

**Friends of Marple Memorial Park
Thursday 10 November 2022
Marple Library**

Present: Mick Thompson, Micaela Wood, Gill Whittaker, Joyce Reed, Bob Wilson, Diane Jackson, Helen Middleton, Mark Whittaker.
Part time: Lorraine Thompson, Patrick O'Herlihy.

1.0 Apologies: Cllr. Malcolm Allan, Terry Wood.

2.0 Minutes of AGM 13 October 2022: Agreed.

3.0 Matters Arising:

Note: As new chairman, Mark asked former chairman Mick Thompson to assist him in running the meetings and ensuring that we follow the agenda. Mick agreed.

3.1 Review of skatepark mural collages with Helen Middleton

The group welcomed Community Artist Helen Middleton. Helen has run a series of four workshops at the skatepark and at Marple Youth Project during October, engaging with 189 young people and encouraging them to create artwork for transfer to the top skatepark ramps. Helen presented a series of 8 collages compiled using the children's artwork in the format of brickwork arches reflecting Marple's Viaduct or Aqueduct. The group were delighted with these and approved their application to the ramps. We will now pass the designs to the council for them to review and approve.

The workshops, materials and Helen's activities to this point have been funded by our £500 Magic Little Grant Award from Local Giving and the Postcode Lottery. Helen will provide feedback from participants to help us complete the grant monitoring.

The transfer of the artwork onto the ramps is to be funded by a successful grant application made to the National Lottery by Helen. This actually covers the application of artwork to the other ramps too, so Helen has been very successful in her bid.

Helen hoped to display the collages in the park to follow-up with the young people but this would be weather dependent. The group agreed that we could display the artwork at our Handcrafted Christmas Craft Sale on 27th November and we could also talk to Marple Library staff about possibly displaying them here in the library too.

Timing of the transfer of the artwork to the ramps was discussed. The designs will be painted directly onto the ramps by Helen, so of course this is also weather dependent. Helen would like to start as soon as possible subject to practical constraints and it was felt that the first or second quarter of 2023 would be a good target provisionally.

Friends of the Park or the council will need to clean the ramps of algae and overpaint graffiti just before Helen is due to start work to give her a fresh surface to work with.

(Post Meeting Note: The Council has approved designs. The artwork was displayed at the Craft Sale and is now on display at Marple Library until after Christmas.)

3.2 Skatepark sign

Mark has had several conversations with Earl about young skatepark users providing etiquette rules to go on the sign but nothing has been received. A deadline of 29 October was agreed with Earl before the half-term holidays but this has now passed.

We do not wish to present etiquette rules without input from the young people who use the skatepark, so it was agreed that we will proceed with the sign explaining our involvement in the skatepark project but use the space reserved for rules as an acknowledgement of the main sources of funding for the project.

Mark will liaise with HB Printing to have the sign made.

3.3 Antisocial Behaviour / CCTV / Police

ASB Update

Apart from several fires set in bins, which the Fire Brigade have thankfully dealt with swiftly, the park has been relatively quiet for the time of year.

We understand that fires have also been set in bins in the town centre too.

The importance of reporting fires within the park or its surrounds was stressed.

CCTV Update

As Cllr Allan could not attend the meeting he and Mark met earlier today to discuss a number of issues, including this one. There is currently no further news on the CCTV beyond the very unsatisfactory situation reported at the last meeting.

Actions ongoing from Crime Survey recommendations

Artwork to Bowlers' Hut: We have now received formal approval to go ahead with this from the council. We will need to trim the boards slightly, revarnish them, purchase timber and create a mounting frame. As there is quite a lot of work to do that will be weather dependent we've targetted to complete by early spring 2023.

3.4 Buildings and Infrastructure

Pavilion Art Project Phase II

Pelmets still to paint and install.

Skatepark repairs

The permanent repair to the concrete damaged by fire on the top section of the skatepark last year was completed by Canvas on Monday 7 November.

The potential problem of the jump-box rail that is badly worn has still to be addressed by the council and Richard Booker is going to discuss this with a contractor.

Drainage at woodland behind library

Mark met on site with Cllr Becky Senior and Council Officers on Friday 4 November.

Most of the covers between the toilet block and the library were lifted for inspection and it was found that there was a blockage and a risk of imminent overflowing in the usual location behind the library in the event of further heavy rain.

The council has verified that the drain is the responsibility of UU from their maps of local services and the problem was reported to UU during the site visit.

UU attended on Saturday. Cllr Allan passed at the time and noted that they seemed to be struggling to clear it but they must have eventually unblocked the drain.

We don't have a formal report but have been verbally advised that a large obstruction caused by a build-up of wipes and other material 4m down-stream of the drain cover that usually overflows has been cleared. We've been told that "bellying" of the drain has occurred at this location, which is likely to be causing materials to snag and then build up. We are concerned that the problem will reoccur if this fault is not fixed but for now the action is to monitor the situation. The good news is that the location of the fault seems fairly easy to access should a full repair be needed.

The group are grateful to Cllr Senior for her help and support with this.

Use of weedkiller in the park

Way forward as agreed and minuted last month.

Park Benches

Mark met with the potential skatepark bench donor on 15 October but their preference is for a conventional bench near to the skatepark rather than within it. So we will save the skatepark bench opportunity for someone else more suitable.

We have a waiting list of 13 potential bench donors and Mark has begun discussions with the first 4. These are in varying stages of negotiation but are looking positive.

Mark is in the process of confirming details of how the ordering, supply and install will proceed between ourselves, the donors and the council. Once this is clear a dialogue with others potential donors on the waiting list can move forward too.

[Post Meeting Note: Proposed locations and plaque inscriptions have provisionally been agreed with all 4 donors. Location plans and base details have been sent to Anthony Crook for agreement and enquiries have been made to TLC regarding space required for mowing around benches. Locations and mowing details have been agreed but the issue of bases has still to be resolved and is now causing delays. We are insisting on paved bases the same as the majority of the existing ones in the park, whereas the council were offering concrete or compacted stone infill. In view of our stance Anthony has said he needs to review whether there will have to be a price increase for the type of base we are asking for. We hope this can be cleared up soon.]

Patrick has been rotating the slats on many of the existing benches this year as the front ones tend to receive much more wear and bow. This has been successful.

It is proposed to purchase some rainbow shades of paint and do a trial painting of one of the brown metal slat benches when the weather allows next year.

We will need to install the Nativity sculptures on the Market Street bench at the beginning of December. *[PMN: Completed on Saturday 3 December 2022.]*

3.4 Projects

Outdoor Exercise Equipment Project

Following a donation of £250 from Marple Beer Run towards this project we now have £19,250 ring-fenced and feel we are on track to reach £20k by the year end.

We've had no response to our enquiry with Marple Senior Citizens to see if they want to get involved so will need to follow-up. *[PMN: Mark called into the MSC Hall recently and spoke to their Chairperson, who made it clear they are not interested.]*

The Chairman of Marple Runners has advised that he is very busy at the moment, so we will need to allow a bit more time before following up with them again.

The great news is that Richard Booker has issued a tender to potential contractors yesterday with a return due date of 17 December. The enquiry asks for the bids to identify schemes using a baseline budget of £25k with options for extra scope to the value of +£5k and +£10k (so options for £30k and £35k as well as the baseline).

The tenders should give us the information we need to engage more with user groups, initially to select a preferred contractor to further develop the scheme with.

Allotment beds

The council has agreed to let us have the surplus paving slabs stored at Etherow Park. Delivery of these has begun and will be spread over several weeks.

We now need to look at the materials we have and work out how to proceed.

Infants Play Area picnic benches

The hard-standings were levelled again and tamped down at the task day. There was a lot of loose chippings over the Pirate Ship carpet and these were swept clear. It

looks like young children are playing with the chippings and this is not helping but the main issue is that the material doesn't seem to be settling as it should.

Mark asked Richard Booker about options to resolve this and he has advised:

- Tarmac under both benches: approximately £700.
- 75mm concrete under both benches: approximately £450.
- Carpet per bench: approximately £400 = £800 total.

It was suggested that we ask AstraZeneca if they can help with this. *[PMN: An email request has been sent via Employee Volunteering on 4 December 2022.]*

3.5 Task Days

The last task days were 15 and 29 October. Thanks to Bernard for leading the latter.

Remaining dates in 2022 are: 12, 26 November and possibly 31 December.

We will need to submit a task day application for the first half of 2023 in December.

4.0 Funding - Status of Funds

Income since last meeting:

£88.39	Local Giving.
£250.00	Marple Beer Run.
£40.00	B' Dazzled Jewellery.
£233.00	50-50 Club income October Draw.
£116.00	50-50 Club donation of winnings: thank you E Knight.
£15.00	Band Room monthly payment.

Expenditure since last meeting:

£407.55	Skatepark Mural Project.
£50.00	Poppy Wreath.

Current balance: £22,295.47

Committed future spends:

£19,250.00	Ring-fenced for Outdoor Exercise Equipment.
£92.45	Skatepark Mural.
£300.00	Budget for Allotment Bed.
£190.00	Budget for Skatepark Sign.

Unallocated working balance: £2,463.02

Spends not yet claimed / reimbursed:

£41.49	10" Tamper Tool.
£18.19	Spray paints to cover up graffiti.

Forms / signatures

The forms to add Diane to the list of banking officials have been prepared and were signed at the meeting. Diane now needs to visit a Barclays branch to confirm her ID. This will be done after the Craft Fair, which is occupying her time at present.

Our Health and Safety Policy and Constitution have been reviewed (no changes) and were both also signed by the appropriate new committee members, except Terry who wasn't present and will sign at the next convenient opportunity.

5.0 Any Other Business

5.1 Handcrafted Christmas Sale: Sunday 27 November

Plans are coming together and Gill and Diane are busy making.

All stalls are sold and payments are coming in.

Posters are in the park and Larry has distributed to shops.

Promotion via social media is ongoing.

There is still time for Tombola prizes and volunteers to bake cakes.

There will be free tea, coffee and biscuits for visitors and a hotpot and veggie curry for stallholders and volunteers only. Set-up will be Saturday night / Sunday morning.

5.2 Wildflower Meadows

Unfortunately our first wildflower meadow attempt in 2020/21 using the area of the Lock 11 repair compound gave poor results. This was at least partly due to delays caused by the pandemic but also the Yellow Rattle seed provided by the Canal and River Trust didn't take and we suspect it had been stored for too long.

The area was also too large for a trial and error approach and it was agreed that we will try again using smaller areas to hopefully learn from and expand if successful.

Sites could include an approximately 3m x 10m section bordering the canal woodland or maybe in some of the locations we have agreed that TLC will not mow next year.

Bob has a stock of Yellow Rattle seed that he will donate and Gill and Joyce will look at growing this into our own plugs ready for planting out next spring.

Mark has spoken to Anthony Crook a couple of times and believes funding to help to create wildflower meadows in Stockport parks is available but no firm details have been received yet, so he will ask for clarification. *[Post Meeting Note: Anthony says he is just setting up the process for wildflower meadow creation properly and would be able to offer assistance for Marple Memorial Park next year.]*

Joyce and Gill's research suggests it is important to remove the top layer of turf and we may have to hire a machine to do this, or maybe the council has one, or it can be funded through the council scheme that Anthony is responsible for.

5.3 Community Hub

Councillors have advised that they are now not expecting to hear the outcome of the Government Levelling Up funding bid until the New Year. At MAC they expressed an intention to press on with processes to get ready for the planning stage so that they can "hit the ground running" in the event of a successful bid outcome.

We have written to councillors expressing our concern that consultation with us has not moved on for some considerable time and urged them to talk with us sooner rather than later before plans are developed too far. We've received some initial reassurances but we don't think they understand properly what our concerns are.

Months ago we suggested changing the location of the proposed hub building. We have heard on the grapevine that this may have been at least partially adopted but have no idea of the details and are concerned it has been misinterpreted.

We are worried pressing on towards planning without discussing fundamental issues such as location with us will force a situation where we feel compelled to object at the planning application stage. Mark explained our concerns in more detail when he met with Cllr Allan today. Cllr Allan has agreed to take up the matter up with officers and hopefully we can have a dialogue to seek reassurances as soon as possible.

5.4 District Partnership / Marple Vision Team

Diane and Mark attended a meeting about this on Monday. It was well attended and positive. There were some excellent ideas, the biggest and most important in our view being the aim to address community toilets and possibly reopen Derby Way toilets.

The Team will engage with the public at the next Make It Marple event on Saturday 19 November 2022. At present we are unsure how we can help directly without watering down our own efforts in the park but will continue trying to be supportive.

5.5 Covid Memorial

The presentation at MAC on 19 October gave the impression that we have been much more involved in this than is actually the case. Mark spoke briefly with Cllr Allan in advance of the MAC meeting and we are generally in agreement that a memorial should be something solid, long-lasting and more maintenance-free than a flowerbed.

One idea is to create something that would incorporate replacement of our second flag pole nearest to Hollins House. This is reaching the end of its life and when it does the council has said they will remove it, not repair. So maybe we could incorporate a new flag pole into a small commemorative structure or monument. Something on a scale with the existing small war memorial where poppy crosses are placed.

Other ideas and themes were a small round bench around a flag pole, something with laser-cut lettering in steel and possibly a floor mosaic a bit like those on the Hollins.

5.6 MUGA Tarmac

The new MUGA surface is retaining water in two large puddles when it rains. We have asked the council what can be done about this and they have provisionally advised that it can be drilled and filled to help water drain away. They expect Groundworks, their contractor, to visit by the end of November to try doing this. *[Post Meeting Note: the drilling has been done and initially seemed successful but more recently the puddles are forming again. The council will be looking at other options.]*

5.7 Toilet Block Bed

Correspondence on this issue was shared before the meeting. It was discovered on Tuesday that the mature bed behind the toilet block that we planted in 2015 and maintain has been trashed, we believe by a council contractor. We don't think it is the normal TLC Operatives who work quite closely with us and know we look after it.

We've complained strongly to the council and after an initial response saying that they are investigating we have been told this afternoon that they do not believe this is related to any works undertaken by one of their contractors. Despite these reassurances we don't see who else could have done it and will conduct our own detailed investigations tomorrow to see what we can discover.

[Post Meeting Note: We checked the green waste area on Friday 11th and found the arisings from the work in a single huge clump placed there. We also spoke with a TLC Operative who witnessed the aftermath of the greenery being hacked down by a contractor engaged in clearing out the gutters on the toilet block. Our findings were passed back to the council who investigated further and found that it was indeed a contractor engaged by their Estates Team. We have received an apology and an offer to replace the plants and shrubs. We've passed a list to the council, who will hopefully make suitable arrangements to replace like-for-like with mature specimens.]

5.8 Favourite Park in the Northwest presentation

The council have received a certificate for the award of one of the UK's Favourite Parks in the Northwest from Fields in Trust and have invited us to a presentation ceremony in the park at 10am on Wednesday 23 November to receive it from them.

We did consider boycotting this in response to the damage done to the toilet bed and as a protest at not being treated as proper stakeholders in the park on important issues like the CCTV but have decided that we will attend.

[Post Meeting Note: We asked that TLC Operatives who work in the park are also invited to the ceremony, especially those old-hands who we first got to work with in 2003 when our group was formed. This was agreed and it was good to join everyone in the park to receive the award from Cllr Grace Baynham, Cabinet Member for Highways, Parks and Leisure Services. It will be placed in the mess room in the park that we share with TLC Operatives. Our web site has been updated with details:]

<https://www.marplememorialpark.org.uk/park-heritage/a-favourite-park-in-the-north-west.html>

5.9 Coffee Bean Dream

We are hugely supportive of the Coffee Bean Dream Van being in the park and we believe it brings significant benefits, discouraging antisocial behaviour both directly and indirectly by the people it attracts to make use of the park's facilities.

We've made a suggestion to local councillors that would help the Coffee Bean Dream over the winter period and have asked them to lobby council officers on our behalf.

5.10 Dead Tree in Car Park

We've been chasing up the removal of this dead tree since the summer. It is unsightly at the park's main entrance and we believe there is a risk of branches falling on people or vehicles in high winds. In July we were told it would be removed in the autumn and the stump ground out to allow planting of an upright oak over winter. This has been followed up repeatedly but is still not done. An update was requested prior to the meeting but nothing received, so Mark will ask again. *[Post Meeting Note: Anthony Crook replied on 15 November saying that the tree will now be removed as soon as he has capacity this winter and reduced to a stump of approximately 4ft to be ground out and replaced next winter when allocation of funds allow.]*

5.11 Community in the Park video

Volunteer Anne Frazer has completed the first of two videos she has been working on throughout the year. The aim has been to record the group's events and activities during the park's centenary year and the first one is now on our web site:

<https://www.marplememorialpark.org.uk/park-centenary/community-in-the-park.html>

Thank you and well done to Anne, we look forward to the second.

6.0 Next Meeting

Thursday 8 December 2022 at 6.15pm in Marple Library.

Provisional dates for 2023 (library still to be booked):

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