

Friends of Marple Memorial Park
Thursday 12 October 2023
Marple Library

Present: Mick Thompson, Micaela Wood, Terry Wood, Joyce Reed, Diane Jackson, Mark Whittaker, Part-time: Lorraine Thompson, Alan Darnell.

1.0 Apologies: Bob Wilson, Cllr Becky Senior.

2.0 Minutes of Meeting 13 July 2023: Agreed.

3.0 Matters Arising:

3.1 Antisocial Behaviour / CCTV / Police

ASB Update:

To our knowledge ASB issues remain relatively low. A group of youths did climb over the bowling green fence on Sunday and damaged the digger that is stored there. We understand this was reported to the police by a member of the public. There has also been a couple of newly planted trees deliberately sawn and snapped off.

CCTV:

Our request for feedback in July on the CCTV cameras and the investigation into the incident involving the motorbike had received no response from the council, so we followed that up on 4th September. There was still no reply from them, so we followed up again when reporting the damage to the digger outlined above on 9th October.

This at last elicited a response from the Neighbourhood Team that was counter-signed by the Police and Estates. The belated, frustrating, disappointing, condescending and wholly unsatisfactory reply was discussed at length in the meeting.

The reply indicates that "a process of renewal", whatever that means, is still ongoing with the CCTV system. It also confirmed for the first time that the Pan, Tilt, Zoom camera originally installed in 2015 and paid for by Marple Area Committee (at our instigation) and then relocated (at our instigation) is "no longer operational". It is our belief that this camera has not worked properly, or maybe not even worked at all, since the relocation in 2018 that was also paid for by Marple Area Committee.

The reply fails to acknowledge 9 years of campaigning by us for the park to be better protected by CCTV, suggesting it isn't something Friends organisations would normally be involved in. It fails to recognise our instigation of the two Crime Surveys with the council and police in 2014 and 2022 or to treat us as key stakeholders in the park.

We've received some other more supportive replies and it was agreed we will take time out to consider how we should respond to the unsatisfactory situation we find ourselves in after so much time and effort trying to make things better for the park.

[Post Meeting Note: Mark raised and discussed our concerns on this issue with Cllr Becky Senior on Saturday 14 October during her surgery in the library and we will also allow some time for further feedback to arise from this conversation.]

3.2 Buildings and Infrastructure

Pavilion Art Project Phase II:

This is a low priority task but we need to make some time to address it.

Long grass areas, reduced weedkiller usage:

Mark has asked Jon Headlam to organise a review with TLC to assess how well the changes we agreed with them have gone, and if we should do anything differently.

Long grass areas:

The general feeling is we've seen no great benefit from the small areas of grass left to grow long. The only feedback we've received from park users is concerns over dog mess hidden in the long grass from a childminder who uses the log bench seating.

Mark and Bernard both feel that the long grass left at the band room triangle has been particularly troublesome to mow the edges and it looks a mess with little benefit.

The consensus was that we would probably ask TLC to revert to mowing as before.

Reduction in use of weedkiller:

We feel this has been a much better outcome except that there has not been enough weedkiller applied to hard-landscaped surfaces like the library paving, the car park, the war memorial, the stonework in front of Hollins House and the main entrance.

We have asked about TLC doing more edging of paths with the knife edging machine, or possibly training some of our volunteers to use the machine.

Park Benches

We've had no response whatsoever from the council regarding them ordering and installing different commemorative benches to those we specified. The outcome of this, and as already advised to the council, is we will no longer facilitate installation of new commemorative benches in the park and will refer future enquiries to them.

Patrick has made a belated but vigorous start to park bench maintenance this year.

Town Centre Benches

Between 2015 and 2019 we obtained sponsors and refurbished all 17 town centre benches on Market Street, Derby Way and The Hollins. We also maintained them annually until 2021 but have struggled to make the time needed since then.

Due to changed circumstances this continues to be a challenge and it was discussed and agreed to formally relinquish this task. Mark will write to Marple Civic Society and the Marple Town Team Officer Richard Daniels in the hope that others will step up.

[Post Meeting Note: this was discussed with Marple Civic Society on Friday 13 October and details of the processes and requirements provided on Monday 16 October 2023.]

Rainbow bench idea (brown metal benches)

Unfortunately this is not proving to be as straightforward as we hoped. The type of paint needed is generally only available in tins of 1 litre or larger. At approximately £25 to £30 per colour, this is working out to £200+ to be able to do a trial bench.

It was agreed not to pursue this idea any further at the present time.

Picnic Benches

Terry will investigate doing a repair to the damaged bench as soon as he is able.

It was agreed that there is no point in installing the second bench top at this time of year and it would probably be better kept until after the Community Hub is built.

At some point we will probably also need to remove the existing one for safe keeping.

Community Hub

Terry, Mick, Lorraine and Mark represented us at a Stakeholder Meeting in the library on Wednesday 30 August, along with representatives from several other groups.

We submitted a 9 page time-line report expressing our frustrations at the lack of consultation since March 2021 and a set of questions. The presentations were generally encouraging and we had a good dialogue with the design team afterwards.

Various members have attended the Drop-In Sessions in the library too.

We used last month's meeting on 8 September to review our responses to the Community Hub Consultation and they were submitted on 26 September 2023.

The full details of our response were also published on our web site:

<https://www.marplememorialpark.org.uk/notices/community-hub-consultation.html>

We've stressed the importance to us that we are treated as key stakeholders in the park and we did receive verbal assurances that this would happen.

We remain concerned for the quality of future engagement, how much notice will be taken of what we've said and whether our comments will be properly discussed with us. How much time will be available to do all this fully remains to be seen too.

Play Area Meeting: Tuesday 10 October

Mark met with Richard Booker and Jane Bardsley from the Neighbourhood Team and Nicole Doxey and Steve Curran from the Community Hub Team.

We went over our key aims to merge both play areas, to not have the diagonal path separating them, for the play areas to be fully fenced and for equipment to be as accessible as possible. The budget is not clear yet but we encouraged the design of a full and complete play scheme, even if it isn't fully affordable as part of the initial hub scheme. We also encouraged maximising retention of existing equipment that has remaining life and to focus on delivery of new core and higher budget items, to allow potential gaps to be left for future smaller budget infill projects if necessary.

We reviewed a draft layout and provisional list of equipment prepared by Richard and the Neighbourhood Team seem to be aligned with us, having similar comments and aims as Friends of the Park. There remains a lot of work to develop a full scheme that makes the most of this opportunity but the meeting felt positive and productive.

Site Walk Around: Wednesday 11 October

Mark met again with Nicole Doxey and Steve Curran for a site walk-around. The main objective of this was to identify items that need to be protected, retained in storage, relocated within the park or given back to us to deal with. It also enabled discussion of some of our key concerns. Nicole and Steve also had a look at our equipment storage and now have a better understanding of why we need access to it.

Mark will meet members of Marple Civic Society tomorrow to discuss our responses to the consultation now the dust has settled and see what common ground we have.

Pirate Ship in infants play area

Richard still awaits update on delivery of replacement drumsticks. This is a piece of equipment that has proved totally inadequate and we look forward to being rid of it.

3.3 Projects

Outdoor Exercise Equipment Project

Start of installation was delayed until 18 September. Work is currently nearing completion but unfortunately there has been an issue with the Magnetic Bells unit.

The City Bike is installed and working, awaiting tarmac.

The Combi 5 Street Workout System is partially installed and still to finish.

The Magnetic Bells unit was installed incorrectly. This was noticed by us on 30 September and reported to Richard Booker at the council for investigation. It turns out that the legs had been installed approximately 700mm too deep in the ground. The unit has been removed and sent off-site for refurbishment. Return of the unit is now awaited along with delivery of some missing / replacement parts from Kompan.

It's very frustrating this has occurred and fortunate we spotted the issue.

Installation will recommence once the refurbished unit and parts are back on site. The tarmacking will be done in one visit once all 3 elements of the project are ready.

We've been invoiced for equipment supply but that was placed on hold after Mark asked to inspect the equipment before paying. Following satisfactory installation we will be invoiced for our contribution towards that too and will pay both together.

It was suggested that we should have an opening ceremony and we can consider timing and practicalities further once everything is completed to our satisfaction.

[Post Meeting Note: latest news (20 October) is that deliveries are expected late week commencing 23 October and the installation contractor will return to site to finish the works week commencing 30 October. A very disappointing delay indeed.]

Refurbishment of the stocks

The finishing touch has been applied to the stocks with the fitting of a new plaque acknowledging the restoration by Tony Heginbotham in 2004 and by Terry in 2023.

The cost of the plaque was £49.41.

Covid Commemoration Project: Flag Pole & Memorial

Construction of the monument started last week and was completed today. We can expect an invoice for our contribution of £400 towards this (funded by the Marple Mutual Aid team) and £200 for the War Memorial Flagpole repair in due course.

[PMN: There are a couple of issues with the monument installation works that Mark proposes to discuss with Jon Headlam when he returns from holiday.]

Moving the goalposts

Now the Community Hub location is clearer we can probably move forward with this. However, before we do that Mark will follow-up something mentioned in conversation with Richard Booker about the possibility of installing moveable goalposts.

Basketball Nets

New hoops with hooks were fitted by the council, including a new set of nets. Those have already worn out and we have fitted our free nets from Project Swish.

We've also purchased two more sets of nets ready for next time.

Magic Little Grant

No change – we still need to identify a small project costing around £500 that would be suitable for us to make a Magic Little Grant application to Local Giving in 2023.

Micaela suggested something relating to Girls Hub to make the skatepark / park more friendly / suitable for girls. We need to work out what this means in practical terms.

[PMN: replacement of the Boules Court sleepers is a possible option.]

3.4 Task Days

Task Days since the last meeting were 15, 29 July, 12 August, 9, 26 & 30 September.

Remaining task days this year are 14, 28 October, 11 & 25 November.

Task Day applications are approved until 31 December 2023.

Parking is arranged until end of November.

Note that the Ride of Remembrance is Sunday 22 October. Also Marple Santa Dash is Sunday 3 December and this year is planned to start and finish in the park.

4.0 Funding - Status of Funds

Income since last meeting:

£182.28	Local Giving.
£725.00	50-50 Club.
£45.00	Band Room SO.
£24.50	Gill's cards.
£60.00	Di's Jewellery.
£6.62	Collection buckets.
£198.57	Benji's Pet Foods and Accessories.
£20.00	Archaeological Resolutions (Virtual Tour Photos).
£100.00	Donation from the Carver Theatre.
£1,453.28	Total

Expenditure since last meeting:

£49.41	SS plaque for stocks.
£16.05	Lest We Forget Flags x 3.
£15.38	Basketball nets x 2.
£3.49	Leaf Grabbers.
£4.00	Hand Forks x 2.
£88.33	Total

Balance in main account: £34,695.16

Committed future spends:

£28,428.84	Outdoor Exercise Equipment.
£400.00	Covid Memorial (from Marple Mutual Aid).
£400.00	Ring-fenced for Skatepark (from Marple Hall School).
£200.00	War memorial flagpole maintenance.
£29,428.84	Total

Unallocated working balance: £5,266.32

Note: Cash totalling £426 from the Food and Drink Festival sales and several other sources was paid into bank today. Full breakdown will be included next meeting.

[Post Meeting Note: Mark has had some provisional discussions with Earl and Helen about how to spend the £400 donated by Marple Hall School for the benefit of skatepark users. He now needs to discuss these ideas with Richard and Jon.]

5.0 Any Other Business

5.1 Makers Market / Food and Drink Festival

We had a good day at the event. Di raised £73.50 with her jewellery and Gill £74 with cards, bags and wine waistcoats. With £18 in donations too, total was £165.50.

5.2 Little Growers

Joyce has been busy planting wallflowers at the last few task days and has around 60 left to go in during the next task day. We are thinking of sunflowers next year.

5.3 Handcrafted Christmas Sale: Sunday 26 November 2023

The Reading Rooms is booked and we need to start getting organised.

Format the same as last year, stalls plus cake sale, tombola and refreshments.

Terry advised that he doesn't wish to have a stall this year.

5.4 External changes to Hollins House Fire Escape

This remains unresolved. We chased up the Conservation Officer Paul Hartley on 24 July but received no reply. This was followed up again on 9 October and copied to Marple North Councillors. Paul has now replied to say that he has raised the matter with the Estates Team and advises:

"They provided a verbal indication to him earlier this year that the works would be rectified but unfortunately, despite reminders, no progress has been made to date. He will provide an answer once he gets a response."

Paul hasn't answered the questions posed about how this issue would have been dealt with if the private owner of a listed building didn't act within a reasonable timescale.

We may have to consider raising this at Marple Area Committee to make progress?

5.5 Marple Civic Society's idea for an accessible woodland

We have recommended that the Community Hub team adopt this scheme and speak to Marple Civic Society and us about it. They seemed interested in doing so.

5.6 Poppy Wreath / Remembrance Service

It was agreed that we would make a payment of £100 for our wreath this year. It was also agreed that Terry would lay it on our behalf at the service in the park.

5.7 Hiroshima Survivor Tree

We awaiting news of a decision from the council.

6.0 Next Meeting

Thursday 9 November 2023 at around 5.50pm for 6pm start in Marple Library.

Future dates for 2023: 14 December.