



**LOOSE PARISH COUNCIL
ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES
Meeting held on Monday 13 March 2023
at 7.30pm in Loose Parish Pavilion, KGVPF.**

In attendance: Councillors: Charlie Hollister (Chairman - CH), Jim Andrew (JA), Elaine Lawford (EL), Susan Luckhurst (SL) and Andrew Richards (AKR).

Also in attendance: Nicky Bourne (Deputy Clerk - NB) who took the minutes.

There were no members of the public in attendance.

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

AGENDA

1. To receive any apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Peter Rigby (PR). No apologies were received from Velma Bennett (VB).

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

The Committee **AGREED** to discuss Item 11e in a closed session.

3. 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.

4. 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.

5. To sign as a correct record, the minutes of the meeting held on 14 November 2022 (Pages 394-397)

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 November 2022 (Pages 394-397) were duly **AGREED** as a true and accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

6. 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 resident who volunteers with the pond works contacted the Office with details of the MBC 'Love Where you Live' grant scheme. This aims to support small-scale environmental projects that encourage a sense of civic pride across communities. Applications are open until 31 March. Non-constituted volunteer groups can ask their Parish Council to apply on their behalf. The resident suggested a number of pond works projects that would benefit from funding, and has offered to write the proposal. He had originally suggested a link with Loose Amenities Association, but they have advised that they are making their own applications for works in the valley, and for some of

the shed costs. After discussion, the Committee **AGREED** that the Office should assist the resident with making an application for the pond works and suggested their priorities from his list. Action: Clerks' Office to contact, discuss and prepare the application with the resident. Other community volunteering was considered e.g. litter picking, but SL advised that 'Love Loose Hate Litter' had recently received funding and had no current needs.

A member of the 'Love Loose Hate Litter' volunteer group had contacted the Office regarding the litter situation on the Village Green and Linton Road, asking if the Parish Council could do anything further to address the issue. He suggested signage or contacting the local businesses who sell the items that are littered. After discussion, the Committee **AGREED** that messages should be sent out on social media, linking in with the Great British Spring Clean 2023 (running from 17 March to 2 April). The Committee **AGREED** that a letter should be sent to all local businesses asking them to take responsibility for litter around their location, and they **AGREED** that the local schools should be contacted to promote the national campaign and encourage social responsibility locally. Action: Clerks' Office.

A Councillor informed the Committee that a number of advertising flyers for the LAA fundraising concert event in June have appeared around the village, nailed onto various infrastructure. Concern was raised as to whether such advertising is lawful and whether it might set a precedent for other advertising notices. After discussion the Committee **AGREED** that the Office should check where the notices have been placed and check regulations for such advertising. The Committee **AGREED** that LAA should be contacted to ask that all notices are removed after the event. Action Clerks' Office.

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

a. Risk assessment for the village sign in the triangle

The risk assessment for the village sign in the triangle has been undertaken by LAA and paperwork received and filed. There are no issues.

b. Cleaning contract for the telephone box, memorial bench and plaque

From April 2023 the cleaning of the items on the village green will be paid out of the Environment budget. They had previously been included with the Pavilion cleaning and paid out of the PCH budget.

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

a. Meadow Update

The third phase of the meadow was seeded and fenced off at the end of January.

b. Ivy-clad tree by the stream

The tree which the pond volunteers thought was dead, is showing signs of life since they have cut away the ivy. It will now not need to be removed, but will continue to be monitored.

c. Village Green status and Brooks Field sign

Village Green status was granted for Brooks Field by Maidstone Borough Council on 1 Feb 2023. The shed remains outside the boundary so that it can be developed. After discussion, the Committee **AGREED** that a new sign should now be produced including the LPC logo, information and rules for Brooks Field. It should be circulated for comment and agreement by **Round Robin**. Action: Deputy Clerk.

d. Roy's Wood update (JA)

JA had recently visited Roy's Wood and updated that three of the young trees were looking brittle, but that it was a difficult time of year to verify their health. The newly planted common oak looked the same as it did when planted. One tree has been gnawed at the bottom and the Committee **AGREED** that a rabbit guard should be purchased and installed. Action: JA. JA did not feel any further remedial work was required at the present time, but the Committee **AGREED** that he should monitor the trees and report back at the next Environment meeting. Action: JA.

e. King's Coronation bench in Roy's Wood

After discussion, the Committee **AGREED** that the trunk of the Pavilion car park tree was not suitable to make a bench, as suggested by the PCH Committee. The Committee **AGREED** that a bench should be sourced that would fit in with the natural environment, and that would be suitable as LPC's commemoration of the King's Coronation. Options to be circulated for agreement by **Round Robin**. Action: Deputy Clerk. The Committee also **AGREED** with the PCH Committee's proposal that a replacement pin oak (*Quercus Palustris*) should be planted in Roy's Wood. Action: Clerks' Office to source. JA/AKR to plant.

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

a. Update on progress towards obtaining the faculty for the war memorial repairs

The Administrator at All Saints Church has continued to chase the faculty application for the war memorial repairs. It was discussed at the December meeting of the Diocese, and in January, the Deputy Clerk was asked to write a "Statement of Needs" for the repairs. This was uploaded to the online application by the Church Administrator. The Diocese have since come back asking whether planning permission is required for the repairs (on a listed structure in a conservation area), and whether the works have insurance cover. After discussion the Committee **AGREED** that the Deputy Clerk should consult MBC Planning Heritage team regarding the issue of Planning Permission. Regarding insurance, the works would be insured by the contractor's Public Liability Insurance. Action: Deputy Clerk to contact MBC Planning and update the Church Administrator with an answer to both questions. Clerks' Office to check PLI insurance cover when securing the contractor.

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

a. Forstal Mead egress

Chartway were consulted regarding the egress from Forstal Mead. They have confirmed, with documentation, that they have installed the physical measures to deter vehicles from turning right towards Well Street, as per the planning application and in accordance with the Section 278 agreement reached with KCC Highways. This is a raised, curved island and it does not, and never did include any signage. It has obtained first certificate completion from KCC Highways, confirming it has been built out in accordance with the agreed detail. They expect to receive second stage sign off this summer. After discussion, the Committee **AGREED** that KCC Highways should be contacted to report concern that these physical measures are ineffective, due to the widened road, and that vehicles can easily, and therefore do turn right to use Well Street as a through route. Action: EL and Deputy Clerk to draft correspondence to KCC Highways.

b. Escalating persistent highways matters

The Deputy Clerk raised the matter of the Office having to repeatedly report faults such as pot holes and drainage issues to KCC in the same places on particular roads in the Parish. Some faults have been left categorised as "under investigation" or "gully scheduled to be cleaned" for over 7 months. Some seem to get closed, yet no action had been taken. A member of the drainage team had been in contact regarding some of these reported faults, and admitted that routine maintenance had not been done. The knock-on effect of the continual flow of spring water unable to drain away can be seen outside Vale House, the Chequers, Church Street, Well Street and Mill Street where in many cases, it has contributed to huge pot holes where the water is overflowing. One resident from Church Street contacted the Office with photographic evidence of the damage to her wooden fence, which has completely rotted as a result of continually being splashed by surface water alongside it. She highlighted that replacement with more modern, durable materials was not straightforward due to the restrictions of the conservation area. The Committee discussed the frequency and longevity of some of the issues, and the recurrence after ineffective temporary measures were actioned. It was **AGREED** that the lack of drainage maintenance in Loose, with its unique natural springs and conservation area status, is

causing wider and longer term damage, and the matter should be escalated to the Head of KCC Highways and to KCC Member Simon Webb for comment. Action Clerks' Office.

c. Update on meetings with the new KCC Highways team

The draft document for the Parish consultation on a 20mph zone had been pre-circulated. The Deputy Clerk explained the process to get to this stage, including the changes that had had to be made since the KCC Highways team re-structure, and the removal of incorrect information and diagrams provided by the legacy team. The Office is still consulting with KCC Highways regarding the accuracy of the map and costings. KCC Highways have provided information on the stages after the informal consultation, and the costs that will need to be paid for the formal Traffic Regulation Order consultation, even if KCC or the JTB decide to dismiss the proposal. After discussion, the Committee **AGREED** some additional wording to go into the "How long will it take?" section, and a small change to the return information now the Clerk has a PO Box address. They **AGREED** that the amended document should then go on the next LPC agenda for full council agreement. Action Deputy Clerk. AKR referred to a previous request by residents to crowd fund some of the costs. The Committee **AGREED** that the regulations should be consulted with regard to fundraising and donations. Action Clerks' Office.

The new KCC Highways team have scrutinised the existing LPC Highways Improvement Plan. As with the consultation document, there has been a need to remove incorrect information provided by the legacy team. KCC Highways have re-ordered the priorities and suggested which projects they believe will have an impact, be most viable, cost-effective, and likely to receive some funding. This has left the document in a new draft state. After discussion the Committee **AGREED** that the new version of the HIP should be circulated for review by the Committee, and that KCC Highways should be invited to a face to face meeting to discuss and agree the priorities. Action Deputy Clerk.

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

a. LAA Christmas tree and carol event

After the last meeting, Loose Amenities Association were informed of the Committee's concerns regarding their request to use the closed cemetery for the Christmas tree location and the Carols Around the Tree event. Brooks Field was offered as an alternative venue. LAA declined the offer and an existing tree in a resident's garden was used. The Carols Around the Tree event had to be cancelled due to adverse weather. LAA proposed to keep the Cemetery as an option this year and put in writing their planned actions to address LPC's concerns. After discussion, the Committee **AGREED** that when the time comes this year, and in future years, they will have to reiterate their concerns to the PCC and LAA that the Closed Cemetery is an inappropriate venue, for the reasons already given relating to health, safety and protection issues. Action Clerks' Office.

b. Toppled headstone actions

Specialists have been consulted regarding the cross memorial that fell during the annual survey hand test. They advised it should be laid flat as it is very old and there are no known relatives to contact. The Deputy Clerk and Caretaker have laid it flat.

c. Cemetery entrance

The Deputy Clerk advised that no further resolutions or quotes had been forthcoming to address the issue of the Cemetery entrance trip hazard, noted by JA and CH on the annual risk assessment walkabout. After discussion, the Committee **AGREED** that the Clerks' Office should continue to seek further contractors and quotes, and circulate for agreement by **Round Robin**. Action: Clerks' Office

d. Lower Loose Valley Pumping Station

Southern Water were consulted regarding clarification of an issue with the Lower Loose Valley Pumping Station. They confirmed there was a power outage on 25 January, that caused the generator to trip when two pumps were trying to run. This caused a spill into the Loose stream and a customer's garden. They immediately ordered a back-up generator that arrived the following morning, and organised a clean-up of the garden. The backup generator remains in place. It is unknown if the on-site generator is now fully functioning but Scott Pring and Aaron Dallas from Southern Water will be attending the LPC meeting to update the Council on 17 April 2023.

The Meeting Closed at 8.43pm to discuss Item 11e in closed session.

e. Tree works quotes

Quotes received from 4 contractors for the necessary tree works identified on the Tree Report had been pre-circulated. After discussion in the closed session the committee **AGREED** a contractor with a quoted total cost of £2070. Action Clerks Office to arrange works.

The meeting re-opened at 8.52pm.

12. Finance

a. To receive an update from the RFO

The Environment Committee finance report and LPC Ear-marked Reserves report were circulated and noted.

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

The Management Plan for 2022-23 had been pre-circulated detailing completed tasks. After discussion it was **AGREED** that the Clerks' Office should prepare the 2023-24 Environment Management Plan, including items discussed, and it should be reviewed at the next meeting. Action: Deputy Clerk.

13. Monitoring and Ratification of any ROUND ROBIN decisions

None.

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

It was **AGREED** that the Great British Spring Clean 2023 campaign should be promoted through the website. Action: Deputy Clerk and Communications and Media Clerk.

15. Other Items (discussion only)

AKR raised an issue of cycling along Brooks Path and asked for clarification about whether it was actually a public right of way. The Deputy Clerk confirmed that it is the KM52 footpath, so cyclists should dismount, in accordance with the signage.

JA referred to the missing vintage sign from the end of Busbridge Road. The Deputy Clerk explained that the Office had reported it to the Police, and it has a crime number, but nothing further can be done without any evidence. Local neighbours have been consulted but could not provide any information.

16. Date of Next Meeting – TBC

The meeting closed at 9.07pm.

Signed

Dated.....