



**LOOSE PARISH COUNCIL
ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES
Meeting held on Monday 20 May 2024
at 7.30pm in Loose Parish Pavilion, KGVPF.**

In attendance: Councillors: Charlie Hollister (CH), Jim Andrew (JA), Sue Hill (SH) and Andrew Richards (AR).

Also in attendance: Nicky Bourne (Deputy Clerk - NB) who took the minutes, and Amanda Baker (Assistant Clerk - AB)

There were 4 members of the public in attendance.

House-keeping and meeting rules were covered by the Chairman before the meeting began.

AGENDA

1. To Elect a Chairman to the Committee for the forthcoming year

A nomination was put forward by JA and seconded by AR that Cllr Charlie Hollister should continue as Chairman for the forthcoming year. This was unanimously **AGREED** by the Committee and accepted by CH.

2. To Elect a Vice-Chairman to the Committee for the forthcoming year

A nomination was put forward by CH and seconded by JA that Cllr Velma Bennett should continue as Vice-Chairman for the forthcoming year. This was unanimously **AGREED** by the Committee. As VB was not present, this will be confirmed at the next meeting. Action: NB to add to next agenda.

3. To discuss and agree any additions or changes to the Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference had been pre-circulated to the Committee. NB highlighted that Environment areas taken over from North Loose Residents' Association (NLRA) responsibility need to be added. The Committee requested that NB draft the new document and bring to the next meeting on 1 July 2024 for agreement. Action: NB.

4. To receive any apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Sarah Leeson (SL) (holiday) and Velma Bennett (work commitments).

5. To receive and agree any decision regarding any item to be taken as confidential

None.

6. To receive any declarations of pecuniary interest on items in the agenda

(In accordance with the NALC Model Code of Conduct for Parish Councils (pursuant to section 27 of the Localism Act 2011). In addition, any declaration of personal or prejudicial interest (as agreed by LPC 21 Jan 13)).

None.

7. To receive any signed dispensation requests for any item on this agenda

(For Councillors to approve/disapprove as appropriate and to agree the reason for the dispensation if approved (see dispensation form). This follows the agreement made by the LPC at the meeting held on the 17 July 17).

None.

8. To sign as a correct record, the minutes of the meeting held on 11 March 2024 (Pages 423-429)

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 March 2024 (Pages 423-429) were duly **AGREED** as a true and accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

9. Questions/comments from the public or community groups (3mins)

(To include any correspondence & phone calls received by the office from members of the public)

a. Drainage issues in Loose village

Three residents of Church Street attended to speak about the ongoing drainage issue in the road. One resident from the the most affected property thanked NB and AB for their support in providing sand bags and for trying to move the matter on. The resident explained the history of the situation and the complications of the pipework. It was suggested that NB explore whether some of the hand-drawn diagrams still exist. The latest email received from Cllr Simon Webb was read out. He has contacted the Cabinet Member for Highways and is trying to secure a site visit. NB explained that many other residents had contacted the office and she had been forwarding every concern to Cllr Simon Webb, requesting an update. It was suggested that the Parish Council keep records of all communications and actions, which NB confirmed she was already doing.

The Committee and the residents discussed who should attend the site meeting representing the residents and the Parish Council. NB highlighted that the meeting was to address the complicated issue of the pipework, but there is still the immediate risk issue of the slippery road from the algae under the continually running water. Volunteers preparing for the duck race had attempted to scrub the road surface at the weekend, but it had little effect and with the warmer weather, the algae would soon be back. The situation has been reported to KCC Highways on the portal, but CH suggested the Office try to contact the Highways Steward directly. AR suggested seeking the advice of contacts at Southern Water, who LPC have been consulting with over the pumping station. Action: NB.

Further discussions included the function of the visible pipes in the area that do not carry any water, the source of the water, whether testing could be carried out, if the flow could be measured and videoed for evidence, whether there is an impact from the developments at Coxheath, and additional concerns were raised over the underground flow having caused recent powercuts. JA explained that objections are made to new development, but development cannot be stopped. The drainage improvement scheme previously provided by a resident that was designed by KCC but never implemented in 2003, was shared.

NB asked if there was a way that the communication could be streamlined as the Office was receiving so many emails from individual residents, and having to repeat explanations, actions and updates on the current situation. It was **AGREED** that the NB should ask the permission of those who have been corresponding and send group emails where possible. Action: NB.

CH thanked the residents for coming and pledged the ongoing support of the Parish Council to get the site meeting in place. The residents thanked CH for the Council's support.

b. Badger sett in Loose allotments and Brooks Field

The office has contacted the West Kent Badger Group for advice regarding the sett that continues to grow in Brooks Field and has become hazardous at the allotments. A volunteer adviser will be contacting the Office to arrange a site visit. Action: NB.

c. Parking issues (various roads)

NB explained that the Office receives regular concerns from residents regarding parking issues, with the Walnut Tree Avenue entrance and exit being the most frequent. At the LPC meeting on 13 May, parking issues in the Parish were raised, and PC Harry Greenfield explained he is working on this matter with Loose Primary School. At the same meeting, Cllr Brian Clark had explained how he had achieved action in other local areas and was willing to support the Parish on these matters. After discussion the Committee **AGREED** that NB should collate the issues

raised by residents, and then pass to the Highways Working Group to take these forward, consulting with Cllr Clark to utilise his experience to consider any effective actions. Action NB.

d. Repairs to the sluice in the Loose Stream

NB explained that Brooks path by the sluice has suffered vandalism with the turfs being uprooted, ragstone being thrown into the stream and the sluice being damaged. Local volunteers have rebuilt the sluice and reduced the entrapment hazard between the wood and the ragstone. They have also reset the ragstone edging. They advise that in the longer term, a piece of oak would extend the life of the sluice and a new ragstone would remove the gap entirely. The volunteers believe they can source a new ragstone section from another local resident.

e. Wooden bollard on Brooks path

One of the two wooden bollards on Brooks path has been knocked down. A volunteer completed a temporary fix to reinstate it but NB will report it to KCC for replacement as the post is rotten. The Committee asked NB to pass on their thanks for addressing this and the repairs to the sluice and edging. Action: NB.

f. Walnut Tree in the triangle

Staff at the Walnut Tree pub alerted the office that there is a cracked branch within the walnut tree in the triangle, which appears to be resting on a lower branch, but with the potential to fall down. NB viewed and photographed the issue and it has been referred to tree surgeons for advice and the Committee **AGREED** any necessary action should be taken under delegated powers due to the risk. Action: NB.

10. The Village Green & The Triangle – to discuss items below and make any necessary decisions

a. Planters

The Office has not yet secured volunteers to look after the six Parish Council planters (four at the village green and two at the Pavilion). The fourteen planters taken over from NLRA are looked after by Loose WI (at the Wheatsheaf parade) and seven different residents (at Boughton Parade). CH advised that because LPC is responsible for those volunteers, the appropriate risk assessments, permissions or cover must be in place. It was **AGREED** that the office should check required permissions or insurance. Action: NB.

JA suggested the planters could be added to the groundworks contract, as the contractor has the necessary accreditation but it was **AGREED** that an appeal for volunteers should be made first. Suggestions included approaching the local primary schools, WI groups and Loose Gardeners' Society. Action: Clerks' Office.

b. Defibrillator phone box painting update

The handyman has confirmed that he is still available to complete the exterior painting at the price he quoted prior to the winter. The work should be done in the next few weeks.

11. Brooks Field – Pond - Roy's Wood – to discuss items below and make any necessary decisions

a. MBC "Love Where You Live" grant update for pondworks

NB updated on the current situation with the "Love Where You Live" reed island project. The approval for the conservation area tree works was granted without issue, but as nesting season had begun, the works have been put on hold and are programmed to start on 2 September 2024. On checking the grant conditions, this will overrun the timeframe given to spend the fund, but the agreement has a clause regarding written agreement for an extension. It was **AGREED** that NB will make that application without delay. Action: NB.

b. Meadow Update (CH)

The 2023-24 meadow funds have been transferred to earmarked reserves as agreed last meeting. CH explained that works need to be planned and arranged to start in October and not

concurrently with the pondworks. Action: CH and NB. JA advised that he had seen poppies in the meadow.

c. Roy's Wood Update (JA)

JA reported that two oaks are dead, an original Texan Oak and the Common Oak that was replaced a year ago. One other is struggling, but all others are fine. As they will not be replaced until Autumn, the Committee **AGREED** that the Office should approach Kent Men of the Trees (KMOTT) to source two of the same variety. If they are unable to provide them, they may be able to advise the best place to purchase. Action: NB. SH made a recommendation of a supplier.

JA reported that the Hornbeam is doing well. The two oaks planted by the local family either side of the the King's Coronation bench are regularly checked and watered by NB and AB. JA advised, and the Committee **AGREED**, to purchase and install two rabbit guards. Action: AR.

d. Site of the old shed

The old shed base needs additional work to remove stumps and concrete. NB advised that a local business recently helped at a recent Loose Amenities Association (LAA) volunteering session, and might consider helping dig out the shed base as another community project. The Committee **AGREED** they should be approached. Action: NB. Any planting would not take place until autumn, the plan being to source with a couple of Chequer trees. Action:NB.

12. Cemetery - to discuss items below and make any necessary decisions

a. Repairs to the war memorial update

The grant application still being drafted. NB is chasing the specialist company who quoted to get their professional input and an up to date quote. Action: NB.

b. Update on risk items

The gravestone is due to be laid flat by the contractor, but is still standing. Action: NB to monitor until completion. At a recent visit checking the gravestone, JA and AR noted Japanese Knotweed had recurred in the south-east corner and over the wall in the neighbour's garden. They requested NB inform the resident, who says he cannot see any on his or our land. He is willing to site visit with a Councillor. CH confirmed that the photograph taken showed Japanese Knotweed and the Committee **AGREED** that she should go ahead and treat it. NB will contact the neighbour so he can inspect the area with CH. Action: CH and NB.

13. KGVPF - to discuss items below and make any necessary decisions

a. Matters arising from the quarterly KGVPF walkabout completed 30 April 2024

The quarterly KGVPF walkabout report had been pre-circulated. There is nothing of concern. As previously agreed, some outstanding small jobs will be referred to handyman as the Caretaker has been unable to complete them. AB been researching individuals. The Committee **AGREED** that quotes for these jobs should either be circulated for agreement by **Round Robin**, or brought to the July meeting.

14. Former North Loose Residents' Association areas - to discuss items below and make any necessary decisions

a. Signage

The office is collating the list of signage required, to change NLRA to Loose Parish Council. CH asked for clarification on the budget for this (LPC or Environment). Action: Kim Owen (KO). Any quotes from the Environment budget should be circulated for agreement by **Round Robin**.

b. Walkabout Checklist

The annual walkabout takes place in August and the original Parish walkabout takes several hours with over fifty items to check. NB and AB have created a Part B checklist for all items in

the former NLRA area (a further twenty items). This had been pre-circulated and after discussion the following were **AGREED**:

- Hedge maintenance in Richmond Way and the Greenway – the Office to seek clarification as to whether there are any former NLRA volunteers continuing. Otherwise, it will need to be added to the groundworks contract. Action: NB.
- Three trees in Richmond Way Green and three trees on Boughton Parade to be added to the LPC tree list and put on the annual Tree Safety inspection. Maintenance to be carried out by the tree contractor. Action: NB.
- The heritage fingerpost sign on the corner of Cripple Street is in need of repainting – Office to start seeking quotes. Action: AB/NB.
- Sean Carter had advised the Office that there is an oak tree at the lodge entrance (near Richmond Way Green) that NLRA had made a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) application on, but it never progressed. The tree will be viewed on the walkabout so a decision can be made whether LPC wish to follow up the TPO. Action: CH/NB/KO.

15. Highways – to discuss items below and make any necessary decisions

a. Highways Working Group

Elaine Lawford (EL) agreed to be co-opted on to the Highways Working Group. As MW was not present no plans were made about the meeting schedule. Action: NB to contact MW. CH, MW and EL to agree the date and venue of their first meeting.

b. Current Highways Improvement Plan Priority 1 – 30/40mph boundary zone

This agenda item will be picked up by the Highways Working Group.

c. Opportunities received from our KCC Highways Improvement Partner

This agenda item will be picked up by the Highways Working Group.

16. Risk/General Maintenance - to discuss items below and make any necessary decisions

a. Tree works update and the annual tree survey

The tree in the allotment has been checked and added to the next tree safety inspection, due in September 2024. It has ivy on it, which needs to be removed prior to that inspection. The Committee discussed who was responsible for that work (the Gardeners' Society, or the McAlpine Trust). JA advised that it has been added to the next McAlpine Trust agenda. Action: JA to feedback.

b. Brooks Field pre and post duck race risk assessments

The Clerks' Office have calendared the pre-duck race risk assessment on Friday 24 May and the post-duck race risk assessment on Wednesday 29 May 2024. Action: NB/AB/KO.

17. Finance

a. To receive an update from the RFO

KO has been unable to prepare the latest Environment Committee finance report due to leave and the end of year finance workload. She will circulate it upon completion. Action: KO.

b. To discuss the 2024-25 Management Plan and make any necessary decisions

In light of the above, and needing to discuss the former NLRA priorities under Agenda item 14b, the first draft of the Management Plan for 2024-25 is still being written. The document will be circulated for discussion for the July meeting. Action: NB.

18. Monitoring and Ratification of any ROUND ROBIN decisions

None.

19. To discuss and agree any additions or changes to the website and media

The Office will create the public information on the pond works project ready for the September start. Action: NB/AB.

20. Other Items (discussion only)

As requested at the last meeting, AB and NB have been looking into the energy consumption for the three LPC streetlights. The lights are confirmed as LED but the differences in energy use are still being investigated. Action: NB/AB.

21. Date of Next Meeting – 01 July 2024

The meeting closed at 9.02pm.

Signed

Dated.....