



**LOOSE PARISH COUNCIL
ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES
Meeting held on Monday 23 October 2023
at 7.30pm in Loose Parish Pavilion, KGVPF.**

In attendance: Councillors: Charlie Hollister (CH), Elaine Lawford (EL), Susan Luckhurst (SL), Jim Andrew (JA), Velma Bennett (VB) and Peter Rigby (PR).

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

There was one member 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 Andrew Richards (AR) (holiday) and Pip Terry.

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 24 July 2023 (Pages 408-412)

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 July 2023 (Pages 408-412) were duly **AGREED** as a true and accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

6. Questions/comments from the public or Community groups (3mins)

None.

7. Correspondence & phone calls received by the office

- a. A resident reported that pavement alongside the A229 adjacent to Fairview farm was overgrown and difficult to travel on. The Office reported it to Kent County Council (KCC) and it was cut back on 20 October 2023.
- b. A resident reported that the wall at the junction of Old Loose Hill and High Banks had been damaged. The Office reported it to KCC and it was fixed on Friday 13 October, only to be noted damaged again by Sunday 15 October. The Office has re-reported it to KCC.
- c. The Leonard Gould property management company have been corresponding with a request for parking restrictions at the junction of the estate and Pickering Street as refuse collection vehicles have sometimes been unable gain access. The Office explained previous measures taken when similar issues arose at Northleigh Close. Letters were put through residents' doors

by Maidstone Borough Council refuse department, and local community social media raised the profile of the issue. It seems to have resolved itself with no recent complaints that LPC are aware of. The matter was discussed at the KCC Highways site meeting and officers explained that double yellow lines would require an expensive Traffic Regulation Order (£3000+) plus installation costs. The Management company have been advised to take up the matter directly with MBC or KCC.

- d. A resident reported that one of the 30/40mph signs on the A229 at the viaduct has been hit and is currently facing the wrong direction. The Office has reported it to KCC.
- e. Sean Carter (NLRA) passed on resident concerns about bikes travelling down the Kirkdale footpath putting pedestrians in danger. The Clerk referred the matter to Loose Amenities Association (LAA) who own that section of the path. The matter was discussed at a recent LAA meeting and they will be putting up a new sign on the finger post by Rainbow meadow.
- f. The regularly reported pot hole issues on Old Loose Hill should soon be resolved as the road is currently closed for two days (23/24 October 2023) for patching on 36 different fault areas.

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

a. Planters

The contents, condition and difficulties with the maintenance requirements of the planters were discussed at length. The Committee **AGREED** that alternatives should be sought for next year and an adoption scheme be promoted amongst local residents, neighbouring organisations and businesses. LPC would be able to assist with some funds towards contents (as currently, but within budget) but the main benefit would be that the attention and maintenance issues would be addressed. Action: Deputy Clerk to prepare materials to promote the idea.

b. Defibrillator Telephone Box

During the Annual walkabout on 14 August 2023 the poor condition of the paintwork on the telephone box was noted. After discussion the Committee **AGREED** that quotes for repainting the box should be sought and brought to the budget meeting. Action: Deputy Clerk.

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

a. Pondworks update for works 20-22 October 2023 (Derek Corbett)

A report on the recent working parties from Derek Corbett (DC) had been pre-circulated to the Committee and DC attended to discuss next actions. Over the weekend of 20–22 October, volunteers successfully removed large quantities of watercress and weed from the pond, mill race and trough opposite the Chequers Public House and filled 2 skips, with an additional pile of weed left inside the entrance to Brooks Field. The Committee **AGREED** that a third skip should be ordered for the excess waste. Action: Deputy Clerk.

DC explained that there may be a need for a 4th skip after the winter for reed removal and further water cress roots. He would also like to purchase additional tubs and some smaller waders. The Committee **AGREED** that the remaining budget should be used up, and additional items requested should be included in the 2024-25 budget at the November budget meeting. Action: Deputy Clerk.

DC raised the issue of the quantity of silt in the water. The vegetation has been removed annually so cannot be the cause of the build up. It is entering via the pipes from the adjacent roads and if not addressed or removed, could increase the flood risk. After discussion, the Committee **AGREED** the matter should be raised with KCC Highways regarding their maintenance schedule and requesting silt removal as has been done in previous years. Action: Clerks' Office.

b. KCC Love Where You Live Pond project (Derek Corbett)

The pre-circulated report also included progress to date on the special project to separate the reed bed from the bankside of Brooks Field, to be funded by a KCC Love Where You Live grant. The aim is to dig a channel, creating an island which would provide greater protection for wildlife, and increase the flow of the stream, reducing silt build up. Further works are included on the Brooks Field bank to

improve the vista that has been lost through vegetation growth. An additional report had been pre-circulated from the site visit by Medway Valley Countryside Partnership, a conservation organisation previously consulted for their expertise. They consider the proposal to be a worthwhile, viable project and provided contractor contacts. DC has met 2 contractors and is awaiting quotes. Both were confident the work could be undertaken before the nesting season. The Committee discussed details of the project including silt removal, spoil, tree works, use of plant and access. DC will chase the quotes and update the Committee when received. Further discussion may be needed regarding funding options or scale of works if the quotes exceed the grant amount. Action: DC

c. Removal of the old shed (update)

The shed was taken down on 18 October and a hazardous waste consignment note for the asbestos removal has been provided. The fence along the boundary of Tylers was completed the following day. The Deputy Clerk shared photographs of the site. The Committee **AGREED** to purchase of grass seed and other necessary materials for the restoration of the area. Action: Clerks' Office.

d. Swift boxes

Terry Davis (LAA) has agreed that swift boxes can be placed on the new shed. The Deputy Clerk circulated examples but after discussion that they should be put at a height higher than the shed to be successful, the Committee **AGREED** that alternative nesting boxes and/or insect or bee hotels should be installed instead. Action: Deputy Clerk to research examples for the budget meeting.

e. Feedback on the visit by the Kent Men of the Trees (KMOTT) representative

JA and AR met with Nigel Heriz-Smith from KMOTT on 24 August 2023 for the Trees in Villages competition. He fed back some recommendations for trees tolerant to wet conditions. JA explained the significance of Chequer trees and the Committee **AGREED** that 2 should be planted near/on the old shed site, but no action would be taken until after the competition results were known.

f. To discuss a suitable site for 2 oak trees donated by a resident, and make planting plans

This item was referred to the Environment Committee from the September LPC meeting. A resident has 2 oak trees that have been grown in pots since the birth of her children, but are now too big for her garden. She would like them to be planted somewhere locally where the family can continue to watch them grow and the family are keen to be involved in planting. JA circulated a map of Brooks Field with potential locations. After discussion the Committee concluded that before a decision could be made, the variety of oak needed to be known, as this would affect the expected height. Action: Clerks' Office to contact the resident, or use the Clerk's app to identify the variety.

g. Meadow Phase 4

CH, KO and NB met with the groundworks contractor on 14 August 2023 in Brooks Field to discuss the meadow project to date, and plans for Phase 4. He highlighted the difficulty using machinery where there are now mounds from where the previously dug turf was piled up. He requested that it be levelled out when the next phase is dug. The groundworks contractor was asked to cut back the higher section above the meadow more frequently next year.

The Committee **AGREED** that for Phase 4 they wish to meadow the length of the existing section, for approximately 10m higher up the bank, and additional areas in the gap towards Roy's Wood. The Deputy Clerk has been in contact with the resident who kindly voluntarily dug out all the last phase, but they still need to meet on site. Action: Deputy Clerk to arrange and attend meeting with volunteer to discuss the Phase 4 works.

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

a. Preparations for Remembrance Sunday

The Deputy Clerk has cleared the war memorial and inspected the area. The path does not require cleaning. A wreath has been ordered. After discussion it was **AGREED** to ask Rita Hood if she would like to place the wreath. Councillor Rigby will be the reserve. Action: Clerks' Office to ask Rita Hood.

b. Repairs to the war memorial update

The Deputy Clerk advised that due to other recent matters, this item has not progressed but will be a high priority in coming weeks. The Deputy Clerk will bring an update to the budget meeting.

11. King George V Playing Field (KGVPF) - to discuss items below and make any necessary decisions

a. Update on recent tree works

The overhanging tree that was providing a screen for ASB has had its crown raised and the tree resting on the resident's fence at the back of the field has been felled.

The next quarterly KGVPF walkabout is due 24 October 2023. Action: NB and Caretaker.

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

a. Highways Improvement Plan and actions following the KCC Highways site visit

KCC Highways visited the Parish on 19 September 2023 and met with NB, CH and EL. They were shown various areas including the A229 viaduct section, the school section, Walnut Tree Avenue entrance, Old Loose Hill, High Banks, Busbridge Road and other roads in the village. The Office has since received the revised Highways Improvement Plan (HIP) from Michelle Norris which had been pre-circulated to the Committee. The new format allows 2 main priorities which are the A229 Loose viaduct section and measures to improve safety around Loose Primary school. Other issues will continue to be logged through the KCC Report a Fault online tool. Action: Clerks Office.

b. 20mph zone update

Following the public meeting the Deputy Clerk has been trying to get answers to a couple of items raised, including if and how a third party can fund works and regarding the issue of whether a national speed limit section can go into a 20mph section (as would be the case if installed in Well St). The Committee **AGREED** that any correspondence received should be forwarded to LAA and Councillor Simon Webb. Action: Clerks' Office.

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

a. Annual monitoring of the stability of LPC owned wall

The annual survey of LPC walls was undertaken by JA and CH on 4 October 2023. The findings had been pre-circulated to the Committee. The Committee **AGREED** that the proposed works should be included in the 2024/5 budget. The Deputy Clerk advised that the previously used company no longer exists so a new company will need to be found when quotes are sought. Action: Deputy Clerk.

b. Annual monitoring of the closed cemetery headstones (JA)

The annual safety inspection of the headstones in the closed cemetery was undertaken by JA and CH on 4 October 2023. The findings had been pre-circulated to the Committee. The Committee **AGREED** the recommendations that professional advice should be sought and any work required be costed and circulated to the Committee for agreement by **Round Robin**. Action: Deputy Clerk.

c. Matters arising from the annual walkabout (completed 14 August 2023)

The annual Parish walkabout was undertaken by CH, NB and KO on 14 August 2023. The findings had been pre-circulated to the Committee along with the action list and progress to date. The Committee discussed priorities and the Office will continue to work through the list and bring any quotes to the budget meeting. Action: Clerks' Office.

d. Annual Tree Safety Inspection report and matters arising

The Annual Tree Safety Inspection was completed on 4 September 2023 and the report had been pre-circulated. The Committee discussed the works required on the young trees in Roy's Wood and **AGREED** that they would continue to tend to them this year. Action: JA and AKR. After discussion the Committee **AGREED** that quotes should be obtained for all other works required within one year and circulated for agreement by **Round Robin**. Action: Deputy Clerk.

The Clerk had advised that there is one additional tree owned by LPC on the allotments that has never been included in the survey. It was **AGREED** that it should be inspected and that the tree should be included in future reports. Action: Clerk to identify tree and request inspection.

Councillor Bennett left the meeting at 9pm.

e. Lower Loose Valley Pumping Station update

NB advised that Southern Water had provided an update since the last LPC meeting regarding the Lower Loose Valley Pumping Station. They are hoping to get a generator installed week commencing 27 October. Whether road mats are needed again will depend on the size of the vehicle delivering the generator to site. They will carry out another letter drop to local residents to ask if they could move their cars prior to delivery. A new contact had been provided for future correspondence.

f. Repairs to the McAlpine Crescent street light

NB advised that at the last Streetlights survey, the McAlpine Crescent light had a damaged column door. The Clerk arranged the repair to be completed at a cost of £105 + VAT under delegated powers.

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 RFO

The Deputy had pre-circulated the Environment Committee finance report and LPC Ear-marked Reserves report from the Clerk. The documents were noted. The Chairman asked Councillors to give thought to priorities for 2024-25 and bring these to the budget meeting on 27 November 2023. Action: All Committee members.

c. To note the updated 2023-24 Management Plan and make any necessary decisions

The updated Management Plan for 2023-24 was circulated and noted.

15. Monitoring and Ratification of any ROUND ROBIN decisions

The following ROUND ROBIN was ratified:

For Item 8c at the ENV meeting held on 13 March 2023, the Round Robin dated 31 July 2023: To agree the design and cost of 2 new signs for Brooks Field was **AGREED** (CH, PR, SL, EL).

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

The Committee requested the following be promoted or publicised on the website, In & Around Loose or social media: Recent work in the Parish (the pondworks and shed removal) and the planter adoption idea. Action: Deputy Clerk

17. Other Items (discussion only)

None

18. Date of Next Meeting – 27 November 2023 (Budget Meeting)

The meeting closed at 9.14pm.

Minutes agreed by the Committee and duly signed by the Chairman

Signed

Dated.....