

**Friends of Marple Memorial Park Meeting
Monday 9th October 2017
Marple Library**

Present: Joyce Reed, Lorraine Thompson, Mick Thompson, Micaela Wood, Terry Wood, Patrick O'Herlihy, Bob Wilson, Adrian Ellis, Mark Whittaker.

1.0 Apologies: Cllr. Malcolm Allan.

2.0 Minutes of last meeting: Agreed.

3.0 Matters Arising

3.1 Teen Area / Skatepark Phase II / MUGA

We have developed plans for improving the small top section of the skatepark and converting the basketball court to a MUGA (Multi-User GAMES) Facility. Budget costs are £35k for the skatepark phase II and £35k for the MUGA = £70k+ in total.

Richard Booker has confirmed that full planning permission is required and has agreed to work with us to submit an application. Mark has resent the Canvas package to Richard and asked him to look at what else we need. It may be necessary to go back to Canvas for additional information but Richard believes we have most of what is required already and he has scheduled to work on this from 30 October.

It is hoped that during the 3 to 4 months the planning process is likely to take the new procedure for allocating commuted sums will have been finalised and we will then be in a good position to move forward with a clear strategy.

3.2 Fencing of Bowling Green

Kerb for new flowerbed

This will be installed by a contractor called AMG, who are also doing some work at the skatepark, provisionally from 11th October but still to be confirmed.

Fixing down of relocated benches

This work has been issued to SSK Play Maintenance. They currently have a backlog due to staff sickness so timescales are still to be confirmed.

Extra notice board

Mark has advised Ken Else that we have a noticeboard that was donated by Marple Library available. This can be discussed and installed if agreed before next season.

New benches inside Bowling area

The Bowling Club are proposing to purchase new benches for use inside the bowling area. They have asked for comments on the benches they are thinking of purchasing and suggestions have been made relating to these.

3.3 Play Areas and Play Equipment

New safe surface around roundabout

This work is expected to be done in late October / early November by a contractor called Groundwork Leisure Services.

3.4 Park Attendant

Cllr. Allan has met with Ian Walmsley to discuss our concerns further. Following this an email was received from Wayne Bardsley referring to the meeting thus:

"Cllr Allan has met Ian Walmsley where the issue of staffing at Marple Memorial Park was discussed. As a result I write to ask whether you are aware of any specific issues

relating to grounds maintenance. If so please do let me know and I'll work to resolve them."

Mark has replied to reiterate the group's concerns to Wayne. The reply was circulated to attendees for discussion and is summarised as follows:

The specific issue we are concerned with is that it was proposed to make savings by removing the full time attendant from Marple Memorial Park. These proposals were put out to public consultation and there was an overwhelming public response against this. As a result, it was agreed not to remove the full time attendant but to leave the money that was to be saved in the budget - specifically for the purpose of retaining the full time attendant role. We were told that this is what would be happening by all serving councillors at the time and it was claimed as a success by them.

Despite those promises and leaving the money in the budget we lost the full time attendant. So as far as we understand the money was retained but it has not been spent in our park on a full time attendant as agreed, or in any other way that we can see because as part of the proposal to save this money it was stated that the work would be covered by a roving team. This is what happens now, so the money that was saved and retained is either still there or has been spent in some other way.

The agreement to leave the money in the budget for the specific purpose of retaining the full time attendant was agreed and approved by then executive councillor Martin Candler and ratified at the council's annual budget meeting. Cllr Allan says that he has confirmed that this was the specific intent of leaving this money in the budget and we understand he has demonstrated this to Ian Walmsley and Ian O'Donnell.

So it is nothing to do with how well or otherwise the park is being looked after now. It is about broken promises, changing decisions that were made after public consultation and approved by the correct process without authority. It's about telling us and local councillors one thing and then doing another.

Cllr. Allan has sent his apologies as he was unable to attend today to give a fuller report from the meeting with Ian Walmsley. However, he has provided a broad update saying that he has now been told there was a second round of budget cuts that wasn't understood as cutting the full time park keeper.

It was collectively agreed that we are very uncomfortable with this explanation because we don't understand why it has taken all this time to tell us that there was a second round of cuts. Why were we not told this at the time? Why didn't councillors who made the decisions know about it? Is there documentary evidence for this in the same way as established for the agreement not to cut the park keeper and why wasn't this revealed during Cllr Allan's initial investigations into the whole matter?

We hope to be able to discuss this in more detail when Cllr. Allan is available.

3.5 Park Benches

The Boules Court benches were sanded and treated by Patrick, Mick and Mark recently and this now concludes our general bench maintenance for 2017.

There are two issues that we need to look at further:

The best approach to conserving the Kay bench. It was originally agreed with the donor to leave it untreated. It has been fine for several years but is now becoming increasingly plagued by green algae, so we need to decide if and how to treat it.

A number of benches would benefit from hard-standings in front to prevent wear by feet. Patrick will take photos of these so we can discuss options with Greenspace.

3.6 Town Centre Benches

No change – we don't expect to do any further work until 2018 now.

Following our request Cllr. Finnie had a dialogue with Highways Officers and they have agreed to remove / treat the weeds under the benches in the Town Centre.

3.7 Park Buildings and Infrastructure

Replacement of Midnight

No change – we hope that in due course Myers Tree Care will be able to source a large piece of timber suitable for creating a replacement for Midnight.

Painting of Pavilion Buildings

No change – Mark to check on our stocks of paint before next year.

Bowling Hut / Pavilion Building roofs

We await the outcome of Property Services' assess of the condition of the roofs.

Breathing Places reading circle

Mark still to ask Greenspace about repair / replacement.

York stone stolen from park entrance

No further news or progress. It's frustrating how long this is taking.

Tarmac to main entrance

The re-tarmac to the main path at the front entrance has now been scheduled on SSK's Highways programme and is due for completion by end November.

Graffiti on skatepark

The latest graffiti tag on the quarter-pipe has been removed by the cleaning team.

Graffiti around the back of the library

This is still to be reported to Greenspace.

Painting of Infants Play area fence

We will ask Greenspace to jet-wash the fence next spring in preparation for painting. We also need to check stocks of paint.

Jubilee Flowerbed

Greenspace have provided a cost of £80 to repair the coping, however, during the last task day we cut-back plants to expose the rest of the coping and it is felt that it should all be removed and re-fixed. Mark has asked for an updated price to cover.

Boules Court

We need to discuss with Greenspace sourcing of materials to top-up the Boules Court.

Circular Coronation Bench

A park user has advised Patrick that they are prepared to donate £100 towards installing a hard-standing path around the circular bench. This has been investigated with Greenspace and it is not considered viable to do this with paving or concrete as there are tree roots close to the surface and we do not want to damage them.

Greenspace has suggested using bonded rubber mulch directly on top of the roots, which would be a good technical solution but has a budget cost of £1,100. The council is to install some rubber bonded mulch features at the skatepark soon, so we will reconsider this after that work is done and we have seen the material in use.

Information board near to Lock 10

Mick and Lorraine identified that this display board is now well past its best. It was agreed that we need to look at refurbishment / replacement.

3.8 Skatepark Development Project

Outstanding Skatepark Project tasks

Landscaping works

Greenspace are to go ahead with rubber-bonded mulch to the "Dirt Triangle" near to the poppy feature. They are also going to create a small bund behind the jump box to improve protection from a fall off that feature. The work is provisionally due to start on 11th October but this is still to be confirmed.

Screening trees and shrubs

We still await a plan from Greenspace for screening trees and shrubs that will allow the scheme to be discussed with residents. They have undertaken to do this asap.

Switching off lights

Despite our hopes that as key stakeholders in the skatepark we would be consulted before the report was issued for Marple Area Committee to consider, there was no consultation with us and the report was published with only one option: switching the lights off at an unspecified time mid-point between dusk and dawn.

On learning of the report's publication we wrote to Greenspace and Marple Councillors advising that we do not support the proposal included in the report and that we would like to see an option to switch the lights off at a fixed and agreed time being considered too. Councillors agreed that there should be a meeting to discuss this between the lighting team and ourselves. Cllr. Allan is facilitating this and a meeting has been arranged for 7pm on Thursday 19 October.

3.9 World War I Centenary Commemorations

Timeline Commemoration

Cyril Benton Johnson and David Totterdell were added on 21 September and Ernest Bennett on 6 October. 3 more men are due on 22 October, 1 on 25th and 1 on 26th, as Passchendaele continues to take its toll on Marple's fallen.

Responses have now been received from companies who may be able to help turn the timeline display into a permanent feature. Two have commented that not using the curved sections of rails at each end will make the project much easier so changing the layout will be investigated so that we can go back to them for firm prices.

3.10 Task Days

Last Task Days – 6 and 30 September 2017

We started and finished early on the 16th so that we could attend the Food and Drink Festival for refreshments. On 30th we planted 5,000 crocuses donated by the Rotary Club of Stockport and added new gravel to the Sensory bed.

Next Task Days – 14 and 28 October 2017

Parking is arranged and emails will be sent as appropriate.

Task Day Registration / Risk Assessments

Everything is up-to-date and we are covered until 31 December 2017.

Saturday Task Days scheduled for 2017

14 & 28 October, 11 & 25 November, 30 December.

Training

We await news of any further dates for training.

Dates are also still awaited for Mick and Bob to do the power-tools training.

Power Tools

Nothing new.

4.0 Funding - Status of Funds

Last statement on 22 September shows a balance of £3,631.95.

Income since last meeting:

£148.56 Local Giving.
£15.00 Charles Ingham Bandroom.
£27.74 Collection box at Marple Co-Op.
£14.31 Collected in Park.

Expenditure since last meeting:

£25.00 RBL Poppy Appeal (wreath).
£21.55 Bulbs ordered in June.

Currently committed funds are: WWI Display £122 and Plants £72, leaving a current working balance of £3,433.59.

5.0 Any Other Business

5.1 Chairman role

Adrian updated the group on his move to Cornwall. He expects to be around for the next couple of meetings before Christmas and then be available some of the time in the first few months of 2018, as he will continue to work in the area until his workload in Cornwall builds up sufficiently to make the move full-time.

Members were asked to consider if they were interested in taking on the Chairman's role from early next year. If nobody wishes to do it the role will become vacant.

5.2 Naming of driveway into the park

Another request for an update has been sent to Cllr. Abell.

5.3 Gravel for Sensory Garden

10 bags of gravel were installed during the last task day. Unfortunately it would benefit from a few more and Mark has asked Greenspace for 5 or 6 more bags. This may not be possible as budgets are now very tight.

5.4 Manure for allotment beds

Greenspace have provided HD bags for manure. It was planned to organise collection with the Allotment Association but unfortunately main organiser Joe has been unwell. It is hoped that he will make a full recovery and it has been provisionally agreed to look at this again with them after the Remembrance Service in mid November.

5.5 Open Gardens in Marple (7th and 8th July 2018)

Look out for publicity in "Inside Marple" magazine soon.

5.6 Tea Dances at Roman Lakes

All 20 tickets for the event on 25 November have been sold. We are trying to get another for Gavin, who requested one late, but are not sure if this will be possible.

5.7 Remembrance Service

Our wreath has been ordered and a cheque for £25 was signed today.

The new Marple Poppy Team will be organising Street Poppies to remember the 46 men from Marple who died in 1917, as well as their normal collections.

Terry is happy to lay the wreath on behalf of the group again but Mark will check to see if there is anyone else who would like to carry out this task.

Mark will check that SSK will support the service as done the last 2 or 3 years.

5.8 Christmas Tree Festival

A discussion took place about whether we would take part in the St. Martin's Christmas Tree Festival this year. Gill has strong feelings against doing it but is happy for other volunteers to carry on without her help if they wish.

5.9 Memorial tree replacement

Lorraine queried when the commemorative tree lost this year will be replaced. Mark will check with the council's Tree Officer. *(PMN: Due last 2 weeks in January 2018.)*

5.10 Croquet set

A croquet set has been donated to the group by Craig Wright.

6.0 Next Meeting

Monday 13 November 2017 at 6.15pm in Marple Library.

Future meeting dates scheduled for 2017/18 (library booked):

13 November, 11 December 2017.

8 January 2018, 12 February, 12 March, 9 April, 14 May, 11 June 2018.