



**LOOSE PARISH COUNCIL
ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES
Meeting held on Monday 01 July 2024
at 7.30pm in Loose Parish Pavilion, KGVPF.**

In attendance: Councillors: Velma Bennett (Vice-Chair - VB), Jim Andrew (JA), Sarah Leeson (SL), Mark Woodward (MW) and Andrew Richards (AR).

Also in attendance: Cllr Brian Clarke (BC) and Cllr Simon Wales (SW) - Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) Linton & Loose Ward Councillors, Elaine Lawford (Highways Working Group member - EL), Nicky Bourne (Deputy Clerk - NB) who took the minutes, and Amanda Baker (Assistant Clerk - AB).

There were 10 members of the public in attendance.

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

AGENDA

1. To confirm acceptance of the Vice-Chairman role (elected in absence at the meeting held on 20 May 2024)

At the last Environment Committee meeting on 20 May 2024, 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. VB confirmed acceptance as she was not present at that meeting.

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

The Terms of Reference had been pre-circulated to the Committee with highlighted changes due to the additional areas of responsibility taken on from the North Loose Residents' Association (NLRA). The Committee **AGREED** the amendments. MW queried whether Mangravet recreation area, which now falls in the Parish, should be added as a specific area under the responsibility of Loose Parish Council (LPC). The Committee **AGREED** that the Clerks' Office should check this and then finalise the document for ratification by LPC. Action: NB.

3. To receive any apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Charlie Hollister (CH) (illness). No apologies were received from Sue Hill (SH).

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

None.

5. 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.

6. 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.

7. To sign as a correct record, the minutes of the meeting held on 20 May 2024 (Pages 430-435)

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 May 2024 (Pages 430-435) could not be signed as there were not three Councillors present who had attended that meeting, who could agree them as a true and accurate record. The agreement and signing was deferred to the next Loose Parish Council meeting on 15 July 2024. Action: NB.

The Committee **AGREED** to take Agenda Item 9b next.

8. 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. Update on the Church Street water situation

Since the last meeting, there has been much communication between the residents of Church Street, KCC Highways representatives, the KCC and MBC Ward Councillors, the KCC Cabinet member for Highways, the KCC Flood team and KCC Drainage teams and the LPC Office.

In response to an urgent request from the Office, KCC Highways did send out a team to clean the road of algae prior to the busy Loose Duck Race event on 27 May. As neither a longer term resolution, nor a site visit had yet to be secured, the Chair of the Environment Committee and the Deputy Clerk hosted an informal residents meeting attended by KCC Cllr Simon Webb and MBC Cllrs Brian Clarke and Simon Wales in the Loose Pavilion on Monday 24 June 2024, to discuss the way forward. Following the advice of the KCC Cabinet Member Neil Baker, NB contacted the Flood Team and has secured a site visit on Friday 5 July with the Land Drainage Engineer and a Highways Drainage Technician. Cllr Simon Wales will attend, along with three representatives from the residents who are preparing a briefing paper regarding the history of the issue and works in the area. The Committee **AGREED** that Cllr Andrew should be invited to attend, as Cllr Hollister would be working. Action: NB.

All other issues and communications from the public discussed at the last meeting (litter and parking) were dealt with under specific agenda items later in the meeting.

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

a. Current Highways Improvement Plan Priority 1 – A229 30/40mph boundary zone

MBC Ward Cllr Brian Clarke (BC) had requested this agenda item and NB had provided information on the Priority 1 progress and issues so far. BC provided an update on the recently approved Greensands development on Heath Road (just outside Loose in the Linton Parish) and discussions regarding traffic calming measures proposed near the Linton crossroads. He has asked that the 30mph zone proposed outside the medical centre be extended all the way to the Linton crossroads. Planners have agreed to his suggestions and this should be progressed.

BC explained that he has been looking into the data within the LPC A229 speed surveys commissioned in 2021. As considerable time has lapsed and traffic patterns have significantly changed since the pandemic changed lifestyles, he asked the Committee to consider paying for two new speed surveys. These would provide up to date evidence to be able to progress attempts to change the speed limits. EL gave information regarding other local areas where speed changes had been implemented but had been paid for by developers, without any evidence of speed data. She also highlighted the lack of official recording of some of the accidents along this stretch, despite street furniture, such as the pedestrian refuges and railings being destroyed. BC also noted survey evidence of some vehicles travelling in excess of 75mph and asked the Committee to consider installation of an illuminated speed indicator device.

After discussion, the Committee **AGREED** these proposals should be discussed at the first Highways Working Party meeting. Action: CH to convene meeting.

b. Current Highways Improvement Plan Priority 2 - Parking in the vicinity of Loose School

MBC Cllr Simon Wales updated on his site visit with MBC Cllr Brian Clarke and Cllr Clive English (who is responsible for MBC parking enforcement), to view parking outside Loose School. Cllr English advised that the current white hatchings are unenforceable so to get action, the Parish Council should request that KCC put in yellow lines, then the MBC parking team could enforce. They also looked at the parking at Copper Tree Court, which already has double yellow lines and can be enforced. Targetted visits by the parking enforcement team will be taking place, but can only be occasional because many primary schools have the same request at the same time of day, and the team is small.

BC explained that there were other issues in the Parish at Wheatsheaf Close and the Sainsburys car park exit onto the Farrowes, and that a combined application would be more likely to be agreed and would be covered with one set of costs for the consultation and Traffic Regulation Order. BC spoke of his communications with the Primary School and previous success getting double yellow lines put down on Waldron Drive, Rushmead Drive, Cripple Street and Warnford Gardens.

Residents spoke of specific incidents at Walnut Tree Avenue and Copper Tree Court and their safety concerns when exiting the roads they live in. They explained their frustrations with poor parking decisions by those dropping and collecting children from the school, delivery vehicles, and even vehicles associated with the adjacent local businesses. They questioned the bus stop location and BC explained that he had questioned KCC Highways on that issue and it had been relocated due to the width of the highway at that point.

BC explained the process, timeline and likely costs involved to get lines in place. The Parish Council would need to re-draft their Priority 2 on the Highways Improvement Plan and propose it to KCC Highways. If accepted by KCC, a consultation would be opened and publicised in local media, and residents in the proximity would receive a letter. BC explained that community support would be important, particularly as action on the issue on Walnut Tree Avenue was not previously agreed by KCC Highways. The Parish Council will also publicise the details of the consultation. MW explained that KCC have a "Vision Zero" strategy with a target of zero road fatalities by 2050, and these new proposals would reduce accidents, so should be viewed positively as they will play their part towards the vision. BC explained that the process might not move very quickly and would depend upon available sources of funding.

JA asked NB to summarise the two priorities on the HIP for the benefit of the residents in attendance, which she did. AR proposed that HIP Priority 2 be expanded from "Parking in the vicinity of Loose Primary School", to cover improving safety at specific named road junctions by requesting double yellow lines to enable enforcement at these hot spots. The Committee **AGREED** the proposal and asked NB to complete the re-draft and circulate it for agreement by **Round Robin**. The HIP would then be submitted to the KCC HIP Partner. Action: NB.

c. Highways Working Group going forward

The Committee **AGREED** that NB should obtain proposed dates from Cllr Hollister for the first Highways Working Group and circulate these to MW and EL with a draft agenda, including the above items and those received from the KCC Highways Improvement Partner (related to Community Speedwatch and the WOW scheme initiative in schools). Action: NB.

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

a. Defibrillator phone box painting update

The handyman has completed the exterior painting of the defibrillator phone box.

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

a. Badger Sett

NB met with a representative of West Kent Badger group on Sunday 26 May to seek advice on badger laws and to view the sett in the woods at Brooks Field and the collapsed part of the sett on the allotment side of the fence. He informed that no one can be prosecuted for making safe a sett, as long as not destroying the sett or an animal. He did give suggestions for how the hole might be reinforced or fenced off. NB fed back the information to the Loose Gardeners Society (LGS) and the matter is on the agenda for the next McAlpine Trust meeting on 3 July 2024 to discuss the next action needed. Action: Councillors attending the McAlpine Trust to feedback after the meeting.

b. Nuisance Fishing in the Stream update

Following the last meeting, NB consulted the Environment Agency who have noted the report of illegal fishing. Our Kent Police Beat Officer has been notified and will start including the area in his patrols. Two residents who reported the issue have provided further details on timings which have been passed to the Beat Officer. It has been explained to him that the issue is not just about the actual fishing, but concerns about the damage being caused to Brooks Path when the tufts of grass are pulled up, loosening the ragstone edging which gets thrown in the stream. Volunteers have retrieved these and fixed them back, but it is an ongoing problem. One resident has asked if “No Fishing” signs can be erected. After discussion the Council **AGREED** that signage should not be erected as it would cause confusion with the very popular traditional activity of paddling with fishing nets by young children. Actions: NB to feedback to resident regarding the decision on signage. NB to monitor the situation in liaison with the Beat Officer and residents.

c. MBC “Love Where You Live” grant update for pondworks

NB contacted MBC with the request for the grant spending date to be extended as the project is unable get underway until 2 September, delayed due to the nesting season. An apology has been received for the lack of response and the matter has been passed to another person at MBC. NB has chased again. Action: NB to continue to chase and update the Committee when response received.

d. Replacement Trees Update

The Clerks Office has been researching sources for the replacement trees for Roys Wood and Chequer trees for the site of the old shed. This is work in progress and will be resolved prior to planting season. Action: Clerks Office. A resident present at the meeting offered two oak trees currently growing on her allotment, which need to be transplanted before they grow too big. The Committee **AGREED** they would gratefully receive the trees in the autumn. Action: NB to liaise with the resident nearer the time.

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

a. Repairs to the war memorial update

The grant application to the War Memorial Trust was submitted prior to the deadline and a result should be known in August. If successful, up to 50% of the cost of repairs (approximately £2000) would be awarded. Upon the War Memorial Trust advice in the pre-application feedback, the focus is on the structural repairs. The writing on the inscriptions is still very legible so would be low priority for any grant funding. Action: NB to update the Committee when the decision is known. Further action will be dependent on the outcome.

b. Update on risk items

Two items are ongoing. The gravestone due to be laid flat remains in place. It was being monitored by NB who has chased the Contractor. Due to miscommunication the payment was delayed, but this has now been dealt with so the work should go ahead shortly. Action: NB to monitor until completion.

CH has inspected the area in the Closed Cemetery reported to have Japanese Knotweed growing and will be attending to treat it once she is well again. Action: CH

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

a. Post-funfair update

The post-funfair checks were completed. There was minimal damage to the grass which is already recovering well. One bollard socket lock is damaged, but has been re-shaped and repair to the lock is being investigated. The remaining two bollards are locked in place. Action: NB.

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

a. Noticeboards and Signage

Signage changes – this remains work in progress and the quotes will be circulated for agreement by **Round Robin**, as agreed last meeting. Action: NB.

Noticeboards – AB explained functional issues with the two former NLRA noticeboards, but particularly the board on Boughton Parade. NB asked the Committee to consider replacement when budget could be made available. The noticeboard on the Greenway is less of a priority as some adaptations could be made by the Office to improve it. NB provided the cost of replacements from the supplier of the other LPC boards, and explained that although not budgetted for this year, funds could be made available from CIL monies or the SE water Community fund. The Committee would address the matter during agenda item 16.

b. Planters

NB explained that LPC now has responsibility for four planters at the green, two at the Pavilion, seven on Boughton Parade and seven at the Wheatsheaf Parade. Volunteers tend those in the former NLRA area, and last meeting the Committee had asked for clarification regarding volunteer insurance. The insurance company have said that the LPC policy covers volunteers working under the Parish Council, including working near the highway, as long as a risk assessment has been carried out, and they are following the guidance given. However, the insurance only covers people aged 16-75 years. As a number of volunteers who tend the planters, and/or are involved in litter picking are older than 75, the Committee **AGREED** that further research should be undertaken on the matter, including MBC, KCC and Kent Association of Local Council (KALC). Action: NB.

c. Greenway Maintenance

The NRLA maintenance programme included quarterly weedkiller application and they paid for the last application in April, so the next is now due. The Office is in touch with the contractor who applies the weedkiller only on the path itself, not the edges. NLRA volunteers completed the cutting back every 3-4 weeks in the growing season, with the biggest issue being disposal of the removed material as vehicle access is limited. This used to be taken onto private land and burnt. However, the volunteers do not wish to continue. The Committee **AGREED** that quotes should be sought for immediate clearance and be circulated for **Round Robin** agreement.

Going forward, as there are no longer any volunteers wanting to be involved, the Committee **AGREED** that LPC would need to take on the maintenance using the precept. The current groundwork contract has one year left, so will need to be revised to include all the areas of maintenance from the former North Loose area. Action: Clerks Office to also request a costed schedule for the regular maintenance from contractors. The Office will seek to contact the landowner regarding cutting of the section alongside the housing. Action: NB.

It was discussed that some wild flowers would grow back naturally, but would always be restricted due to the dominance of other vegetation. Focus areas could be worked on e.g. at the entrances, but this could be considered at future meetings, once maintenance had brought the whole section back under control.

d. Heritage signpost re-painting quote

After discussion the Committee **AGREED** the quote received from the handyman (who had completed the re-painting of the Defibrillator phone box), to wash down pointers, rub down the rest of the post and paint black and white in Hammerite at a cost of £220 from the maintenance budget. Action: NB to advise the handyman to proceed. Additional quotes have been received for items at Brooks Field (the gate and memorial bench) but these would be considered next meeting, after the annual walkabout. BC explained there are some white posts on Boughton Parade which would benefit from re-painting. Some are KCC, but one extra one was installed by NLRA. NB advised that these had not been mentioned on the inventory from NLRA. After discussion it was **AGREED** that these would be reviewed during the forthcoming annual walkabout. Action: NB to add to the walkabout schedule.

e. Richmond Way Green update

The Committee had asked NB to find out if volunteers would be continuing to maintain the Richmond Way Green (hedges) but as discussed in Agenda Item 14c, the volunteers are not carrying on. It was **AGREED** that the maintenance would need to be included in the LPC groundworks specification going forward and quotes should be sought. The cutting of the grass has already been agreed and is on the schedule. The three trees will be added to the tree safety inspection list, along with the trees on Boughton Parade. Action: Clerks' Office.

SL updated on the progress with the signing of the lease document. It needs to be dated then will be returned and sent off to land registry. Action: Clerk.

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

a. Walnut Tree in the triangle update

The broken branch spotted in the Walnut Tree in the triangle (Walnut Tree Avenue) has been removed.

b. Brooks path bollard

The wooden bollard knocked down has been replaced by KCC Highways and the No cycling sign will be transferred from the old post (currently in the LAA shed).

c. Litter Management

A report from Love Loose Hate Litter had been pre-circulated and the two co-ordinators will be stepping down. The scheme did come under MBC in terms of insurance but needs clarification. NB is awaiting a response from MBC. There is a database of volunteers who cover specific areas and a stock of equipment, a social media page, logos, and previously thank you events have been organised. The NLRA volunteers have been included into the scheme, but there are still areas without coverage. After discussion it was **AGREED** that an appeal should be made on social media for a volunteer co-ordinator. Action: NB.

16. Finance

a. To receive an update from the Responsible Finance Officer

KO had pre-circulated the latest Environment Committee finance report and ear-marked reserves. After discussion regarding funding sources for the noticeboards it was **AGREED** that the SE Water Community Fund would be used to replace the Boughton Parade noticeboard. Action: NB.

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

As requested NB had updated the Management Plan incorporating some of the responsibilities taken on from NLRA and this had been pre-circulated to the Committee. NB explained the working document categories and colours (budget and ear-marked reserves) and highlighted considerations for the future maintenance and costs. After discussion it was **AGREED** that the document should be reconsidered after the annual walkabout and during budget discussions to

differentiate items that are regular maintenance or on the groundworks specification, as opposed to specific projects. Action: Committee to review again at the next meeting.

17. Monitoring and Ratification of any ROUND ROBIN decisions

None.

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

The Office is still to create the public information on the pond works project ready for the September start. It will be circulated to the Committee for checking. Action: NB/AB.

The latest In & Around Loose has just been published and a Community Alert is in preparation. Items to be added include Love Loose Hate Litter going forward and appeals for volunteers.

SL advised that her road does not receive the In & Around Loose magazine. Action: NB will advise the distributor.

19. Other Items (discussion only)

EL highlighted a recent issue on the footpath at the rear of Copper Tree Court and Walnut Tree Lane. The top ragstones are being vandalised and removed and are on the footpath. One large collapsed section had previously been reported and dealt with by the property owner. NB will take photos and raise with Walnut Tree Ltd. There may be some houses in Copper Tree Court who need to be made aware.

BC explained that he is working with Tovil Parish Council and KCC Highways to install 7.5 tonne weight limit signage (for Cripple St/Straw Mill Hill) much further in advance on the Loose Road, following incidents with overweight vehicles getting stuck. The current signage is at the Greenway entrance.

BC also advised that historically Sainsburys had Community Funding available and might be worth contacting to see if they could contribute to the new noticeboard.

BC also advised that he has a big supply of the volunteer green bin bags which he will hand over.

AR updated on the letter that Simon Webb had received from KCC Highways advising that they could not support the 20mph scheme for a long list of reasons. AR has suggested Loose Amenities Association consider any other possibilities eg alternative rural lane signage on the boundaries.

20. Date of Next Meeting – 14 October 2024

The meeting closed at 9.47pm.

Signed

Dated.....