

**Friends of Marple Memorial Park
Thursday 8 December 2022
Marple Library**

Present: Mick Thompson, Micaela Wood, Diane Jackson, Mark Whittaker.
Part time: Lorraine Thompson.

1.0 Apologies: Cllr. Malcolm Allan, Joyce Reed, Terry Wood, Patrick O'Herlihy.

2.0 Minutes of Meeting 10 November 2022: Agreed.

3.0 Matters Arising:

3.1 Handcrafted Christmas Sale

The event at Hawk Green Reading Room was a great success, well done everyone!

The grand total raised was £930.57 including after-sales. A full report was shared with the following highlights: Tombola £220; Cakes Sale £115, Stallholders £135, Diane's Jewellery £170, Terry's Wooden items £122.50 and Gill's cards etc. £93.

The group thanked all our volunteers and supporters for their help, with special thanks to Diane, Gill, Pauline and Mark for organising the event.

Thanks to Larry for distributing posters to shops. Micaela offered to help with this next year so there is an even wider reach. Some shops are happy to display larger posters than we used this year so it was agreed to produce a range of sizes next time.

The web site has been updated:

<https://www.marplememorialpark.org.uk/events/handcrafted-christmas-sale.html>

3.2 Antisocial Behaviour / CCTV / Police

ASB Update

There have been a couple more fires in bins dealt with by the Fire Brigade. The police have asked if the bins can be emptied towards the end of the day to reduce risks.

On Monday damage and mess was caused at the war memorial with pampas grass strewn everywhere. This was reported and we asked the council to check CCTV. They confirmed that technical issues have still not been resolved, see next item.

Although still frustrating, the ASB situation is much improved compared to last year.

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 still no further news on the CCTV beyond the very unsatisfactory situation reported at previous meetings.

Cllr Allan advised that he will be following this up in the near future.

Actions ongoing from Crime Survey recommendations

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

3.3 Buildings and Infrastructure

Pavilion Art Project Phase II

Pelmets still to paint and install.

Skatepark repairs

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

The situation will now be monitored for future issues.

Use of weedkiller in the park

In order to make it clear to everyone what was agreed with TLC managers we will post details of this on the noticeboard in the Mess Room shared with operatives.

Park Benches

Proposed locations and inscriptions have been provisionally agreed with 4 potential bench donors. There are 9 more on our waiting list pending resolution of bases.

Location plans and base details have been sent to Anthony Crook for agreement.

Enquiries have been made with TLC managers to clarify mowing constraints.

Locations and mowing details have been agreed but the issue of bases has still to be resolved and is now causing delays. We have insisted 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, which we have had poor experience of in our park. 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.

Mark has written to the donors to explain why things are being delayed. We hope this can be clarified by the council as soon as possible so that we can move forward.

We will not start a dialogue with the remaining potential donors until this is resolved.

Town Centre Benches

We installed the Nativity sculptures on Market Street on Saturday 3 December 2022.

Community Hub

We've written to Marple Councillors to express our concerns about the lack of recent consultation with us on the siting of the Community Hub. Mark has also discussed our concerns at length with Cllr Allan last month and today but we have been told it will not be possible to have any form of dialogue prior to the next round of consultation.

Councillors have given reassurances but we remain sceptical we are understood.

Our concerns are that snippets of information received suggest the park will be cut in half by the latest scheme and we are worried it will have been developed too far by the time we get to the next stage of consultation, making it very difficult to change.

It is very frustrating that we appear to have exhausted all avenues to discuss what is proposed for our park in what we think is a timely manner. We will just have to accept that conflict may develop when the scheme reaches consultation and planning.

3.4 Projects

Skatepark Sign

The final artwork was sent to HB Printing but appears to have gone astray, perhaps due to file size. It was confirmed received on 1 December and HB are now working on a timescale for production. We have chased again recently and awaiting a reply.

[Post Meeting Note: HB have advised they are having some issues with the company that supplies the fixings and are currently trying to source elsewhere. They will let us know the timescales as soon as they are able to resolve.]

Outdoor Exercise Equipment Project

Mark has met on site with Richard Booker and representatives from three equipment suppliers with potentially very different offers for our exercise equipment project.

The tenders are due on 17 December and will be based on a baseline budget of £25k, with options for increased scope of +5k and +10k. The proposed strategy is to select a preferred supplier to develop the project with before placing an order.

Richard has advised that it will be best to have a small user group to help make the suppliers selection, as differences between the bids may be complex to explain. We will try to form a small but knowledgeable group with a good cross section of user profiles including age, gender, fitness and abilities to help us make the best decisions.

Mark has spoken with the chairperson of Marple Senior Citizens and they are not interested. Further discussions are needed with Marple Runners and other groups.

Fund-raising has gone well in the last few weeks, especially with the Handcrafted Christmas Sale. It was agreed that we would ring-fence a further £1,750 of funds to the project, taking the current total to £21k and beating our year end target by £1k.

Skatepark Art Mural

The council has approved the collage designs to be applied to the ramps and they were displayed at the Christmas Sale on 27 November. They are now on display in the library until after Christmas. An article has also been featured in the Marple Review.

We are awaiting information from Helen to close out the Magic Little Grant.

As explained last month, the transfer of artwork to the ramps will be funded by Helen's grant award from the National Lottery and she hopes to start in the spring.

Allotment beds

The council has kindly been moving recycled paving slabs for this project from Etherow Park to our park over the past few weeks. We have approximately half of them now and need to confirm over Christmas how many more we need.

Infants Play Area picnic benches

A solution to the hard-standings that have not compacted remains unresolved at present. It was suggested at the last meeting that we ask AstraZeneca (whose volunteers created the hardstandings for us) if they would be able help. A request for them to consider this has been made via Employee Volunteering, who have said they will pass it on. There is a low expectation of success but if you don't ask!

The acceptable solutions offered by Richard Booker are:

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

Given a source of funding our preference would be the tarmac solution.

For the time being fitting of the second bench top is on hold.

Wildflower meadows

We believe the large area we tried in 2019/20 was unsuccessful due to the age of seed and other factors. The new plan is to try smaller areas and discover what works best, including some of the grassed areas we've agreed will be left un-mown by TLC.

Anthony Crook 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.

Bob has passed his Yellow Rattle seed to Gill and Joyce, who have sown most of this to hopefully germinate and grow our own plugs at home for use next year too.

3.5 Task Days

The last task day was 12 November and the park was in great shape for the Remembrance Service thanks to our and TLC efforts. The 26 November was cancelled due to personal issues and the Craft Sale that evening and the following day.

We'll decide nearer the time on the last scheduled date in 2022 of 31 December.

We 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:

£905.57	Handcrafted Christmas Sale.
£53.00	Booklets.
£113.50	Gill's cards etc.
£38.96	Park collection bucket.
£21.97	Your Local Shop collection box.
£15.00	Band Room monthly payment.
£230.00	50-50 Club Draw for October.
£49.99	Donation from Magazine Company*.

* this sum was refunded in error by the company after a fraudulent transaction on our 50-50 Club account was recovered by the bank. We offered to return it or accept it as a donation over 12 months ago and have had no response from them.

Expenditure since last meeting:

£92.45	Skatepark Mural Project.
£41.49	Tamper tool.
£18.19	Spray paints.

Current balance: £23,649.98

Committed future spends:

£21,000.00	Ring-fenced for Outdoor Exercise Equipment.
£300.00	Budget for Allotment Bed.
£190.00	Budget for Skatepark Sign.

Unallocated working balance: £2,159.98

We're looking forward to learning how the sales of Marple Stationery Supplies 2023 Vintage Calendar have gone. We understand it's the most successful yet and we've been able to help a little with sales at our events and Marple Local History meetings. We may not hear until the New Year unless they sell-out before Christmas.

5.0 Any Other Business

5.1 UK's Favourite Park Award presentation

We decided to attend the ceremony after resolution of the toilet bed saga and asked that TLC Operatives who work in the park were also invited, especially the old-hands who we first began working with in 2003 when our group was formed. That 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. The award will be placed in the park mess room that we share with TLC Operatives.

The council issued a press release without sharing it with us. We've only seen it or the photo because Cllr. Allan passed it on. It's a shame as we could have corrected the spelling and grammar. We've used Anne's photos on our web site as they are better.

We understand the news has appeared in the Stockport Review and Express.

5.2 Covid Memorial

The proposal for a new flag pole plus a small monument with plaque looks like it is coming together at present. Jonathan Headlam is currently talking to suppliers and he hopes to have the existing flag pole foundation examined by a specialist company to determine if any of the infrastructure can be reused to save funds. Once the flag pole costs are clear it should be possible to finalise the other elements of the project.

We are pleased with this proposal as it would link the Covid memorial to the flag pole that we used throughout the Covid pandemic to fly NHS and Rainbow flags.

5.3 Toilet Block bed

Following the council's denial that the damage was done by one of their contractors we conducted our own investigations on Friday 11 November. We found the arisings from the work in a single huge clump placed in the Green Waste Area. 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've received an apology and an offer to replace the plants and shrubs. We recently passed a list of the items lost to the council and have stressed that we are expecting them to replace everything with like-for-like mature specimens.

5.4 Dead tree in car park

To recap on this issue, we reported the tree as an eyesore and potential hazard in June and were told in July that it would be removed in the autumn and ground out so a replacement could be planted this winter. We've followed up a number of times.

We are now told it will be removed as soon as the council has capacity this winter and reduced to a stump of 4ft, to be ground out and replaced next winter when allocation of funds allow. We've expressed frustration that the stump will be an eyesore in such a prominent location and at having to wait another year to grind out and replace.

Mark asked Cllr Allan if he could look the funding issue when they met today.

5.5 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.

Mark appraised the group of further discussions on the issue of support for CBD over winter with Cllr. Allan today and that he agreed to talk further with his colleagues.

5.6 Volunteer recruitment

Diane expressed an interest in doing some work on volunteer recruitment in the New Year, not just for task days but for all aspects of what we do, and particularly with a view to engaging with younger adults and families. We agreed this is a great idea!

6.0 Next Meeting

Thursday 12 January 2023 at 6pm for 6.15pm start in Marple Library.

Dates for 2023 (confirmed library bookings shown in bold):

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.