



**LOOSE PARISH COUNCIL (LPC)
ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES
Meeting held on Monday 14 October 2024
at 7.30pm in Loose Parish Pavilion, KGVPF.**

In attendance: Councillors: Charlie Hollister (Chair - CH) Velma Bennett (Vice-Chair - VB), Jim Andrew (JA), Sarah Leeson (SL), Sue Hill (SH) and Andrew Richards (AR).

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

There were 0 members of the public in attendance.

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

AGENDA

1. To receive any apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Mark Woodward (MW - unwell).

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 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 1 July 2024 (Pages 436-442)

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 July 2024 (Pages 436-442) were duly **AGREED** as a true and accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

The Committee **AGREED** to take Agenda Item 7b next so Cllr Clark could attend another meeting.

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. The Scenic Green Trail

Information on a long-distance footpath from Lenham to West Malling called the Scenic Green Trail, had been received and pre-circulated to the Committee. The proposed route travels through the Loose valley and the Project Leader was seeking support. After discussion the Committee **AGREED** to support the proposal and suggested other local organisations should be included. Action: NB to inform project manager of LPC's support and advise of Loose Amenities Association (LAA), Valley Conservation Society (VCS) and Loose Swiss Scouts interests in the land along the proposed route.

b. Church Street

Church Street residents contacted the Office and Ward Councillors concerned that the water flow has already returned and some residents have experienced power cuts. The road is currently undergoing works for high voltage electrical repairs. NB emailed the Kent County Council (KCC) Floods Team for an update and they advise the next stage is CCTV surveys of all the systems in place including highway drainage, chambers and the outfalls of the river to check for defects and to map everything. A service scan would then be done to confirm placement of services under the road to check against plans received from utilities companies. KCC have received quotes and awarded the surveying job, and are awaiting a date for road closure to action the CCTV survey. BC had raised the flood water issues with the Joint Transport Board (JTB) and the matter is on the forthcoming agenda. Action: NB to follow up after the surveys. BC to update after the JTB meeting.

c. High Banks

A resident emailed to seek help to improve parking outside her property at High Banks cottages. BC advised that unless the land registry entry for the property included a historic right to that section of roadway, little could be done to gain any rights (and this would not be something KCC would take up). It would have had to have been fenced off and used exclusively by the resident (for 10 or 12 years depending on circumstances) to gain adverse position rights. Action: NB to advise the resident.

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

a. Highways Improvement Plan (HIP) Priority 2 amendments

NB explained that due to the ongoing matters being pushed forward by the Ward Councillors, the HIP Priorities document had not been re-drafted because the Committee had not had an opportunity to discuss or agree what they wish to support. The following agenda items 7b and 7c cover this and the HIP will be re-drafted by the Highways Working Group. Action: NB, BC and the Highways Working Group.

b. Update on highways matters being led by the Linton and Loose Ward Councillors (BC)

BC informed the Committee of his recent communications with Loose Primary School and residents along the A229 (from Walnut Tree Avenue to 639 Loose Road) regarding a proposal for double yellow lines to stop vehicles parking on the pavement and hatching. Current parking habits block sight lines for cars exiting Walnut Tree Avenue and block the pavement for pedestrians with young children walking to school. BC also proposed double yellow lines being put on the Wheatsheaf Close junction with Loose Road, and on the Farrows opposite the entrance to the Sainsburys car park. The multiple sites would be covered by one Traffic Regulation Order, reducing the cost. KCC would be unlikely to fund these measures so BC suggested that if the Parish Council wished to progress the proposal, the Parish Council HIP Priority 2 could be revised, and funding could come from Community Infrastructure Levy. After discussion the Environment Committee **AGREED** that the Highways Working Group should take this forward with BC attending their meeting. Action: Highways Working Group and BC.

BC updated on the consultation on the proposal for speed reduction from 40mph to 30mph along Linton Road (from the viaduct, through Linton crossroads to the Stilebridge at Linton). He will be presenting on the proposal at the next JTB meeting and explained possible outcomes. Action: BC to update following the meeting.

BC provided information on the current open consultation relating to the proposal for a zebra crossing outside Loose Primary School. He explained that proximity to the Walnut Tree Lane entrance meant a pelican crossing would not be compliant. The proposal was designed with the support of the school to increase safety when the School Crossing Patrol was unavailable. The installation would provide a safer crossing point for all pedestrians at all times. Residents are encouraged to give their views. Action: BC to update on the consultation outcome and project progress.

JA asked whether a 20mph zone outside the school was still on any agenda. BC explained that it was not, but it could be revisited when the HIP was re-written, if that was what the Parish Council wished to do.

c. Highways working group

After discussion the Committee **AGREED** that all above matters should be delegated to the Highways Working Group (CH, MW and EL) to discuss and progress. BC will also attend. Actions: CH, MW, EL and BC to agree date and venue to for meeting. NB to draft agenda including the above items and those previously received from the KCC Highways Improvement Partner (related to Community Speedwatch and the WOW scheme initiative in schools).

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

a. Planters

The four planters at the village green are now being tended by a new volunteer who leads Tiger community gardeners. The wooden planter has been painted by a regular volunteer. The Committee asked that their thanks were passed on to these volunteers. Action: NB

b. Walnut tree in the triangle

The Office has received requests for the walnut tree in the triangle to be cut back from the house boundary to its north, and where it hangs over the pub outbuilding to the south. The tree forms part of the annual safety inspection. A request to inspect the issues and provide a quote to cut back the overhangs will be requested. The Office has advised the residents that they can trim back anything overhanging in the interim. Action: NB to follow up inspection and bring the quote to the next meeting.

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

a. KCC "Love Where You Live" pond project

The trees have been coppiced and the channel has been dug out of the stream to create an island as per the project specification. One section was unreachable by the machinery and will be worked on by the annual pondworks working party. The public information boards remain in place explaining the project and safety notices have been put on the newly exposed river bank. The area is being regularly monitored by AB/NB and volunteer residents.

b. Annual pondworks plans

The pond warden has allocated the weekend of 26-27 October for the annual pondworks and a skip has been ordered for delivery on Wednesday 23 October. Action: NB to oversee.

c. Tree planting plans

Kent Men of the Trees (KMOTT) will provide one Chequer tree free of charge with the tree credit won by LPC in the "Trees in the Village" competition. They provided options to purchase a 4-5 foot Chequer tree or 15 whips. The Committee **AGREED** to purchase one further tree at a cost of £62 and both to be planted in the area of the old shed in Brooks Field. Action: NB. At the last meeting a resident offered two oak trees for transplanting and was going to provide more information on type. The Office will make contact to find out if still available. Action: NB/AB

d. Meadow Phase 4

The meadow has been cut as per the groundworks contract for Brooks Field. Plans need to be drawn up for Phase 4, to be implemented by March 2024. Action: CH, NB & AB.

e. Brooks Field boundary collapse within the Loose allotments

The Office has continued to investigate a solution for the ground collapse at the allotments through a wide variety of different contractors and organisations. Responses and issues were explained and discussed. The Committee **AGREED** that research should continue (Action: NB/AB)

but the matter would be raised by CH and AR at the McAlpine Trust AGM on 5 November. Action: CH/AR.

f. Roy's Wood update (JA/AR)

JA reported that most of the young trees in Roy's Wood were doing well with the exception of the Scarlett oak which has died. After discussion it was **AGREED** that the Office should seek an established replacement to be planted in a more favourable position. Action: NB/AB. JA advised that the surrounding shrubs are encroaching the area. The Committee **AGREED** that the Office contact the groundwork contractor to arrange a cut as per the groundworks specification. Action: NB/AB.

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

a. Repairs to the war memorial

A grant has been secured from the War Memorial Trust towards the repairs and maintenance of the Loose War Memorial in the closed cemetery. The paperwork has been signed by the Chairman and is awaiting the contractor declaration, then a start date will be advised. The contractor needs to order the required Portland stone and has advised that costs have risen since the last quote. He will provide an updated quote as soon as known. The Committee **AGREED** that the work is essential so must proceed, and they will discuss any changes to costs at their budget meeting. Action: NB to bring revised quote to next meeting.

b. Preparations for Remembrance Sunday

It is anticipated that the area around the War Memorial will still be available for use on Remembrance Sunday as the initial works, if started, will be the cleaning. The Office will confirm as soon as known. Action: NB. The poppy wreath has been ordered and the Committee **AGREED** that Rita Hood be asked to lay it on behalf of the Parish Council. Action: Clerks' Office.

c. Matters arising in the cemetery from the annual walkabout

The gravestone identified as unstable has now been laid flat. Photographs of issues in the cemetery had been pre-circulated. After discussion it was **AGREED** that the groundworks contractor be contacted regarding the maintenance the roses, and asked to mend the collapsed frames as quoted. Action: NB. The Committee **AGREED** the smaller vegetation issues could be addressed by the team when next checking the area. Action: NB/AB

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

a. Matters arising from the October quarterly KGVPF walkabout

The report from the October walkabout of KGVPF had been circulated and issues highlighted. After discussion the Committee **AGREED** that the area cut back to remove the den would remain open for the time being to assist visibility (rather than being re-fenced), but would be regularly monitored. Action: NB/AB.

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

a. Greenway update and ongoing maintenance

The Greenway had the one-off cut in August as agreed at a cost of £460 + VAT. The ongoing maintenance of the path was discussed as it will require regular work during growing season. The path is not currently part of the KCC Public Rights of Way (PROW) maintenance, as per an arrangement with the former North Loose Residents Association (NLRA), whose volunteers took it on. As requested at the previous meeting the landowner had been contacted regarding the cutting of the section alongside the housing but has confirmed they give agreement for the cutting, but do not do it, or fund it. After discussion, the Committee **AGREED** that as there is no formal written agreement with KCC, the Office should consult them to request reinstating the Greenway section (KM22B) on their programme as they clear the adjacent sections. Action: NB.

b. Noticeboards and Signage

The NLRA signage has been removed from the Greenway and the Committee acknowledged that any replacement would depend on the outcome of the KCC PROW maintenance decision.

SL updated on the situation with the Richmond Way Green lease and the Office will wait and only order the signs once the process is fully complete. Action: NB

The new noticeboard for Boughton Parade has been ordered, funded as agreed from the Community Fund. The noticeboard on the Greenway recently suffered vandalism (three holes). AB has made a temporary fix to keep out moisture, but the Office asked that in the forthcoming budget meeting the Committee consider funding a replacement magnetic board.

c. Planters

All planter volunteers have been contacted, thanked and offered supplies if required. Some have had some fresh compost and plants purchased. One planter, allocated to Five Acre Wood School has been taken over by a willing resident as it was left untended for sometime. Two at the Wheatsheaf are being monitored as bases are dropping, but still intact. The Committee is grateful that all planters under LPC responsibility are now being well taken care of by these volunteers.

d. Richmond Way Green – matters arising from the walkabout

The three trees have been added to the tree safety inspection list, along with the trees on Boughton Parade. The groundwork contractor has been asked to quote for an inside perimeter hedge trim, particularly at the entrances which have overgrown and obscure the signage. The Committee **AGREED** the quote should be circulated for agreement by **Round Robin**. Going forward this will be added to the groundwork specification. Action: NB

Photographs of the mature tree on the border of Richmond Way Green and the KM33 footpath had been pre-circulated and discussed. NLRA had started to apply for a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) but the matter did not progress before they disbanded. The Committee **AGREED** this should be pursued. Action: NB/AB. JA advised that the Planning Committee had requested updated criteria for listing trees from Maidstone Borough Council but this was still awaited.

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

a. Annual monitoring of the stability of LPC owned ragstone walls

The annual safety inspection of the LPC owned ragstone walls is now due. JA and CH will arrange completion. Action: JA and CH.

b. Annual monitoring of the closed cemetery headstones

The annual safety inspection of the headstones in the closed cemetery is now due. JA and CH will arrange completion. Action: JA and CH.

c. Annual tree safety inspection

Additions have been made to the LPC tree list (Boughton Parade, Richmond Way Green and allotment) and an inspection quote requested. The Committee **AGREED** it should be circulated for **Round Robin** agreement. They acknowledged that the increased number of trees will raise the cost of the inspection and the tree maintenance budget going forward. Action: NB.

d. Volunteer agreements

Cover for residents volunteering in the Parish has been investigated with the insurance company and with other Parishes. As the insurance company do not cover anyone outside the age bracket 16-75 years, the advice is to have an LPC volunteer agreement/waiver. This should explain the limitations to cover so residents understand they volunteer at their own risk. The Office is currently sifting through examples to create an LPC agreement. The Committee **AGREED** the draft version should be circulated by **Round Robin** for agreement or comment. Action: NB/AB.

14. Finance

a. To review the contract for Street Lighting servicing and maintenance

The annual contract was reviewed and the Committee **AGREED** to continue with the existing contractor for street lighting service and maintenance. Action: Clerks' Office to update the contract record.

b. To receive an update from the Responsible Finance Officer

The Environment Committee finance documents had been pre-circulated by the Clerk. The documents were noted. The Chairman asked Councillors to give thought to priorities for 2025-26 and bring these to the budget meeting on 25 November 2024. Action: All Committee members.

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

The updated Management Plan for 2024-25 had been pre-circulated. The Committee discussed current spending and that some categories will need expanding to include new responsibilities taken on in the extended Parish when the 2025-26 plan is created. For example, the Brooks Field fencing allocation would now need to cover the post and rail fencing at the Wheatsheaf Parade and Boughton Parade. After discussion it was **AGREED** to accept the quote of £300 from the handyman to paint the bench inside Brooks Field and the gate on the Old Loose Hill entrance. Action: NB.

15. Monitoring and Ratification of any ROUND ROBIN decisions

The following **Round Robin** was ratified:

For Item 14c at the ENV meeting held on 1 July 2024, a **Round Robin** was sent on 17 July 2024: To agree a contractor for the immediate cutting of vegetation along the Greenway.

A contractor and the quote of £460 + VAT for the works were **AGREED** (CH, JA, SL).

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

The next "In & Around Loose" will feature the new planter volunteers and an update on the pondworks project and war memorial repairs.

17. Other Items (discussion only)

AR raised the issue of out of date planning application notices being left on posts around the village and the consensus was that anyone could remove these.

JA highlighted the amount of litter at the bench on the village green following the removal of the open tulip bin directly next to the bench. The issue was discussed and NB will monitor and put the matter on the next agenda. Action: NB

NB provided an update from Southern Water on the Lower Loose Valley pumping station: Good progress is being made. The temporary generator and electrical panel will shortly be replaced with permanent equipment. The Motor Control Centre (MCC) panel will be delivered to site w/c 21 October, with installation starting the same week. Installation of the pumps will then take place at the end of November, expected completion is the first week of December. They will then commission the whole site to ensure it is working as it should.

18. Date of Next Meeting – 25 November 2024 (Budget meeting)

The meeting closed at 9.35pm.

Signed

Dated.....