (approx extra £500* needed).
4. Keep Combi 2 and add Arm Bike (approx extra £2,000 needed).
5. Keep Combi 2 and add Street Bike (approx extra £3,000 needed).

Since Saturday the page was viewed 594 times and 22 people submitted comments. There were also 11 positive comments on social media and 89 positive reactions.

Bike touchscreen

6 of 22 people raised concerns about potential vandalism to the screen on the bike.

In view of this Mark revisited the two bikes with touchscreens in Werneth Park in Oldham. These had been fitted in December and the screens were still fine. He also asked Richard to speak with Oldham Council and Kompan to gain their feedback.

Oldham Council has advised they've had no issues with the screens and they are very happy with the equipment – they are currently in the process of ordering more units.

Kompan has said that they have never had to replace a screen to date. They also shared a video of one of the screens surviving a brick being dropped on it and explaining that they are made using the same technology as ATM screens.

We feel sufficiently reassured to go ahead with the City Bike with touchscreen.

Option 3: Upgrade to Combi 5

By far the favourite option, with 10 out of 22, was to upgrade to the Combi 5. The second favourite received 3 out of 22 votes. It does make sense to go for the biggest and best Street Exercise option as it would be difficult to upgrade in the future.

*The cost above £30k of option 3 was advised as £500 but unfortunately there was a mistake in the figures and the extra cost is actually £1,434. We believe we can raise the extra funds needed and some of the people who commented even offered to help.

Next steps

It was agreed that we would confirm to Richard at the council that we wish to commit to the purchase of the Magnetic Bells, the City Bike with Touchscreen and the Combi 5 at a supply only cost of £19,808.88. Mark will confirm tomorrow.

The council now need to agree an exemption to avoid having to go out to tender again and to place an order before 10 June, when the validity of the quote expires.

The cost of installation is currently £8,225 (incl. the Combi 2) plus an uplift of £3,400 allowed for the Combi 5 = £11,625. This needs to be confirmed with the installation contractor and Mark has asked Richard to do this asap. Installation costs may escalate so we need to have some contingency plans in place to cover this eventuality.

When we know more about the factors above we can share the news on the web site to tell people what is happening next and to seek help raising the extra funds.

In the longer term, after the equipment is installed, we may decide to see if there is enthusiasm within the community to add a Cross-Trainer and Arm Bike. Mark recently discovered that there is a Cross Trainer at Werneth Park and was very impressed.

Skatepark Art Mural

Transfer of the artwork to the top ramps is now in progress by Helen. It looks really good so far, and very accurate to the children's original designs.

Helen is set to move onto the ramps facing the canal and will do a similar exercise of workshops at the skatepark then transfer the art to the ramps. The theme will be wildlife and nature to compliment the woodland views from that side of the skatepark.

Allotment beds

The beds are now largely planted up and will need watering over the summer. We will organise a rota and share the keys so we can spread the load of this work.

We've invited Frank Thompson, our sponsor from Stockport Hydro, to visit the project and have submitted copies of the invoices to cover the spending of our award.

Infants Play Area picnic benches

The synthetic surface contractor is due to start work at Highfield Country Park soon and will follow-on with the bonded mulch under our benches once completed.

Refurbishment of the stocks

Terry has purchased the timber and a circular cutter from Tomlinson Parbans and passed over the receipts totalling £162.53 so far. He plans to start imminently.

[Post Meeting Note: work is well underway with several trial fits taking place. Two extreme weather vintage style padlocks have been ordered and are due soon.]

Covid Commemoration Project: Flag Pole & Memorial

The new flag pole was installed on Wednesday 19 April.

Mark met with Zoe Porter from Marple Mutual Aid and Cllr Allan during the task day on Saturday 13 May. Zoe and the MMA Team are very happy with the design and the text proposed for the memorial, which now includes the quote suggested by Larry.

The layout was discussed and it was agreed to remove the small flowerbed in front of the monument to prevent plants obscuring the inscription. Instead we will create a small bed either side of the cobbled hardstanding leading to it afterwards. Mark and Jon will be meeting with Maysland tomorrow and will update their brief accordingly.

Following tomorrow's meeting it is hoped Maysland can confirm the design and the costs, and verify if the inscription we want can be accommodated on the stone.

Cllr Malcolm Allan has commented on the tense of the text, so two versions were passed around for consideration. It was agreed to go with Malcolm's suggestion with a couple of other minor tweaks discussed at the meeting:

Those who touch our lives, stay in our hearts forever.

Remembering the lives lost in Marple due to COVID-19.

Celebrating how our community came together in Mutual Aid.

Thanking NHS & Key Workers in their efforts to keep us safe.

DD/MM/2023

[Post Meeting Note: The above now includes some later tweaks to reduce the number of characters and to reflect Government guidance for writing about COVID-19. This latest version was passed to the council for communication to Maysland.]

War Memorial Flag Pole

We were expecting some maintenance to be done to the War Memorial flag pole during the visit to install the new pole but there were technical issues that prevented this. We are now waiting for the contractor to advise the options and costs of what can be done. This will now be treated as a separate project to the COVID memorial.

Moving the goalposts

A resident has suggested moving the 5-a-side goalposts to give the goal mouth areas a rest and allow them to recover. We've inspected and this seems a good idea.

Jon Headlam has been able to secure a delivery of topsoil we could use to fill the dips in the ground. We could possibly do this ourselves or ask Shelby Landscapes to do it for us following their kind offer of support.

However, we don't know what the impact of the Community Hub being built in the park will be and wonder if we should wait until we know more to avoid abortive work.

Wildflower areas

Gill and Joyce have Yellow Rattle ready to go in. We're trying to decide how to move forward this year and hope to prepare a smaller area but are running out of time.

Possibilities include hiring the equipment or asking for help from Shelby Landscapes or possibly Gracias Gardens, who Mark is meeting on Sunday morning.

Eve Taylor from Cheshire Wildlife Trust has also said she can talk to us about this during the Treasure Hunt on Saturday 27 May.

3.5 Task Days

We're in full swing now and task days are coming round quickly. Last task days were 15 and 29 April, next ones are 13 and 27 May, which is also the Treasure Hunt.

Parking is arranged until end of July and applications until end of June.

4.0 Funding - Status of Funds

Income since last meeting:

£1,500.00	Macnair Trust for Exercise Equipment Project.
£1,000.00	Marple Area Committee for Exercise Equipment Project.
£100.41	Local Giving.
£1,220.00	Treasure Hunt sponsorship (to 9 May 2023, changing daily atm).
£235.00	50-50 Club (including donations).
£15.00	Band Room SO.

Expenditure since last meeting:

£180.00	Local giving Fee.
£142.99	Chocolate Coins for Treasure Hunt.
£23.99	Tools and materials.
£44.91	Plants and seeds.

Balance in main account: £25,958.22

Committed future spends:

£24,000.00	Ring-fenced for Outdoor Exercise Equipment.
£200.00	Budget for replacement of stocks timbers.
£108.00	12 new printed hi-vis vests.

Unallocated working balance: £2,150.22

5.0 Any Other Business

5.1 Family Treasure Hunt: 27 May 2023

Everything is coming together frantically but well on the sponsorship front. We are nudging closer to last year's figures but may not reach those heights.

Di advised that £2,340 was pledged at present.

As well as the Hunt we will have:

- Cheshire Wildlife Trust attending.
- Marple Guides doing Face Painting.
- Marple Youth Project doing a Cake Sale plus an Art Trail.
- The Coffee Bean Dream doing refreshments.
- Gill and Di will do their cards and jewellery respectively.

Mark has sent out an email regarding help on the day, including baking cakes.

5.2 Little Growers

Joyce passed Mark a draft poster for Wall Flower Little Growers. We will check materials available on Saturday and may do at the T Hunt but definitely the Carnival.

5.3 Carnival Saturday 17 June 2023

The Carnival has agreed to us having a stall next to our allotment beds.

We will do cards, jewellery, little growers and promotion of projects.

Mark will put out a help request after the Treasure Hunt.

5.4 Makers Market

Mark will ask Kala if we can have a stall at the 16 September Makers Market.

5.5 Hiroshima Survivor Tree

We awaiting news of a decision from the council.

5.6 Open Gardens in Marple

No change, we will seek volunteers after the Carnival.

5.7 £500 Magic Little Grant 2023

We need review suitable projects in the park.

5.8 External changes to Hollins House

No news, we will keep this on our agenda so we can monitor progress.

6.0 Next Meeting

Thursday 13 July 2023 at around 5.50pm for 6pm start in Marple Library.

Dates for 2023 (library bookings all confirmed):

Thursdays: 13 July, 10 August, 14 September, 12 October, 9 November, 14 December.