

**Friends of Marple Memorial Park Meeting
Monday 14th November 2011
Marple Library**

Present: Terry Wood, Micaela Wood, Joyce Reed, Bob Wilson, Gavin Eyquem, Mark Whittaker.

1.0 Apologies: Adrian Ellis, Patrick O’Herlihy.

2.0 Minutes of the last meeting: Agreed.

3.0 Matters Arising.

3.1 Ornamental Flowerbeds

The £1,000 grant has been received from Stockport Homes and payments of £50 each to Marple Beavers and Rainbows have been sent. The invoice from the council for the £1,537 contribution towards the plants has been paid.

It was agreed that the project to save the flowerbeds has been a huge success and feedback from park users has been very positive. The group acknowledged the financial help from Stockport Homes and Marple Area Committee in achieving this.

There should be no further significant cost outlay required but obviously the beds will continue to need maintenance and occasional additional plants, although it is also likely that some plants will to be divided and removed in due course. In this case they can be distributed to other areas in the park or possibly sold to raise funds

Indications from the Beavers and Rainbows are that they wish to continue in 2012.

3.2 Park Benches

Preservatives and Sanding Materials

Sanding materials and preservative have been ordered.
100 litres of preservative has recently been delivered.

Replacement of bench near Junior Play Area (No. 17 on survey)

The Yarwood family bench has been installed by the Area Team and looks great. The family have been notified and Mark has asked Jonathan to issue an invoice to the FOMMP for the Yarwood family’s contribution of £660 already received from them.

Refurbishment of second bench near Junior Play Area (No. 16 on survey)

This bench is completed but Terry still needs to submit an invoice for £250 to cover the materials ordered through the David Lewis Centre.

Replacement of bench near to the Bowling Green (No. 2 on survey)

The donation of £813 from the Kay family for the Broxap Kensington heavy-duty hardwood timber bench has been received and Jonathan placed an order with Broxap on 19 October. Delivery should be before the end of November.

Patrick and Mark removed the old concrete bench during the last task day and we now need to decide exactly how to modify the base to accommodate the new bench. Mark and Adrian have discussed this and will look at it further when the bench and ground fixings have been delivered.

Refurbishment of bench SE of Bowling Green (No. 6 on survey)

Terry has priced the hardwood and materials needed to refurbish this bench and with an allowance for a plaque the total cost would be £300.

Patrick will approach Marple Business Forum and ask if they would like to sponsor this.

Bench near to Teen Shelter (No. 31 on survey)

A bench was set on fire over the Bonfire night weekend and is damaged beyond repair. It will need to be removed and Mark will discuss this with Adrian.
(Post meeting note: the remains of the bench have now been removed.)

Refurbishment of Mac's Bench (No. 6 on survey)

The family of Peter McFall, who had a bench dedicated to him in 1998 at the south of the Bowling Green, have recently been in touch wondering if they could make a contribution towards its upkeep. Mark has advised them that this can be done via FOMMP and suggested a donation of £50. The family has responded to say that they will have a collection and hope to raise more than that amount.

This bench is a good candidate for jet washing, sanding and treating and this can perhaps be arranged for the November Task Day.

3.3 Picnic Bench made by the David Lewis Centre

Adrian has still to arrange for the ground to be levelled and the bench to be installed by the Area Team. *(Post meeting note: It will be a couple of weeks before this can be done – so hopefully by mid-December).*

Terry needs to submit an invoice for £80 to cover the cost of the bench.

3.4 Infants Play Area Fence

Jet washing and cleaning the fence will continue through the winter with a view to starting to re-paint it in the spring. Ordering of the paint by the council can be arranged nearer the time.

3.5 Bowling Green Boards

The Veterans Bowling Club have discussed the spare wooden boards with Bob and are happy for them to remain stored where they are in Bob's hut until the club is ready to start their task day to fit them. This will probably be in the spring.

3.6 Task Days

Previous Task Days

Saturday 29 October

A very good turnout by our local volunteers made for another busy day.

The ornamental beds were weeded, trimmed and spring bulbs planted.

The large shrub bed near to the tree sculpture was also given a good tidy-up and an old concrete bench near to the bowling green was removed in readiness for the installation of a new one that is being donated by a local family.

Saturday 12 November

It was decided to hold a special task day to make sure that the area around the War Memorial was looking its best for the Remembrance service on Sunday 13th.

It's just as well we did as it was discovered that the handrails on the memorial had been vandalised overnight. It's hard to find the words to express our contempt for this kind of act but at least we were in a position to do something about it and were able to carry out a temporary repair. The damage has been reported to the council.

We had another great response from our volunteers at short notice and fine weather. As well as removing leaves and hoeing the flowerbeds we painted a litterbin that had been desperate for a coat of paint and cleared the leaves all the way down the main drive into the park. It was particularly good to have families with children helping out on a beautiful sunny autumn day.

Next Task Day – 26 November 2011

This will be our last task day of 2011 and it is planned to remove the weeds in the narrow border along the path by the library and add a layer of gravel to prevent them building up again. Gravel will also be added to the Sensory Garden path and in a couple of other areas in the park.

It is also hoped to start jet-washing benches and there will be plenty of other tasks to do, especially if the good weather holds.

Mark will send out the parking request for specified vehicles and the task day email.

Joyce gave her apologies in advance, as she will be involved in the Santa Train from Rose Hill Station on 26th, but she will be helping Bob in the park during the daytime whenever she can and will make a start on the library path weeding.

2012 Task Days

It has been agreed that during the months of April or May until September next year we should hold two task days per month and reduce the meetings to bi-monthly during the same period. Details can be arranged early in the New Year.

3.7 Skate Park

The Skate Park improvements design brief has now been completed and will be sent out to five skate park contractors during the next week. The tenderers are being asked to submit schemes using budgets of £25k, £50k and £75k and to provide 3D representations that can be used for further consultation. With help from Marple Hall School and Skate Park users it is planned to select one contractor to move forward and develop an agreed scheme that can be used to seek funding.

Mark has submitted a grant application for £1,000 of match funding on the skate park project to the Hilton Foundation 10k Giveaway, which closes on 18 November 2011. It is not certain that we will satisfy the grant criteria but seemed worth a try!

Feedback is still awaited from Parks Development Manager Kath Hughes about possible funding opportunities via Sport England. The council is investigating the possibility of leasing parts of their parks to community groups like ours to allow us to tap into funding that is only available to landowners or leaseholders. It remains to be seen if the conditions are suitable for a small volunteer organisation such as FOMMP.

3.8 Toilets in the Park

After waiting 4 to 6 weeks for feedback from the council Mark wrote again to Cllr. Alexander and Megan Black on 1 November asking for a meeting to discuss opening of the park toilets on weekends. A reply from Megan Black was received as follows:

Councillor Alexander has asked me to reply to this email. As you acknowledge we have transferred responsibility for the toilets to the park and so they will not be replaced by a Community Toilet Scheme. We have arranged for the toilets to be opened Monday to Saturday.

I know you attended the Friends of Groups meeting recently where the future working arrangements about the maintenance of parks transferring to Solutions SK (SSK) was discussed. As we write our SLC with SSK we will consider the opening of the toilets on a Sunday as part of this process. As outlined at this meeting once the draft SLC has been progressed sufficiently it will be shared among stakeholders using the Greenspace Forum as our main consultee.

The group discussed this response and agreed that it was a considerable success to have saved the toilets from closure and to keep them open 6 days per week; but were still disappointed that the final hurdle of also opening them on a Sunday was proving to be so difficult. Sunday is one of the busiest days in the park and is a day when the least alternative facilities are available to park users.

It was agreed that the council's SLC with SSK should include opening the toilets on Sundays. It was also felt that this was an issue that concerned a number of other local stakeholders as well as the Friends of the Park and their views should also continue to be considered by the council. Mark will respond accordingly.

Mark advised that the gent's toilets are currently closed due to a blockage. He had been in contact with Environmental Services on Friday to ask them to ensure that the toilets were open for the Remembrance Sunday service. Unfortunately, although they sent a contractor to jet them, the blockage could not be cleared on Friday. A CCTV camera survey has been arranged to investigate the problem and the ladies toilets was open on Remembrance Sunday but not the gents.

(Post meeting note: The gents were open again on 18 November.)

3.9 Park Cottage

Sue Emery has provided the following update on behalf of Marple Bands:

Renovation of the cottage has progressing well and they expect to install soundproof doors soon. They still have to sort out the drains, do some decorating and flooring.

They have accepted an offer on the plot of land behind the Edge restaurant but have not yet exchanged contracts. If this goes through ok they should have almost enough money to complete the whole project.

Building Regulations approval of their plans has been received and they can now start to get estimates for the extension work. If the land sale goes through the work could be completed next spring but if it doesn't then it will be a much longer process to raise the funds required.

3.10 Wildflowers for Breathing Places Area

This project is now waiting to order the wild flowers in the New Year ready for spring planting. Joyce brought in a catalogue and asked Bob to review it and consider what he thinks will be the best selections to purchase to suit the woodland environment.

3.11 Diamond Jubilee Project

Joyce, Bob and Mark met with Hilary Fidler and Rebecca Knowles from CAMSFC on Friday 19 October. The college are keen to help with design and labour for the refurbishment of the library flowerbed but cannot contribute any funding.

Rebecca, who has won Silver medals at the Tatton Show for the college's displays, will lead development of the design so we should be in good hands. The general brief is to raise the bed and incorporate plants and a feature with height (perhaps a metal sculpture) to commemorate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee next year.

Rebecca hopes to have a first draft design available in the next couple of weeks and this should be a good tool to help raise funds. It will be important for Micaela to have an input to the design, as it was her original idea to commemorate the Jubilee.

It is proposed to have a notice board on the library wall telling people what is going on with the bed while the project is in progress and to have a permanent display panel on the wall explaining the background to the project once it is completed.

There is an existing notice board on the library wall that could be used for the "in progress" notices but it cannot be opened and the Perspex is opaque and needs to be replaced. Mark has agreed with the library that we can refurbish or replace this and Terry will take a look to determine the best way forward in that respect.

With regard to funding, Mark submitted an application to the Macnair Trust in October and they have agreed to provide £600 towards the project. It is anticipated that we will need somewhere between £3,000 and £5,000 but will have to cut our cloth to suit the money that can be raised. It was agreed to pledge £1,000 of our existing unallocated funds to give us an initial budget of £1,600. This should enable the project to get off to a good start.

3.12 Dog Waste Bins

Mark has written to Megan Black expressing the group's concerns about proposals to remove dog waste bins from the park and a reply is awaited. A copy of the letter is appended to these minutes.

3.13 Town Hall Meeting – Tuesday 18 October

Mark, Jackie Collins from Friends of Brabyns Park and Adrian attended the council meeting, the advertised purpose of which was to discuss the council's plans to transfer parks staff to SK Solutions and to give assurances to groups such as ours that the impact on us will be minimal and that we will still be welcomed and supported.

Copies of the record of questions and answers were distributed with the agenda and are appended to these minutes.

Mark reported that the meeting was very disappointing. He was expecting a presentation of some kind explaining the changes followed by a Q&A session but the meeting just plunged straight into questions.

The acoustics were very poor, so it was difficult to follow what was being said and frustrated allotment groups, whose issues are very different from those of "Friends of" Groups, successfully dominated the meeting.

With regard to Parks & Recreation staff who will transfer to SSK, assurances were given that there would be no changes in the first 12 months but nothing beyond that.

Assurances were also given that task days would continue to be supported.

Mark asked if Bob would continue to be based in the park?

Answer: *"There are currently no plans to move staff out of parks. However, where there is a persuasive argument for relocating staff this position may be reconsidered in the future."*

The council explained that three "Green Space Project Officers" would become the Public Realm's key point of contact for volunteer groups such as ours.

Mark asked how three GSPO could provide the same level of support (to 70+ volunteer groups) that we get now? FOMMP normally have two council employees attending our meetings.

Answer: *"Friends of Groups will get a level of support that they need within the available resources."*

Other groups asked similar questions and everyone is concerned about losing the close working relationship that they have with front-line staff such as Adrian and Bob.

Mark advised that he found no encouragement in the political answers provided to his specific questions and is concerned that if existing relationships are lost then being a volunteer will become frustrating and unfulfilling, resulting in the demise of groups such as ours in the longer term. We will just have to wait and see how things develop.

3.14 Green Space Forum – Thursday 24 November

A notice about the Green Space Forum AGM was circulated with the agenda. There will be another opportunity to ask questions of the council and SSK about changes plus presentations on the work by the Manchester Environmental Unit and a new concept of "Cluster Groups" being set up in the Borough.

The Forum has asked for questions for the panel and nominations for a Hero Award from our Park. Mark will attend and questions to be forwarded to him.

A nomination for a Hero Award was discussed: these are given to people who we think have gone the extra mile to help in our park and it was agreed to nominate Adrian and his Area Team and particularly Bob, for his commitment, enthusiasm and passion for the park, which we consider goes beyond the call of duty, and for the fantastic relationship he has developed with the Friends of the Park and the support he gives to us. The group feels that it is an important time to publicly acknowledge Bob's personal contribution to the park's well being and believe that nominating him for a Green Space Forum Hero Award is a great way to do this.

4.0 Funding

Status of Funds

Current bank balance is £4,725. Income since the last meeting includes £1,000 from Stockport Homes, £813 from the Kay family for a commemorative bench, £100 from Marple Carnival Charities Committee, £87 from Ring o' Bells Quiz Nights, £5 regular donation from Mr Senior and £10 from artist Steve Abbott.

Expenditure in the same period includes £50 each to Beavers and Rainbows, £1,537 on plants for the ornamental beds and £20 for a Poppy Wreath.

Previously committed funds are £1,803, including £660 for the Yarwood family bench, £250 for the Tait family bench, £813 for the Kay family bench and £80 for the Infants Play Area picnic bench. Following agreement to commit £1,000 towards the Diamond Jubilee Project our total committed funds are £2,803, leaving a balance of £1,855.

Income this year to date is £4,611 and expenditure £4,053. Total income to date is £30,557 and total expenditure to date £25,832.

The above figures do not include £600 recently awarded by the Macnair Trust or £6 spent on mortar and a trowel to repair the War Memorial.

5.0 Any Other Business

5.1 National Gardening Week

Reminder: National Gardening Week starts on 13 March next year.

5.2 Remembrance Service

Terry laid the wreath on behalf of the group during the Remembrance Service on Sunday 13 November. It was agreed that there seemed to be more people at the service and more wreaths laid than previous years. Terry expressed some frustration at Friends of Marple Memorial Park not being on the "official" list of wreath layers in the programme when we have been attending for so for many years. Mark will make enquiries as to how this can be amended.

5.3 Christmas Dinner

The "Christmas dinner" was provisionally scheduled for Saturday 14 January 2012. Venue has still to be decided.

6.0 Date of next Meeting

Monday 12 December at 6pm in Marple Library.

Provisional meeting dates in 2012:

9 January 2012, 13 February, 12 March, 16 April.

Megan Black
Interim Head of Public Realm
Stockport Council
Endeavour House
Stockport
SK1 3XE

Cc Cllr. Shan Alexander



Please reply to: Mark Whittaker (Treasurer), 72 Woodville Drive, Marple, Stockport, SK6 7QX

11 November 2011

Dear Megan,

Re: Dog Waste Bins in Marple Memorial Park

The FOMMP have heard that the council have plans to save money by removing Dog Waste Bins from the park and will be encouraging people to deposit dog waste in the ordinary bins. Could you please confirm if this is correct?

Assuming it is, could you please clarify the detail of these plans and advise how you intend to deal with the following issues:

Memorial Park bins are often overflowing at the weekend and litter piled up around them because there is nowhere else to put it. This means that dog waste would end up being deposited in the same way and potentially be scattered all around the bins.

- Will you be providing more bins to ensure this doesn't happen?
- Will you be emptying them more frequently at weekends to prevent this being a problem?

Many of the bins in the park are of open topped design – will you be encouraging dog owners to deposit waste in open topped bins, or will you be replacing them with ones more suitable for dog waste?

Currently there are ordinary bins in and near the children's play areas in the park. We all know the seriousness of children coming into contact with dog faeces. What measures will you be taking to protect them from this risk?

We understand that waste processing companies charge more for disposing of dog waste than ordinary waste and possibly much of your cost savings assumptions are based on this. What assurances do you have that companies will accept ordinary waste that includes dog waste, or that they won't charge the higher price for processing the whole lot?

Whilst everyone wants the council to be able to save money, we are concerned that in the long term this will not be a real saving and it will result in higher risk to children in the park from infection and generally degrade the quality and cleanliness of our community open green space.

I hope you will be able alleviate our concerns by advising that dog waste bins will be retained in Marple Memorial Park, or explaining how you plan to deal with the issues that we have outlined.

Yours faithfully,

Mark Whittaker
Treasurer / Key Contact – Friends of Marple Memorial Park

Friends of Groups Meeting

Town Hall Ballroom

18th October 2011 – 18.00 to 19.30

Present:

- Cllr David Goddard, Leader of the Council;
- Cllr Iain Roberts, Executive Councillor (Transportation);
- Cllr Shan Alexander, Executive Councillor (Environment);
- Nic Cox, Managing Director Solutions SK;
- Carol Morrison, Service Director Communities;
- Megan Black, Interim Head of Service Public Realm.

Opening Statement

The Council is consulting on a range of budget proposals to save around £13.5 million in the 2012/13 financial year. We are committed to providing the best possible services for residents and minimising the impact of budget reductions on the community and our workforce.

One of the Council's proposals is to create a Public Realm Service, from which a contribution of £776k will be made to the Council-wide saving target. The Public Realm Service would be responsible for all Council maintained green space. In making these changes the priority is to maintain high quality frontline services. No reductions are proposed to existing operational frontline employees who will transfer to Solutions SK, a Council wholly owned company. The current terms and conditions of all staff to be transferred would be preserved. Community groups would still be supported by the Council and support for tasks days would be unaffected.

We greatly appreciate all the hard work the many Friends Groups do. We are committed to working in partnership with you to ensure that the proposed Public Realm Service is a success and that the service offered to our parks is maintained.

We have invited you here today to discuss the proposals further and answer any questions and concerns that you may have on the community and our workforce.

Q - Why is it proposed to that the parks operations will transfer to SSK and not another contractor?

A – SSK, a company that is wholly owned by the Council, has a unique, close and productive working relationship with the Council. SSK share the Councils aim of providing high quality services to the people of Stockport.

Q – There has been no expression of an undertaking by SSK to continue to work with Friends. Friends Groups raise funds, plan what happens in the park, assist in the development of parks, make grant applications ... all these activities are supported by a range of council staff. Will SSK maintain that close working relationship with friends groups?

A – Greenspace Project Officers will act as a single point of contact for stakeholders. They will work with groups to deliver the range of services to meet the needs of volunteer groups

Q – It has been stated that there will be a single point of contact for Friends Groups within the Council; what we are worried about is losing contact with the front line staff that we have built up relationships with.

A – There are no plans to change any of the current working arrangements relating to those staff that may transfer to Solutions SK.

Q - Will SSK support Friends led events held at weekends, such as regular task days?

A – Yes. There are no plans to change any of the current working arrangements relating to those staff that may transfer to Solutions SK. The Council highly values the voluntary work that is undertaken in our greenspaces and we are committed to supporting this in the future.

Q – Is it correct that the operational activities will transfer to SSK but volunteer groups will deal directly with the Public Realm Service? Won't that create difficulties for volunteers trying to get things done on the ground?

A – It is correct that operational activities will transfer to SSK and volunteer groups will deal directly with the Greenspace Project Officers. However SSK and the Public Realm Service will work closely together to provide a seamless service.

Q- Friends Groups discuss with park managers what we want to be done in parks and then work together to raise grant funding to deliver these improvements. Will this continue in the future?

A – SSK will maintain the greenspaces and Public Realm Service will support the development of the parks, helping volunteers as now.

Q – It has been said that senior managers from SSK and Public Realm will not meet with Friends Groups. Is that true?

A – No. Senior managers from both SSK and the Public Realm Service will meet regularly with Stockport Greenspace Forum.

Q - We currently have a 'one-stop-shop' for issues relating to greenspace. How can a contractor and client service continue to offer a one stop shop?

A – The Public Realm Service, which will be the single point of contact for volunteer groups, will work in partnership with SSK to provide a seamless service.

Q - Will I be able to talk directly to staff or will my calls go through a call centre which is a system I believe that SK Solutions and the Environmental Services are currently using?

A - Stockport Direct Contact Centre currently manages enquiries on behalf of the Parks, Sport and Cemeteries Service. There will also be occasion when, as now, enquiries are received directly by Council officers.

Q – There will be three Greenspace Project Officers, how will they provide the same level of support to groups that they get now. Some Friends Group meetings have more than one Council employee attending their meetings.

A – Friends Groups will get a level of support that they need within the available resources.

Q – What about those staff who work in countryside sites?

A – It is proposed that the Senior Rangers and Rangers remain within the Public Realm Service. There will be a reduction in the number of those staff but a presence will be maintained at Etherow Country Park, Reddish Vale Country Park and Chadkirk Estate.

Q - Will there be a permanent member of staff based at in those sites that currently have one?

A – There are currently no plans to move staff out of parks. However where there is a persuasive argument for relocating staff this position may be re-considered in the future.

Q – Senior Rangers provide and help to reduce anti-social behaviour, assist with events and activities and store Friends Groups tools and equipment. Will this level of service continue?

A – There is a proposal to reduce the number of senior rangers. However there is a commitment to continue to support the visitor centres at Reddish Vale Country Park, Etherow Country Park and Chadkirk Estate.

Q - My understanding is that the senior rangers are being reduced from 6 to 3. There will also be a loss of 2 facilities managers. This is a total loss of 5 members of staff. Is this correct?

A – Yes, that is our proposal.

Q- There have been assurances that there are no current plans to change the current operational activities of parks staff. However is there not a risk that in the future Friends Groups relationships with park operatives will be like the relationship between Friends Groups and those people who mow verges; none existent.

A – There are no plans to change the current operational activities of parks staff. Moving forward this may change however there will always be a relationship between the Public Realm Service and volunteer groups.

Q – Will litter picking of the parks be undertaken on the same frequency as now?

A – No changes to operational frequencies are planned.

Q - Enforcement of bye laws relating to misuse of parks and open spaces is a significant issue. Can the council outline who will have responsibility for the direct management of issues of misuse of our parks and open spaces. Currently staff employed within the parks assume some direct responsibility for responding to incidents in the parks. Will this continue under Solutions SK?

A - All Council staff and those employed by Solutions SK would continue to be expected to challenge behaviour that either puts the health and safety of site users in danger or risks damaging Council assets. In addition the roles of both Public Realm Inspector and Enforcement Officer are to be created and these officers will contribute to the monitoring and protection of our greenspace assets.

Q - Who will have daily responsibility for removal of broken glass and offensive graffiti from within parks?

A - SSK, through the Service Level Contract, will be responsible for the majority of operational activities e.g. removal of broken glass.

Grffiti will be removed by SSK if possible or, if required, referred to a more specialised service.

Q – The grounds maintenance specification is the key to the success of this proposal. Friends groups are generally happy with the current standards and these will need to be maintained.

A – The specification will reflect current maintenance standards.

Q – Will individual green space sites have specific and individual maintenance standards?

A – To some degree yes. There are many similarities across sites e.g. amenity mowing, that will share maintenance standards but the individuality of sites will dictate that there will be local variations.

Q – Will Friends Groups be able to specify the level of maintenance in their own greenspace?

A – That level of intervention will be difficult to manage however once a the draft SLC has been progressed sufficiently it will be shared among stakeholders using the Greenspace Forum as our main consultee.

Q - Is there going to be a formal structure to establish the SLC / performance standards and if so who will organise that?

A – The Public Realm Service will lead on the establishment of an SLC. Every effort will be made to consult with all stakeholders whether through the Greenspace Forum or on an individual group basis.

Q – Some sites are badly maintained now and there is a worry that the situation will deteriorate further due to future cuts.

A – The SLC will allow for a rise in standards at those sites that need it.

Q - How can Friends Groups influence the setting of standards?

A – A draft Service Level Contract will be made available for all stakeholders to comment upon.

Q – How will the performance of the contractor be monitored?

A – The Public Realm Service will follow a regular and formal monitoring regime. The results of the inspection will be made available.

Q – Are the Parks Service making a disproportionate contribution to the cuts that the Council have to make?

A – No. There are approximately 150 posts to be deleted in the current round of budget reductions across the whole of the Council. There are 50 vacant posts that will be deleted and around 70 people have expressed an interest in taking voluntary redundancy. The thirty remaining posts to be deleted will not be taken disproportionately from the Parks Service.

This year's savings are largely being achieved through merging services and streamlining management roles.

Q – The current arrangements are protected for now, will the parks service be protected in the face of further rounds of budget cuts?

A – The Council is preparing its budget well in advance of the next financial year and that is why a commitment can be given now to protect the frontline service for the next twelve months. However it is far too early to know what level of reductions will be required for the following year. It is almost certain that the situation will change and that difficult decisions will have to be made.

Q – What will happen to the buildings in parks, will these still be used by the Council?

A – There is no intention to change the current arrangements or operational procedures. If stakeholders have any good ideas on how to better utilise our buildings then please do let us know.

Q - If park buildings are used by SSK will they have to pay rent to the Council?

A – No.

Q – What will happen to Green Flag parks?

A – The intention is to continue to maintain these sites to the green flag standard.

Q – Why are Green Flag Award winning sites no longer submitted annually for the award?

A – Changes to the Green Flag Award process required the Council to self-assess sites that had previously won the award and yet still pay the awarding body for the privilege. Therefore we have adopted the self-assessment model but no longer pay a fee to the awarding body.

Q – Woodbank Nursery has closed and since then there have been no seasonal bedding in parks. Will there be a budget for purchasing plants?

A – Woodbank Nursery was operating at a loss and the infrastructure required considerable investment. These twin financial pressures could not be sustained. Therefore the nursery was closed in 2010/11. All associated budgets have been lost to savings and therefore there is no budget specifically for purchasing bedding plants.

Q – I think rent rises and saving money is the real agenda with regard to allotments.

A – A previous communication sent to allotment associations was incorrect and badly timed. However allotments must cover more of their costs.

Q – Will allotment rents be raised?

A – Yes, leases are to be reviewed to allow for rent increases.

Q – Is there a figure in your head now with regard to allotment rent rises?

A – No, there is no figure available at this time.

Q – Will a consultation document be made available with regard to allotment leases?

A – Yes, before year end.

Q – Is it the intention to have the single point of contact for allotment holders undertake other roles?

A – Yes there will be a sharing of roles

Q – Will the single point of contact in the Public Realm Service for the allotment associations have a budget?

A – Public Realm Service budgets will be managed by the appropriate team manager.

Q – Will there be a dedicated link officer for allotments or is the existing role to be combined with other duties?

A – It is proposed that there will be a combined land management officer. This will include letting of allotment plots.

Q – Can allotment associations be assured that there will be no implementation of the proposals to transform the job role until after the lease consultation process?

A – No, but there will be no changes to the current rent systems until after consultation.

Q – Allotment associations might not approve of the proposed job description. Can this be shared?

A – Yes, the proposed job description can be shared. It should though be noted that the job description is subject to consultation.

Q – Allotment associations were given only one days' notice about this meeting. Why was that?

A - Officers were instructed to invite all groups for which records were available. An e-mail invitation was sent to our known SMAGA e-mail address on the 8th October. No message was received that this address was not valid. There was no intention to marginalise or disenfranchise allotment holders.

The Leader of the Council reiterated his commitment to meet separately with SMAGA and that senior managers will ensure that the consultation process is a genuine two-way process.

Q – The Stockport Federation of Anglers responded over a year ago to a request to submit an application for a lease covering a number of bodies of water. There has been no closure; leaving clubs in the difficult position of not have security of tenure and an inability to apply for grant funding. When can a response be expected?

A – A commitment was given that the Service Director of Communities will investigate this issue with some urgency.

Q – Will minutes from this meeting be shared with attendees, other Friends Groups and Allotment Associations?

A – Yes in the form of FAQ's. This will be circulated widely.

Finally, for those who attended the meeting we apologise for the poor acoustics.