

**Friends of Marple Memorial Park Meeting
Monday 12 September 2022
Marple Library**

Present: Mick Thompson, Lorraine Thompson, Micaela Wood, Terry Wood, Joyce Reed, Bob Wilson, Cllr Malcolm Allan (part-time), Earl Nanton (RTIME Detached Youth Worker), Mark Whittaker.

1.0 Apologies: Patrick O'Herlihy, Lewis McLaren.

1.1 Minutes of last meeting 13 June 2022: Agreed.

3.0 Matters Arising:

3.1 Discussion with Youth Worker + Skatepark Users

Open forum discussion with users

Earl advised that skatepark users were unable to attend. User Lewis McLaren has sent his apologies and hopefully a meeting can be arranged in the future.

Earl updated the group on the two formal but low-key sessions held in the park over the summer, which he felt had been a great success. Earl has also worked with Marple Youth Project leader Helen Middleton to hold activities for young people in the park.

Earl has engaged with users who have come up with a list of suggestions to improve the park for young people and he will email these for us to consider in more detail.

Earl also mentioned that users have asked if the skatepark lighting can be set to go off later. These were changed some time ago and we agreed to request a review.

New Skatepark sign / Skatepark Etiquette

Earl has previously explained that many current skatepark users don't realise that we led the projects to improve the skatepark over the last 10 – 11 years. We felt this should be addressed and a sign to go at the skatepark explaining our involvement has been developed. A full-size mock-up of this was presented to the meeting.

We have allowed some space on this to include Skatepark Etiquette guidelines and we would like the input of skatepark users to finalise and agree what these informal rules should be. It will not be practical to discuss this at our next meeting, which is the AGM, so Mark and Earl will try to arrange a separate meeting for this.

HB Printing have priced up the 1260 x 660 sign for us at £148 with standard fixings and £190 if special clamps / brackets are needed. This expenditure was approved.

Mark advised that we have a small noticeboard donated by the library that could be placed at the skatepark. He will review the location of the sign with council officers.

3.2 Antisocial Behaviour / CCTV / Police

ASB Update

We are pleased that the summer holidays have passed fairly quietly from our perspective. There have been a few incidents that we are aware of but nothing like the the antisocial behaviour experienced last year and earlier this year. This is largely down to the increased policing implemented by GMP using overtime and other methods to increase their presence in the park. We understand some trouble has moved to other areas of Marple but GMP advise they are getting on top of this too.

We are aware that motorbikes were reported in the park again on 14 August and there was an incident in a neighbour's garden involving young people who had been drinking on 24 August to which the police and ambulance had to be called.

We've had damage to a large structural plant in the war memorial beds and also theft of a plant there, and one of the pots went missing from the school gardens, but on the whole things have been much better with many positive things happening in the park.

PC Mayers has advised that he is making a case for more overtime around Halloween and Bonfire Night and we hope that this will be successful.

Mick asked if there had been any progress on councillors speaking to the Secondary School Consortium and local primary headteachers as requested at Easter because it was felt that this could still be of long-term benefit. Cllr. Allan agreed to follow up.

CCTV Update

At the June meeting we learned progress was being made on CCTV improvements but also that we would be excluded from being involved in assessing the effectiveness of the changes. We have protested extensively to councillors and officers repeatedly about not being treated as proper stakeholder in the park yet again but have had no response whatsoever from anyone to our complaints made over 3 months ago.

Cllr Allan provided further update that Stockport Homes is ready for councillors to visit and they are awaiting proposed dates. It appears to still be the intention of Stockport Homes and council officers to exclude us from this and we remain completely dissatisfied at the situation. Cllr Allan is hopeful a way to involve us can be found.

Actions ongoing from Crime Survey recommendations

Repairs to Hollins House windows are now all complete and it looks so much better.

We have submitted proposed text for the sign concerning broken glass that police suggested should be added to the fence near the picnic benches. Council officers are reluctant to implement this and have asked us to focus on adding artwork to the gable end of the Bowlers Hut, suggesting that we can review the need for the sign after.

We have written to the council requesting confirmation that we can install the artwork from the School Gardens Project on the gable end. They have responded positively but asked us to prepare a mock-up image like the one we did for the artwork roundels.
[Post Meeting Note: Mock-up submitted for approval 27 September 2022.]

Provision for secure storage of waste bins currently located next to the police station by using one of the parking spaces: ideas and suggestions have been made to the council with a request to do a layout to develop a scheme. Jon Headlam has recently indicated that the council are not keen to pursue this any further at this time as they think the new police CCTV gives adequate protection from the bins being used to access the police station roof or the bins being removed and set-alight in the park. This has been accepted with the proviso that we will play the "told-you-so" card in the event that either of these things happen. Cllr Allan was concerned as he thought this had been moving forward and agreed to follow up with his own enquiry.

3.3 Bowling Green, Buildings and Infrastructure

Pavilion Art Project Phase II

We still have the pelmets to paint and install but the project is otherwise finished.

Storage of rubbish under canopy

The council and TLC have been persuaded to stop storing rubbish from the bins under the canopy and there is now an extra waste storage bin near to the library that they are using instead. It is a huge improvement and we would like to extend our thanks to Cllr Shan Alexander for taking this up for us and the council for listening.

Skatepark repairs

Canvas have at last provided a price and an order has been placed for the fire-

damaged concrete repair. The cost is £2050+VAT but when it will be done is unclear. Repairs to the wear and tear on the original jump-box grind rails is not covered by this order and will probably be undertaken by the contractor for the new Torkington Park skatepark in the future. Current estimate is 1st or 2nd Quarter of 2023 and there is a risk that the rail may become unsafe before then. This is being monitored.

Exercise Equipment Project

Fundraising over the summer has gone well and the allocation of a further £9k to the ring-fenced funds was considered and agreed later in the meeting. This means we have a total of £19k currently set-aside and hope to reach at least £20k by year end. A dialogue is ongoing with Thad Barker about a council contribution.

Mark now needs to have discussions with Marple Runners and the Senior Citizens, progress the brief and take forward with Richard Booker. A page on our web site will also soon be needed to promote the project and aid consultation.

Drainage at woodland behind library

It has now been confirmed by UU and the council that the problem drains are the council's own responsibility. Mark raised this with Cllr Becky Senior at Marple Library on Saturday 27 August in the hope that a permanent solution to regular overflowing during heavy rain can be pursued before the winter sets in.

We've asked for a hasp to be fitted to the inner door of the gents loos so that it can be closed off in isolation when blocked instead of completely shutting the whole gents and restricting access to the urinals when it is not necessary. *[PMN: Completed]*

We were told by a member of the public that the library is closing their toilet to the public on Saturdays. We found this very strange and Cllr Allan agreed to investigate. *[PMN: Cllr Allan has reported back to say this is not correct. The toilets are not accessible when the library is in Open+ mode and access to upstairs is closed but they are open during normal opening hours unless there is a fault or blockage.]*

Infants Play Area picnic benches

Volunteers from AstraZeneca created hard-standings under the benches for us during their community payback event on Wednesday 31st August. They also painted fencing and pruned shrub beds. It may take a while for the hard-standings to compact.

We have fitted the first picnic bench top cover – a town road-scape for toy cars – and started work on the second, which is a graphic of the solar system.

Allotment beds

The Allotment Association told us during the summer that they wished to stop looking after their adopted beds as they are struggling for volunteers now. Mark agreed that we would take them back and do something new with them.

They have already received a good tidy-up by our volunteers led by Bernard in July.

It is proposed to reuse the sleepers from the School Gardens plus extras to raise the rear bed. We will need to purchase more sleepers, soil and compost. It was estimated that a budget of £250 to £300 would be needed to do this, which was approved.

3.4 100th Birthday of the Park

Events

Carnival participation, the Treasure Hunt and the Marple Local History Society exhibition were a great success. The Picnic in the Park less so due to the poor weather forcing it indoors but at least it was able to go ahead and was well attended.

We raised almost £4,000 with the Treasure Hunt and Di has recently organised a personalised thank you letter to each of our supporters giving them the news.

Marple School Gardens Project

This has been a great success too. The St. Mary's bed has been emptied and dismantled already, the All Saints' one is set to have plants removed 22 September.

We are still waiting for receipts and spreadsheet from St Mary's before we can reimburse their costs but All Saints' has been done.

A big thank you to Sarah Braide for coming to us with the idea and helping to organise the whole thing too by liaising with the schools and Cheshire Wildlife Trust.

We will consider doing this again but next year is Open Gardens so maybe 2024.

3.5 Task Days

We've held seven task days since the last meeting including the one with 20+ volunteers from AstraZeneca, so we've got a lot of work done.

We've welcomed several new volunteers over the summer, which has been great.

Our task day application for the second half of 2022 was approved and remaining are: 24 September; 15, 29 October; 12, 26 November and possibly 31 December.

Remembrance Sunday is 13 November and we are in the park the day before.

4.0 Funding - Status of Funds

Income since last meeting:

£3,248.00	Treasure Hunt income (Total £3,800).
£100.00	Donation from "The Coffee Group".
£100.00	Donation from Mr T. Williams.
£320.00	Centenary booklet sales.
£210.00	Local Giving.
£802.00	50-50 Club June, July and August income.
£45.00	Band Room monthly payments.
£116.00	Card sales (Carnival + Makers Market).
£101.00	Jewellery sales (Carnival + Makers Market).
£117.00	Collected in park.

Expenditure since last meeting:

£126.00	Tools and materials.
£414.00	School Gardens Project.
£130.00	Face painting at Treasure Hunt.
£156.00	Treasure Hunt (mainly chocolate coins).

Current balance: £21,300.75

Committed future spends:

- £10,000 Ring-fenced for Exercise Equipment.
- £250 for the School Gardens Project.

Unallocated working balance: £11,050.75

It was agreed to allocate a further £9k toward the Exercise Equipment Project, increasing the ring-fenced sum to £19k and leaving a working balance of £2,050.75.

5.0 Any Other Business

5.1 AGM: Proposed committee changes

The AGM will be the next meeting, Thursday 13 October. Provisional committee changes remain as previously discussed with Mick stepping down as Chairman.

5.2 Food and Drink Festival: Saturday 17 September

We have a stall at the Food and Drink Festival to raise funds for the park selling cards, jewellery, booklets and calendars provided by Stationery Supplies. Mark passed around a copy of the calendar, which sells for £7.50 each with £1 to the park fund.

Gill, Mark, Di, Greg, Bernard, Mick, Larry and Eden will help on the day.

5.3 Christmas Crafters Fair

Gill and Di are hoping to organise another Christmas Crafters Fair at the Hawk Green Reading Room. The one last year was very successful despite being arranged at very short notice, so they hope to do even better this time. Details are still to be firmed up but they are looking for any other "crafty" volunteers who could make things to sell.

5.4 Community Hub Scheme

Malcolm advised that a Levelling-Up application was submitted by the council and the outcome is expected in the autumn, hopefully by around mid-November. Funding is key and if successful they would expect further consultation and planning next year. Our suggestion to reorientate the scheme has been taken onboard.

5.5 Ice Cream Van

Since learning of the fees and constraints applied to the new Coffee Van, who gives back to the park and the council significantly, we have been making enquiries about the licencing of the ice cream van, who as far as we know gives nothing back.

We are not trying to stop the van coming into the park but we feel that the arrangements as we currently understand them seem very unfair.

We have now been advised that the standard street traders' licence allows the van to come into the park for up to one hour per day without further fees.

We also have concerns about the locations used and would prefer to see a safe location considered and agreed by the council. They seem reluctant to do this.

5.6 Use of weedkiller in the park

It is several months since we tried to initiate a conversation about the use of weedkiller in the park and discovered that it appears to be a taboo subject with TLC declining to discuss it with us and council officers saying that it's a complex issue.

We understand that other groups have made demands and caused problems but our aim is simply to understand what is done and why, and see if there is anything we can do or any decisions that can be made to reduce weedkiller use. We just want a grown-up conversation. At the last meeting Cllr Allan agreed to raise with officers.

We understand that TLC are now prepared to discuss this with us and hopefully we can gain a better understanding and consider how we might be able to help.

We are now waiting for Jon Headlam to arrange a meeting with TLC.

5.7 Flag at half-mast

Following the Queen's death the Union flag is flying at half-mast in the park.

5.8 Ride of Remembrance / "Marple Pals" Walks

We are pleased to learn that the Ride of Remembrance is being organised again by the Marple Poppy Appeal Team and this will take place on Sunday 23 October.

Andy Cook is also going to be doing his "Marple Pals" guided walks with the Poppy Appeal Team too. These will be on four Sundays in October and likely to "sell out".

5.9 Skatepark Art Project

Helen Middleton of Marple Youth Project is set to lead a proposed art project to decorate the skatepark ramps with help from young people and skatepark users.

The proposal is for a pilot project that will decorate the top level ramp facing into the park first and we have applied for a "Magic Little Grant" of £500 to cover this.

[PMN: The application has been successful and the £500 award received.]

If this is a success we could hopefully work with Helen to do the other ramps too.

5.10 Small war memorial repairs

It was recently noticed that there was cracking and loose masonry on the small memorial where people place their crosses during November. The council was alerted and they have placed an order with a contractor for repairs.

We have asked that these are done in good time for Remembrance. We have also asked for a small amount of pointing on the main memorial to be done and this has been agreed with the contractor too.

5.11 Tree near to Lock 11

Someone cut large low limbs from this popular tree near to Lock 11 last Thursday night. A visitor to the park noticed two men cutting at around 20.47 and reported it to Mark and to the police. Mark spoke on the phone with an officer in Marple Police Station who said he would attend but we later learned this didn't happen.

It looks like a neighbour has probably done this to try and stop young people gathering in that area of the park. Mark has written to councillors, police and council officers asking them to address this so that it doesn't happen again.

The council has confirmed that they will take action to inspect the tree and will liaise with local residents to assist GMP in their enquiries.

[Post Meeting Note: Sadly there was a second attack on the tree on Thursday 22 September and all the lower branches have now been removed and scattered throughout the woodland. The council have conducted a house-to-house and warned neighbours that it is being taken very seriously. We have issued a public statement here: <https://www.marplememorialpark.org.uk/notices/tree-near-to-lock-11.html>]

6.0 Next Meeting AGM

Thursday 13 October 2022 at 6.15pm in Marple Library.

Future meeting dates for 2022:

Thursdays: 10 November & 8 December.