

Friends of Marple Memorial Park (AGM)
Monday 12th November 2012
Marple Library

Present: Terry Wood, Bob Wilson, Micaela Wood, Joyce Reed, Patrick O'Herlihy, Anne Frazer, Jonathan Long, Mark Whittaker.

1.0 Apologies: Lorraine & Mick Thompson, Adrian Ellis.

2.0 Minutes of the last meeting: Agreed.

3.0 Matters Arising.

3.1 Park Benches

Refurbishment of bowling green benches sponsored by Senior Citizens

The cast iron sections of the second bench have now been painted and are stored in the lock-up in the park with the timber slats. The plaque has been fitted.

The slats are not stored flat and there is a concern that they may warp. It was decided to transfer them to Mark's garage where they can be stored flat until the bench is re-assembled. It can be assembled there and then transported to the park using Bob's truck. Terry and Patrick will endeavour to rebuild the bench before the next task day so that it can be collected and installed on Saturday 24 November.

£500 is set aside for payment of materials and the David Lewis Centre's services.

Replacement of bench opposite Senior Citizens Hall

The bench has now been installed and the paving completed. Mrs Bluhm is very pleased with it and Mark has asked Anthony Crook to invoice the group for our contribution of £604 from the donation of £650 given by the Bluhm family.

Refurbishment of bench near entrance sponsored by Costa Coffee

Terry and Patrick completed the Costa Coffee bench during the last task day.

Refurbishment of other bench near entrance sponsored by All Things Nice

The second bench near the Co-Op steps has been refurbished using recycled timbers from benches that have been replaced but it does not look as good as the Costa Coffee bench. Patrick has now managed to secure funding for this one to be fully refurbished with new timber and a plaque sponsored by All Things Nice.

Mark will order the plaque and ask Terry to order the wood as soon as the sponsorship monies are received. Terry warned that he would not be able to get the wood as cheaply as the last time as there had been a mistake in the pricing but it will still be possible to do the work within the budget of £180 requested from All Things Nice.

Refurbishment of other benches

Further examination of Jim Heald's bench has revealed that it cannot be dismantled and it will have to be sanded and treating in-situ. This will be done next year.

The Ian Rice bench, near the towpath entrance at lock 12, will be treated with green-away and then coated with preservative next year.

At the last task day Gill was approached by an elderly lady who said that she had donated a bench in 1998. She was delighted that it had been refurbished and wanted to know who to thank. Gill explained that it was the Friends of the Park and she said that she would write to thank us. *(Post meeting note: a thank you card has now been received from 90-year-old Pamela Holloway of Glossop. Her bench is the one with arms towards the Garth Road end of the park).*

Patrick raised the issue of two picnic benches on the Recreation Ground that are badly in need of refurbishment. Although they are outside of the park he wondered if the group would be prepared to do the work. Mark suggested that rather than refurbish them they could be replaced with two new ones like the one made by the David Lewis Centre that was installed in the Infants Play Area. At a cost of £80 each these are fantastic value and the quality has already been established as acceptable to the council. Patrick will apply to Graeme Vout, the Town & District Centre Manager for a small grant to cover the cost of these.

Jonathan advised that the council should be able to help the group with the supply of paint, preservative and other maintenance materials. The group will compile a list of materials that would be useful for the bench refurbishment and other activities.

3.2 Diamond Jubilee Project

Planning Permission

Councillor Martin Candler has taken up the issue of a possible reduction of planning costs in relation to the Jubilee Project sculpture and it is hoped that he will be successful in recovering some or all of the £255 planning fees the group has paid.

Completion of the Project

The application to the Vernon Building Society was not successful, so the project will be closed out without the optional bespoke bench.

This means that the display panel, with a budgeted cost of £880, is the last item and can now go ahead. Mark will start work on this as soon as he can.

The projected balance of funds raised for the project is £650. This will be allocated to future planting of the flowerbed. The college Horticultural Department have indicated that they would like to be involved in future planting so Mark will contact them to confirm this and ask them for their proposals of how they would like to use the bed.

3.3 Infants Play Area Fence

Painting of the Infants Play Area has gone well but there are some areas, mainly the inner fence and the entrances that will have to be completed next year when the weather is again suitable for painting.

At the last task day Patrick dug out the soil that was being splashed up the front of the fence when it rained, so this problem should be resolved. The section of fence will need cleaning and repainting in the New Year too.

3.4 Treatment of Sculptures

No further work needs to be done until next year.

3.5 Wildflowers & Bulbs

Nothing in particular needs to be done on the wild flowers now apart from collecting and scattering seeds and waiting to see how things develop next year.

The bulbs obtained by Joyce from Lyme Park still need to be planted and this will be tackled during the next task day on 24 November.

3.6 Skate Park

Two meetings to discuss how this project can be taken forward were held on 26 October and 9 November. They were attended by Mark, Graham Clarke (Marple Civic Society / MVP), Richard Booker (Greenspace Project Officer), skater Lewis Abbott and at the latter, BMX Rider Ben Meek. The next meeting is 23 November.

It has been identified that the Veolia Environmental Trust (Landfill) is currently the most promising source of funds for the proposed skate park extension. Veolia have confirmed that our project satisfies the current location requirements and it is one that they would accept an application for providing we met their other criteria.

Veolia fund projects up to £100,000, although their web site says that above £70,000 is rare and the average is £20,000 to £40,000. Their key criteria for projects where the total cost is over £25,000 (as ours) is that 20% of the funds must be in place before they will accept an application. In addition, a payment of 10% of their grant amount must be paid by an independent source in the event of an award. They also require planning permission to have been granted before an application is made.

A target has been agreed to try and raise between £16,000 and £20,000 to allow an application to Veolia to be made in 12 months time. In the meantime other possible sources of funding will be considered as and when they arise.

It has been proposed that a skate park user group should be set up to work with us to raise funds and support grant applications and it's hoped that Lewis and Ben will take the lead on this. Currently Richard Booker is looking at the possibility of us making a grant application to the Co-Op Community Fund to pay for a freelance Youth Worker to help set up the user group and to engage the users in a positive way.

The council have agreed to install the old notice board that used to be at the main entrance near to the skate park to help to communicate what is happening to the skate park users. Mark and Adrian agreed a location for it on Sunday and it should be installed on Tuesday or Wednesday this week (*PMN: it was installed Tuesday.*)

Mark has also arranged for a free stall at the Christmas Cracker that can be shared by the skaters to put on a display about the project and possibly to raise some funds.

Mark advised that the group currently has nearly £3,000 of unallocated funds in their account and proposed that we allocate £2,000 of this to the skate park project to get the ball rolling on fundraising. This was agreed and also that this will become the main focus of our fundraising efforts for the immediate future.

Ideas for fund raising were discussed and initial suggestions included events in the park, tying in with the Carnival, a collection bottle at the library, a guess the weight or number competition and asking the Town Team for some of the Portas bid money.

3.7 Teen Shelter

Last month the group were alarmed to learn of the conversation that Anne had with young users of the skate park that revealed details of bullying and intimidation, drugs abuse, including wrapping the teen shelter with cling film to make a "smoking den" and encouragement of the younger kids to try drugs by older users of the teen shelter. It was agreed that Mark would write to Jonathan Long, the Greenspace Asset Management Officer, to request that the teen shelter be removed from the park.

Jonathan has replied to advise that the council are currently reluctant to do this and he attended the meeting in order to clarify the reasons behind this decision and to explain the actions that the council proposes to take to deal with the concerns raised.

Jonathan advised that one of the key concerns was where the perpetrators would go next if the teen shelter were removed. It is thought likely that they would relocate to other areas of the park like the Bowling Green hut, around the library or in the small Wendy house in the Infants Play Area, where they could cause more damage than they are currently doing. The group understand this concern.

Jonathan also stressed the importance of reporting offences to the police but the group feel that this is unrealistic in the case of bullying and intimidation. The real result is that the younger kids end up having to avoid using the skating facilities during the day if the teen shelter is occupied. It is clear from discussions with skate park users that there are two distinct groups of people: those using the skate park for healthy recreation and others who use the teen shelter for a variety of less savoury purposes. There is no crossover between the two groups and they do not mix well.

The council's preference for dealing with the matter is to engage the Neighbourhood Policing team and the Anti-Social Behaviour Team to focus attention on the people using the shelter and try to tackle the offences taking place through their involvement. Jonathan asked for time to see if this approach would be effective.

The group were not particularly satisfied with this approach as they don't feel it is tackling the issue of young skaters not being able to use the skate park facility during the day but agreed to give the council time to implement their plan.

Jonathan agreed to report back in January on progress made and if possible to bring representatives of the Policing and Anti-Social teams too. In the event that the group remain dissatisfied the matter will be taken up with local councillors.

3.8 Park Cottage

The drainage works are almost finished and there is just painting and a few other minor works outstanding to the cottage itself that are expected to be complete by Christmas. The Bands plan to start using it for youth band training early in the New Year and will then focus on fundraising activities for the extension.

The sale of the plot of land near the cinema is still subject to ongoing discussions with the council over ownership of the land across which access is needed to make the plans to build domestic dwellings on the site viable.

3.9 Task Days

Previous Task Days since last meeting

Saturday 27 October

Flowerbeds were cleared of leaves and tidied, paving slabs were cut for the new bench near to the Senior Citizens' Hall and the Costa Coffee bench was restored.

Saturday 10 November

A final tidy-up of the War Memorial beds and the ornamental flowerbeds was carried out so that everything was at its best for the Remembrance Service on Sunday 11th.

Remaining Task Days 2012 – 24 November & 29 December

It is hoped to get the second Senior Citizens' bench installed and to plant the bulbs donated by Lyme Park.

Mark will send out the parking request for specified vehicles and the task day emails.

Task Day Dates for 2013

26 January; 23 February; 30 March; 13 & 27 April; 11 & 25 May; 15 & 29 June; 13 & 27 July; 17 & 31 August; 14 & 28 September; 26 October; 30 November; 28 December 2013.

4.0 Funding - Status of Funds

Current bank balance is £5,681. Income since the last meeting includes £5 from Mr Senior's regular donations, £100 from Marple Carnival and 81p interest.

Expenditure in the same period is £25 for the Poppy Wreath, £46 to Patrick for various maintenance materials, £37 for the Costa Coffee plaque, £76 for the Senior Citizens' plaques and £7.50 on winter bedding plants.

Following allocation of £2,000 to the skate park, committed funds are now £4,693, including £1,529 allocated to the Jubilee Project, £500 on the Senior Citizens' bench refurbishment, £604 on the Bluhm family bench and £60 for timber on the Costa Coffee bench refurbishment. This leaves an uncommitted working balance of £988.

5.0 Any Other Business

5.1 Puddle at main entrance

The pathway at the main entrance to the park has now been partially resurfaced and looks much better. Jonathan believes it has resolved the puddling of water.

5.2 Options for new trees

Anthony Crook has asked for feedback from the group on what types of trees we would like to replace the Conker and Hawthorn that were recently removed. This was discussed and the majority felt that direct replacements were not necessary. However, it was agreed that we should ask Anthony if it is possible to have two specimens of *Amelanchier lamarckii* as substitutes to plant in alternative locations.

5.3 Ash trees

There are several mature specimens of Ash tree in the park. So far there has been no occurrence of Ash tree disease in the borough and the council are putting in measures to ensure that no new specimens of Ash are introduced. Apart from this, all that can be done is to monitor the situation and see what happens.

5.4 Carnival presentation evening

Gill, Micaela, Anne and Lorraine attended the presentation evening and collected a cheque from the Carnival Committee for £100 towards projects in the park.

5.5 Remembrance Service

Terry and Micaela were successful in getting the group on the formal list of wreath layers at last. Terry laid the wreath on behalf of the group. It was a good turnout for the service, although not as many as last year based on photographs of the event.

Jonathan advised that the handrails had been re-bonded to the stonework on the memorial before this year's service.

5.6 Green Space Forum / AGM

The GSF newsletter was reviewed. It was noted that an events log system and new insurance for Friends Groups are in the process of being set up and we will be notified when they are operational. Risk Assessment training is also due to be arranged.

The new insurance, and to a large degree the RA training, is particularly important to Friends groups who work without council supervision. In the case of Memorial Park it is normal for Bob to attend our task days and the group feel that this is a very important aspect of our success. Mark stressed to Jonathan that if the council decided to withdraw support and attendance at our task days and expected us to get on with it ourselves it would be likely to have a very detrimental effect on the ongoing success.

It was also noted that the GSF newsletter had a "Focus on Marple Memorial Park" article that was very complimentary and stated that "The Park is a perfect example of what can be achieved by a partnership between volunteers and permanent staff."

Mark will write to the council to emphasise the importance of this partnership.

Joyce also highlighted that Friends of Cromwell Avenue Park were experiencing great difficulty with red tape and frustration at council requirements and were at risk of folding before they had really got going if the issues are not resolved soon.

5.7 Letter from Cllr Hogg / Megan Black Email

The letter from Cllr Hogg asking, "*Would your group be willing to take over the management and maintenance of your park?*" was shown to members at the last task day and distributed with the agenda to this meeting.

After the task day Mark wrote to Megan Black to advise that we are already heavily involved in maintenance and improvements to the park and we are uncertain what more we can do as volunteers. However, we are prepared to listen and Megan was invited to attend this meeting to talk to us.

Megan was not able to attend but replied to say: "*The letter has been sent as there are many possibilities to explore with our Friends of Groups. One might be the transfer of the asset to a Trust, having a board of trustees, setting your own standards, budgets etc. Another might be the Friends of group being given the budget to maintain and manage the park on behalf of the Council. They would be expected to maintain the park to the Council's standard commissioning services and responding to complaints etc. There are lots of other options in between – this is why we want to know who might be interested in talking to us about what the possibilities are.*"

Nobody at the meeting felt that any of the specific suggestions made by Megan were viable for a group of our size and situation but we remain prepared to listen to what the other options in between might be and Mark will reply accordingly.

5.8 Christmas Lunch

The feedback received by Micaela about holding the Christmas lunch before or after Christmas leaned slightly in favour of after, so a date of 19th January 2013 and a provisional location of the Hare and Hounds on Dooley Lane was agreed.

Micaela advised that it would be better for her to talk to members on the telephone or face-to-face so Mark will email the list of members and ask them to pass on their numbers to Micaela so that she can talk to them about menus and costs etc.

5.9 Pride in Marple Awards

Everyone was very disappointing to learn that our nominations for Bob and Patrick in the "Pride in Marple" Awards did not make the final selection.

6.0 Date of next Meeting

Monday 10 December 2012 at 6pm in Marple Library.