

**Friends of Marple Memorial Park Meeting
Monday 13 June 2022
Marple Library**

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

1.0 Apologies: Patrick O'Herlihy, Diane Jackson, Terry Wood.

1.1 Minutes of last meeting 9 May 2022: Agreed.

3.0 Matters Arising:

3.1 Antisocial Behaviour / CCTV / Police

ASB Update

Since the last meeting there had been less vandalism and damage in the park, but unfortunately there was an assault in the park on 13 May involving a stabbing. Thankfully we are told the injury was not serious but it's very worrying of course.

We've had more vandalism this week too, with slats kicked off the Infants Play Area fence again on Friday night. There was also damage done to the former bowling pavilion roof. The fence was repaired by us during our task day on Saturday and the roof damage was reported via the council's emergency contact line.

There were two motorbikes on the skatepark again on Saturday evening. This was reported to the police via 999 by a witness as the bikes nearly knocked an elderly couple over. A small amount of video evidence was also provided to the police.

[Post Meeting Note: on Saturday 25 June offensive and racist graffiti was discovered on the library building and on Sunday 26 June the War Memorial flowerbeds were vandalised. Both items have been reported to Police, Councillors and Officers.]

Meeting with Police/ Crime Survey

A follow-up meeting was held in the park on Monday 30 May with PC Mayers plus Cllrs Allan, Gribbon, Macalister and Thornley. At that time the ASB had eased significantly thanks to the extra hours and patrols instigated by the police leading up to and including Easter. Of course there was a lot of concern about assaults that had recently taken place in our park and also High Lane Park and near to Marple Hall School.

Key things highlighted during this meeting were the need to complete the repairs to Hollins House, to maintain pressure on CCTV issues being resolved and to continue encouraging reporting of incidents through the proper channels, which has improved.

With regard to the Hollins House repairs, we have repeatedly asked the council when the upstairs windows and the transom windows above the entrance door will be repaired, or what the delays are. We explained at the meeting that we've had no informative replies and councillors agreed to follow this up. *[PMN: 27 June: we are advised that an update from Estates is awaited. There have been issues with the availability of polycarbonate and they will update further when they have timescales.]*

Additionally, we have had a detailed response from the police to Patrick's suggestion that parking their vehicles in the main car park would be a deterrent to ASB. Key to this is the risk of injury to the public during a "blue light" response leaving the park.

CCTV

The CCTV Systems have now been taken over by Stockport Homes and Cllr Allan has recently advised that progress is finally being made on resolving long-term issues.

Councillors and Police have been invited to attend the Control Room once remedial

works are completed to witness the cameras working. Currently Friends of the Park are excluded from this invite and it has been suggested that if the police are happy then we should be happy too. While this is partially true, it is our view that we are not being treated like proper stakeholders in the park as we were in the past and are deeply dissatisfied. Mark has written to Cllr. Allan expressing this in more detail.

Actions ongoing from Crime Survey recommendations

We have still not seen any formal response or acknowledgement from the council of the Crime Survey conducted by the police at our instigation and have not been informed of intentions regarding all the recommendations made in the report.

Repair Hollins House windows: covered under meeting with police earlier – awaiting feedback from local councillors on when repairs will be concluded.

Repair fencing at Infants Play Area: planned repairs have all been completed and we have paid our £500 contribution to the most recent works. As mentioned earlier, additional repairs had to be carried out by volunteers on Saturday.

Add a waste bin to the area by the picnic benches: complete, being monitored.

Add a sign about the risk of broken glass to young children: now to action.

Consider adding artwork to the Bowlers' Hut gable end as a deterrent from throwing bottles: we are considering a low-cost option to recycle materials (and possibly artwork) from the School Gardens Project in the autumn.

Skatepark repairs

Permanent repair to the arson damage continues to be delayed waiting for prices from Canvas Spaces. Mark has followed this up with Canvas with limited success so far.

[PMN: Canvas have now provided a price to Richard and an order has been placed. The cost is £2050+VAT on top of whatever the temporary repair cost was. Confirmation of the timing of the works is still awaited.]

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. Unfortunately that is delayed by design changes atm and there is a concern that our grind rails may become dangerous before they are ready.

3.2 Use of weedkiller in the park

Following on from last month's discussion Mark asked Jon Headlam if it was possible to have a walk-around the park and a conversation with TLC's supervisor to understand their brief and the objectives for using weedkiller. The response was that "the request has been passed onto managers and, as always, these things are not straightforward and have wider consequences / considerations."

In the meantime Cllr. Allan has passed on some Government information that he shared with other groups about glyphosphate based herbicides as used in the park that suggest that it is not harmful to bees or very toxic. This conflicts with the information we find online published by environmental groups.

As well as concerns over the potential environmental impact of using weedkiller in the park we are unhappy with the appearance left after it has been used in so many places. We are frustrated that we are not even able to initiate an adult conversation about it to better understand why it is considered necessary to use it in the park and to discuss whether our volunteers could undertake activities that could alleviate or reduce the need to use it. Cllr. Allan agreed to take this issue up on our behalf.

It was also noted that the one area that is desperate for something to be done about weeds is the main entrance to the park and the town centre pavements. It adds considerably to the frustration that the park is done but not these areas that need it.

3.3 Detached Youth Work

Detached Youth Worker Earl Nanton was welcomed at the start of the meeting and quick intros all round followed. Earl then kindly waited for us to get through several agenda items we wanted to ensure were covered before Cllr. Allan had to leave.

Earl explained that he was an RTIME Detached Youth Worker funded by Stockport Council, Stockport Homes and Life Leisure currently working in Marple 1 day a week. The rest of Earl's time is predominantly focused on areas generally considered to be more deprived than Marple. His time is mainly spent trying to engage with young people, to understand why they sometimes choose to behave antisocially and cause problems, and to facilitate diversionary activities whenever it is practical to do so.

Earl had a walk around the park with Mark last week and advised that he was very impressed with the work of the Friends group, particularly the artwork roundels on the former bowling pavilion and the Skatepark / MUGA projects, including the engagement we undertook with young people during those times. He was also complimentary of our positivity and willingness to discuss ideas.

Earl has been talking to young skatepark users in particular and has noted that they have several key concerns. Primarily, these are being assaulted by other park users and feeling that they have no voice and no way to communicate their concerns.

Earl advised that there are three young people that he hopes he will be able to connect with us for further engagement and to develop a better understanding.

It was interesting that during discussions with Earl it was realised that most, if not all, of the young people we engaged with during the Skatepark Project have now grown up and likely to have moved on to new interests. So it quite possible many of the skatepark's current users do not realise that we instigated it or how much effort we put in to engage with young people to ensure we achieved a good outcome aligned with their aspirations. Earl suggested putting together a noticeboard display at the skatepark to make Friends of the Park's involvement clearer to current users. It was agreed that this was a great idea, as while there is lots of detailed information on our web site about this, there is nothing explaining it at the skatepark itself.

Earl advised he is planning two low-key events with skatepark users over the summer. He hopes these will involve wheeled-sport demos, basketball and street art. The event dates are proposed as 29 July and 19 August. Event applications are being prepared and Earl will let us know more details when available and also bounce ideas off us.

3.4 Bowling Green and Buildings

Pavilion Art Project Phase II

The finished artwork was installed on Monday by Pete Kelly, Bernard and Mark. It is also now fully paid-up, with the total cost amounting to £4,169 compared to our original budget of £4,100. The increase is due to material prices.

We have an extra job to do, which is to paint and fit some pelmets that Pete made for us from off-cuts. These will keep dust from collecting on top and behind the boards.

Programme Reproduction

Last month Diane suggested that the programme from the Dedication and Historical Pageant could be reproduced as a new souvenir of the park's 100th anniversary.

This idea has grown legs and a sample print of a booklet featuring the programme with photos from the day and other related material from Marple Local History Society archives was passed around. It is planned to have these for sale at Marple Carnival when we will be able to show people around the artwork too.

3.5 100th Birthday of the Park

Marple Carnival – 18 June 2022

The attendance rota was issued this morning and appears to be acceptable to all.

The plan is to sell Gill's cards, Diane's jewellery and the new booklet. We will also show-off the new artwork, engage about volunteering and the 50-50 Club, take part in the parade to promote the Treasure Hunt and Picnic in the Park and enjoy the day.

Mark has painted and decorated the wheelbarrows and Terry is currently building four wooden-top figures. Marple Carnival has paid for our banner for the parade.

Family Treasure Hunt – 23 July 2022

Promotion and sponsorship got off to a slow start but is now progressing nicely.

We are awaiting the event application approval.

Marple Youth Project have been asked if they would like to get involved, perhaps as the leaders on the cake sale. They will let us know after the carnival.

We will need help on the day – Mark has a provisional list of volunteer support.

Cheshire Wildlife Trust will attend the event to engage about rewilding.

The programme needs to be prepared.

Marple School Gardens Project

School Build Days are scheduled for Monday 11th and Tuesday 12th July.

We will need to construct the raised beds in advance of the build days.

Sleepers and fixings have been ordered and delivered today.

Topsoil and membrane to order soon.

Play Area fence local to build area has been jet-washed.

A risk assessment + arrangements for the school children to attend the Treasure Hunt with parents rather than teachers has been proposed and agreed with the council.

Picnic in the Park with the Brass Bands of Marple – 24 July 2022

Marple Bands are leading the organising of this event.

Their event application is approved.

We will attend to support and hopefully can sell our booklet too.

We will need volunteers on the day to help.

MLHS Exhibition – 22 to 30 July 2022

This is coming together nicely under the leadership of MLHS.

Mark needs to provide a history of Friends of the Park.

The library staff and Marple Bands are also involved in creating displays.

3.6 Task Days

Task Days are now in full swing with second dates each month scheduled.

We need to submit an application for task days from 1st July to end of December.
[Post Meeting Note: Submitted for approval 24 June 2022]

2022 dates going forward will be:

25 June; 16, 30 July; 27 August; 10, 24 September; 15, 29 October;
12, 26 November and possibly 31 December.

4.0 Funding - Status of Funds

Income since last meeting:

£1,550.00	Stockport CAN Fund.
£446.00	Cash paid in from card sales, collection buckets and park.
£398.00	Marple Area Committee (for gazebo).
£100.00	Forever Manchester Connecting Communities.
£500.00	Land & Water Services (CRT Contractor).
£245.00	50-50 Club May Draw income.
£552.00	Treasure Hunt sponsorship to date.
£144.00	Local Giving.

Expenditure since last meeting:

£1,619.00	Pavilion Art Project Phase II.
£1,585.00	Cordless Battery Powered Tools (CAN Fund).
£91.00	Tools and materials.
£5.50	Plants and seeds.
£316.00	School Gardens Project.
£500.00	Play Area fencing contribution.
£53.00	Gazebo banners.

Current balance: £17,024

Committed future spends:

- £10,000 Ring-fenced for Exercise Equipment.
- £650 for the School Gardens Project.
- £192 Treasure Hunt expenses.

Unallocated working balance: £6,182

After carnival it's hoped we can commit at least a further £5k to Exercise Equipment.

5.0 Any Other Business

5.1 AGM: Proposed committee changes

Mick has expressed a wish to step down from the role of Chairman, although he is happy to continue until alternative arrangements can be made. There is also a clash with our second Monday meeting dates and his and Larry's choir commitments.

With regard to the meeting dates, Mark will double-check options to move them with library staff then conduct a straw-poll with regular attendees to see what suits best.

[Post Meeting Note: It is proposed to move the meeting dates to the second Thursday of each month from September onwards. The next meeting on Monday 11 July will go ahead as currently scheduled providing there are sufficient attendees.]

With regard to the committee changes, Mark has spoken with Diane, who is happy to take on the role of Treasurer, allowing Mark to transfer to the role of Chairman and Micaela to remain as Secretary. These changes will of course be subject to agreement at the next AGM, which is provisionally scheduled for October 2022.

[PMN: AGM would be 13 October providing library accept changes to our bookings.]

5.2 Use of Reading Circle for Story Time

We are really pleased that the library used the Reading Circle for Story Time during the Platinum Jubilee celebrations. The feedback from staff was really positive and they said that around 50 children attended. It does feel like installing the Frogs in place of the decayed wood sculpture has given the Reading Circle a new lease of life.

5.3 Stockport CAN Fund: Replacement of petrol equipment

This has gone remarkably smoothly and quickly. An award of £1,550 has been received, the equipment purchased at a cost of £1,585 (due to small increases since we priced them up) and the mower and strimmer have been used already.

Hedge-cutting is awaiting the end of the bird-nesting season.

The old petrol driven equipment has been scrapped for recycling of materials.

5.3 Exercise Equipment

Provisional discussions with Marple Runners have taken place about them getting involved. Mick suggested talking to the Senior Citizens too.

There has been no progress on the brief due to everything else going on at present.

It is thought we will be able to allocate more funds to the £10k currently ring-fenced in the near future and we will need around £20-25k for suitable equipment.

Mark will follow-up with Thad Barker on funding as soon as workload allows.

5.4 Makers' Market – Saturday 21 May 2022

Our attendance was a great success with £73 raised by cards sales, £85 raised by jewellery sales and a £5 donation, totalling £163.

The next opportunity may be Sat. 16 July and we need to decide if we will do this.

5.5 Decoration of Coronation Tree / Bench

We worked successfully with Marple Youth Project leader Helen Middleton to decorate the Coronation Tree and we think a lot more people learned about the tree's origins.

5.6 Community Hub Scheme

Nothing new.

5.7 Drainage Problems

The blockage was cleared by UU but they say that the drains are used by council properties only and it is therefore a private system. UU said they would be reporting this back to the council and further investigations will be necessary.

It looks like this one is set to run and run!

5.8 New Horizons Trip

Mark has been lucky again in the Float-the-Boat Draw and won another free trip on New Horizons. Possibilities were discussed and it was concluded that an evening trip may be best as it could mean that Bob, Christine and Amy would be able to come.

Bob will discuss with Amy and confirm, we can then look at suitable dates.

6.0 Next Meeting

Monday 11 July 2022 at 6.15pm in Marple Library.

Future meeting dates for 2022 (if library accept booking changes):

Thursdays: 8 September, 13 October, 10 November & 8 December.