



**LOOSE PARISH COUNCIL
ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES
Meeting held on Monday 25 November 2024
at 7.30pm in Loose Parish Pavilion, KGVPF.**

In attendance: Councillors: Charlie Hollister (Chairman - CH), Jim Andrew (JA), Sue Hill (SH) and Sarah Leeson (SL).

Also in attendance: Nicky Bourne (Deputy Clerk - NB) who took the minutes, Kim Owen (Clerk & RFO – KO), Amanda Baker (Assistant Clerk – AB) and Brian Clark (Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) Ward Councillor for Linton & Loose).

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 Velma Bennett (VB - attending area KALC meeting) and Andrew Richards (AR – holiday).

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

None.

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 an agreement by LPC on 17 July 17.*)
None.

5. To sign as a correct record, the minutes of the meeting held on 14 October 2024 (Pages 443-448)

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 October 2024 (Pages 443-448) were duly **AGREED** as a true and accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

6. To receive any questions/comments from the public (3mins)

(To include communications received by the Clerks' Office or other committees)

A resident contacted the Office regarding the overgrown KB48 footpath from Norrington Road to Pickering Street. NB has reported this since June 2024, and has also questioned the lack of action. No response has been received from Kent County Council Public Rights of Way (KCC PROW) but the Office will continue to chase. Action: NB

A planter volunteer reported some vandalism to her planter on Boughton Parade. One of the feet is still missing, so a suitable replacement is being sought. Action: NB.

A resident of Lawrence Close (which borders the Greenway) contacted the Office concerned that a tree on the ransom strip has split and is being supported by a tree on his property. NB and AB visited and are contacting the landowner. Action: NB.

Councillor Sue Hill contacted the Office to report a dangerous pot hole in Well Street. She updated that she had reported to KCC Highways as advised by the Office. They attended and made a temporary fix. She spoke with the operatives because temporary measures have been used several times already and she will continue to monitor as it is likely to fail again. Action: SH

SL advised a tree was blocking the KB33A behind Richmond Way. NB advised that it should be reported to KCC PROW. SL shared the photo and location information. Office to report. Action: NB.

7. To receive updates on recent and ongoing Environment matters and to make any necessary decisions (in preparation for budget discussions)

With the meeting needing to focus on agreeing the budget, updates on Environment (ENV) matters since the last meeting had been pre-circulated:

Pond/Stream and the MBC Love Where You Live project

- The tree works were completed w/b 2 September 2024 (funded from the ENV tree works budget).
- The trench was dug by the contractor w/b 23 September 2024 (funded by the MBC Love Where You Live grant). This left a small section near Tylers that the machines could not reach.
- Over the weekend of 26/27 October 24 volunteers at the pond works working parties broke through this section to complete the channel. Other volunteers did the annual watercress and weed clearance along the length of the pond, and the signs were able to be cleaned for the first time in years. One skip was filled and LPC funded the purchase of two pairs of smaller waders, two spades and three buckets (currently stored in the shed).
- The pond warden is now in discussion with Medway Valley Countryside Partnership (MVCP) regarding future works and ongoing maintenance. He has proposed the following to the Committee:
 - a) The new reed island could be divided into 3 sections i.e. “cut through” in two further places. This would give more views across the whole pond as the gaps will remain, even when the reeds on the islands grow tall again. The reduction in the volume of reeds will help reduce the level of mud and the silt build-up. As islands, they would be easier to maintain because the volunteers could get right round each island. He had shared photos of the first breakthrough to give an idea. The work would be done by the volunteers at a working party so the only costs would be a further skip.
 - b) The silted area on the bank (approx. 50m x 5m) to be seeded in the spring. Seed options researched for pond edges/meadows suggest a cost of about £88 for 5kg of seed for that area. There is already some growth naturally on the area, so by spring there would be even more, and the seed would help thicken the cover.

He is awaiting MVCP’s advice on both matters but would like the Committee’s opinion. After discussion the Committee **AGREED** to both proposals. Action: NB to inform Pond Warden.

NB advised that the groundworks contractor has obtained some leftover turf containing meadow seed which they are happy to donate to LPC for Brooks Field. The Committee were grateful for the offer and **AGREED** to accept the turf to be laid on the silt strip.

Tree works

- The annual tree inspection had been completed and the report pre-circulated.
- **Roy’s Wood** – JA/AR/NB reviewed the tree report on site on 17 November 2024. JA/AR proposed to:
 - Purchase mulch and convene a working party to clear the base of all the young trees
 - Source a Scarlett oak to replace the dead tree, to be planted further away from competing trees
 - Request the grounds work contractor cut back the vegetation around the perimeter
 - Seek a quote to cut back encroaching trees inhibiting young trees growth (advised in the report).The Committee **AGREED** the four proposals. Action: NB/AB.

- **Chequer Trees** – JA/AR/NB planted the Chequer trees in front of the new shed. One was the prize from Kent Men of the Trees (KMOTT) competition, and the other was purchased from the tree budget. The ground in front of the old shed was unsuitable, containing bricks and gravel. The trees should help mask the view of the shed from Kirkdale.
- **Resident's oak trees** – contact has been made with the resident and the oak trees are currently on her allotment awaiting viewing and collection. Action: NB/AB
- **Allotment** – Loose Gardeners Society (LGS) queried the report on the health of the ash tree on their border. NB had consulted the inspector who provided further detailed information. After discussion the Committee **AGREED** they would follow the advice of the inspector. Action: NB to update LGS.

Brooks Field gates/bench (Old Loose Hill side) – the main gate, kissing gate and bench have all been repainted by the handyman.

Cripple Street signpost – the vintage signpost has been repainted by the handyman.

Blocked drains – some issues reported on the KCC fault portal (outside Vale House and on the viaduct) have received the standard KCC Drainage response that they are not urgent so will be dealt with by routine maintenance. The blocked drain at the bottom of the allotment path was reported on 24 October 2024 and remains “under investigation” on the portal. Action: NB to monitor all reported faults.

Viaduct footpath - The footpath over the viaduct has again been reported for cleansing now that all the leaves are down. The leaves and rain have left a layer of slippery sludge making it awkward to walk over, and it is a busy route either way to schools. Action: NB to monitor until work completed.

Church Street water flow – the CCTV survey to check for defects in the existing drainage system that could potentially be contributing to the water emanations was completed but found no defects. This has confirmed the water is due to the natural springs. Regarding the possibility of installing a new drainage system, the underground service information provided on paper indicates limited to no available space under the road. Recognising that these maps are not always entirely accurate, a Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) survey to confirm service locations and available space has been scheduled for 25-26 November. The next update will come once the GPR survey has been conducted and findings reviewed.

Cemetery gravestone and ragstone wall surveys – both have been completed.

Cemetery – The overgrown roses have been pruned and the collapsed supports re-built. The poppy wreath was laid by Rita Hood on behalf of LPC at the Remembrance service. CH has checked the overgrown corner and confirmed Japanese Knotweed was not visible. NB/AB have completed some routine maintenance, bin emptying and tidying up specific memorials, cutting back large amounts of bramble and other vegetation, which the contractor then cleared.

War Memorial - The War Memorial Trust has confirmed all the grant conditions have been met so work can proceed. The contractor has been advised and is programming the clean. The revised quote for the Portland stone section is still being chased. Action: NB to chase up quote and circulate for agreement by **ROUND ROBIN**.

Boughton Parade noticeboard- This has been delivered and quotes for installation are being sought. Action: NB/AB.

Richmond Way Green - The perimeter cut has been completed by the grounds work contractor.

Village Green – At the previous meeting JA raised concern about litter on the village green and whether the bin should be moved nearer the bench. The situation will continue to be monitored. Action: NB/JA.

8. Risk/General Maintenance - to discuss items below and make any necessary decisions (in preparation for budget discussions)

a. Actions from the annual monitoring of LPC owned ragstone walls stability

The annual inspection of the LPC-owned ragstone walls took place on 24 October 2024 with a number of actions advised for the Triangle wall with estimated costs of £600 from the LPC budget. Non-urgent works were estimated at £400. After discussion it was **AGREED** quotes should be sought to advise accurate budget setting at the meeting in December. Action: NB/AB.

b. Actions from the annual monitoring of the closed cemetery headstones

The annual inspection of the cemetery head stones took place on 1 November 2024 with a number of monitoring actions advised. No immediate works or expenditure are needed but the Committee **AGREED** the existing budget of £400 should continue to be allocated because works, when required, are costly. Action: KO.

c. Actions from the annual tree safety inspection report

The annual tree safety inspection report had been pre-circulated to the Council. The report highlighted that the regularity of inspections and maintenance by LPC has meant there are no new major issues. The Committee discussed that the increase in the size of the Parish required appropriate funding to maintain a greater number of trees. Action: KO.

After discussion the Committee **AGREED** quotes should be sought for all recommended actions requiring a specialist contractor, so that they could be prioritised and assist the budget decision. Action: NB. Some of the maintenance to the smaller trees in Roy's Wood would be done by a working party. Action: AR/JA/NB.

d. Collapsed land on the allotment / Brooks Field boundary

The ongoing issue of the collapsed land in the allotment had been discussed at the McAlpine Trust meeting on 5 November 2024. After discussion the Committee **AGREED** that the Office should continue seeking solutions (Action: NB/AB) and that a budget be requested and allocated (Action: KO / Chairman).

9. Finance

a. To agree the budget for 2025-2024

The Clerk had pre-circulated the finance report and budget information. The proposed budget for 2025-2026 was discussed and **AGREED** as follows:

Code	Environment Item	Budget
4200	General Maintenance	£5000.00
4205	Street Lighting	£500.00
4210	Street Furniture	£1500.00
4215	Tree Works	£3000.00
4225	Planting Planters	£1500.00
4230	Pond Works	£1500.00
4235	Village Green Improvements	£300.00
4240	Meadow	£2000.00
4245	Save to Invest War Memorial	£300.00
4250	Save to Invest Fencing (B Field)	£400.00
4255	Save to Invest Noticeboards	£1000.00
4275	Cemetery Works	£400.00
4270	Save to Invest Highways	£3000.00

b. To update the management plan and make any necessary decisions

The Deputy Clerk had pre-circulated the 2024-25 Management Plan, which had been updated to show completed items, and those that are still outstanding. After discussion it was **AGREED** that all incomplete

items should be carried over to the 2025-26 plan when drafted. Action: NB. The Committee should give thought to any further projects for 2025-26, and bring these to the next meeting. Action: All Committee.

10. To review the first drafts of the Volunteer Agreements and Risk Assessments and make any necessary decisions

The first draft of the Volunteer Agreement and the risk assessments for litter picking and planter maintenance had been pre-circulated. After discussion it was **AGREED** that LPC must align with any regulations that KCC Highways, MBC and Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC) have with regard to litter picking and tending to planters close to the highway. Action: Office to clarify KCC, MBC, KALC regulations and incorporate into the risk assessments. The new documents to be circulated for decision by **ROUND ROBIN**. Action: NB/AB.

11. To review the groundworks specification and make any necessary decisions

The current groundworks specification for 2022-25 had been pre-circulated. NB highlighted the timeframe for getting the 2025-28 contract in place. After discussion it was **AGREED** that JA would review the specification and meet with NB to include the works required for Richmond Way Green. The updated document would be circulated to the Committee for agreement by **ROUND ROBIN**, prior to going out to tender. Action: JA and NB.

12. To receive an update from the Highways Working Group (CH)

CH reported that three Highways Working Group meetings had taken place. Sean Carter has joined the group as a volunteer consultant bringing his wealth of knowledge from the former NLRA area. The group has been considering all potential interventions for inclusion in the revised Highways Improvement Plan (HIP). A number of these were briefly discussed. The list will be taken to a meeting with our new HIP consultant Greg McNicholl. Action: NB to arrange meeting date.

13. To ratify any ROUND ROBIN decisions since 14 October 2024

The following **ROUND ROBINS** were ratified:

For Item 12d at the Environment meeting held on 14 October 2024, a **ROUND ROBIN** was sent on 23 October 2024: To agree the quote for Richmond Way Green perimeter cut. The quote of £275 + VAT was **AGREED** (CH, VB, AR & SL).

For Item 13c at the Environment meeting held on 14 October 2024, a **ROUND ROBIN** was sent on 23 October 2024: To agree the quote for the annual tree safety inspection. The quote of £600 + VAT was **AGREED** (CH, JA, AR & SL).

14. Website and media – to discuss and make any decisions as relevant

The Committee discussed publicising advice and reporting mechanisms to the community as the winter weather approaches. Action: NB.

15. Other Items (information only)

None.

16. Date of next meeting – 10 March 2025

The meeting closed at 9.43 pm.

Signed

Dated.....