



Helsby Parish Council

Minutes of the Parks, Cemetery and Allotments Committee meeting held at 7.00pm in the Parish Office at Helsby Community Sports Club on Monday 7th August 2023

Present:

Cllr. Rob Nicklin (Chair)
Cllr. Sarah Temple
Cllr. Mike Branigan
Cllr. Chris Ellams

Also present:

Claire Jones Parish Clerk

1. Public Participation – No matters were brought to the Committee’s attention.
2. Apologies were noted from Cllrs. Duffy and Stothard.
3. Declarations of Members’ Interests. Cllr. Temple declared a pecuniary interest in Item 7.7 as her husband was an allotment holder.
4. Confirmation of Previous Minutes. It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Parks, Cemetery and Allotments Committee meeting held on 24th April 2023 were accepted as accurate and were duly signed by the Chair – **PCA05/23**.
5. Clerk’s report from the previous meeting - the following was noted:
 - Item 5 - no further progress in relation to the Air Quality Monitoring Station lease. Clerk to contact the council’s solicitor for an update.
 - Item 5 - park inspection app to be set up shortly.
 - Item 5 – clerk to contact Paul Bowers in relation to various paintwork jobs in the parish field and play area.
 - Item 7 - revised contract completed for Helsby Garden Services to reflect the new rates for 2023/24. Clerk to present a draft specification for the next 3-year contract from April 2024 at the next meeting in October.
 - Item 8 – Hilldale confirmed no increase in fees for hedge cutting contract and work would be completed in November.
 - Item 10.5 – VPA had no issues with paving in front of the storage container. Clerk to progress with Helsby Garden Services.
 - Item 11.4 – following a meeting with tree specialists, it was agreed that stump grinding would not be necessary for any trees recently removed from the parish field.

- Item 11.6 – Countrywide had completed all outstanding tree work but awaiting a report on the condition of the tree in the corner of the cemetery.
- Item 12.6 – clerk written to plotholders at the cemetery in relation to inappropriate ornaments and a permanent memorial to be installed shortly at the plot with the temporary wooden fence.

It was also reported that Network Rail had discarded some tree cuttings at the Queens Drive allotment site but following complaints, these had now been removed. The clerk outlined that she had removed some inappropriate flyers from the cemetery and would contact the company involved. It was also noted that the clerk was progressing a S106 reclaim with CW&C for £2,318 of additional monies for the parish field lighting project as VAT had been incorrectly removed from the net amount rather than the gross amount in the original application.

6. The final budget spend for 2022/23 along with the Parks, Cemetery & Allotments Committee budget for the year 2023/24 was noted (as below).

Budget Code	Description	Budget 2022/23 £	Budget spent 2022/23 £	Budget 2023/24 £	Budget spent to date £	Predicted To 31/03/24 £
201	Allotment maintenance	3,500	1,950	3,000	1,149	3,000
202	Allotment water charge	500	318	300	20	300
211	Cemetery repairs/renewals	400	720	1,000	0	1,000
212	Cemetery maintenance	3,500	2,602	3,500	1,467	3,500
213	Parks and general maintenance	12,000	10,478	12,000	3,254	12,000
214	Park grass cutting	5,000	2,800	5,000	1,679	5,000
215	Park equipment	3,000	22,046	2,500	163	2,500
501	Play area improv./upgrades	8,000	0	9,000	0	0
502	Future burial provision	3,633	0	4,105	0	0
504	Cemetery extension area design project	0	0	5,000*	0	5,000
506	Cemetery garage roof	0	0	7,500*	0	7,500
507	Wheelchair accessible roundabout	0	0	5,000*	0	5,000
TOTAL		39,533	40,914	57,905	7,732	44,800

*Monies vired from general reserves for these projects in 2022/23.

The following was also noted:

- i) All figures exclude VAT and are rounded to the nearest £1.

- ii) Budget Code 201 – Contract with Helsby Garden Services for allotment maintenance work in 2023/24 = £2,901. Also to include hedge maintenance work with Hilldale (£84) and any other potential ad-hoc maintenance costs.
- iii) Budget Code 202 – Meter reading issues improved – reading sent to Water Plus on 18/7/23. Latest bill for £111.93.
- iv) Budget Code 212 - Contract with Helsby Garden Services for cemetery maintenance work = £3,075. £3,500 agreed due to potential ad-hoc maintenance costs on top of contracted work (e.g. spoil heap clearance and tree root infill work).
- v) Budget Code 211 – Look to appoint a contractor to carry out a memorial safety testing exercise.
- vi) Budget Code 213 – Contract for general maintenance work (park and Helsby-wide) in 2023/24 = £9,123. Also to include £147 contracted hedge maintenance work and any other ad-hoc work as identified.
- vii) Budget Code 214 – Grass cutting contract for 2023/24 is £2,939 but additional cuts may be required depending on weather conditions. Budget allows for additional cuts, if required. Countrywide are paid over a 7-month rather than a 12-month period.
- viii) Budget Code 215 – Includes ROSPA safety inspection at play area and Winsford/Northwich TC inspections.

7. Allotments

- 7.1. It was **RESOLVED to approve a quote from Hilldale/Frodsham Tree Solutions to fell a diseased ash tree on council land adjacent to the Queens Drive allotment site a cost of £480 and to chip and leave any discarded timber within the allotment site for use by allotment tenants – PCA06/23.**
- 7.2. It was noted that Wrought in the Port were unable to quote for repairs to the allotment gate at Queens Drive. The clerk agreed to find an alternative supplier. It was also agreed to include repairs to a damaged gatepost at the Old Chester Road site within this project and following an inspection, to add any other gateposts to the work programme as necessary.
- 7.3. The clerk updated members on correspondence that was sent out after the previous allotment inspections in May and July. It was noted that one Stage 1 letter had been issued in May to a plot holder on Old Chester Road.
- 7.4. The results of the latest allotment inspection carried out on 5th July were noted. It was outlined that two Stage 1 letters had been sent out following the inspection and that several e-mails had also been sent out with various queries.
- 7.5. Allotment tenancies and waiting list – the clerk outlined that all plots were currently occupied. It was noted that an advert on Facebook had resulted in several people coming forward to be added to the waiting list. It was outlined that one person on the list had expressed an interest in keeping bees.
- 7.6. The Allotments Policy and Tenancy Agreement were reviewed. It was **RESOLVED to add a clause in the Tenancy Agreement to specify that there would be no refunds or discounts in rent for partial years and to state that ‘tenants will be notified of any rental increases in August and the rent will be operative from 1 October’ - PCA07/23.** It was **RESOLVED to make the following changes to the Allotments Policy: to preface the first part of Clause 15 with ‘Except during the**

winter'; to delete reference to the committees in Clause 20; and under the guidelines for managing the wildlife corridor, to change reference from Parish Council employees to Parish Council contractors - **PCA08/23**.

7.7. A report on allotment rents was considered. It was **RESOLVED not to increase rents in October 2023 - PCA09/23**.

7.8. Member's reports – no matters were raised.

8. Children's Play Area

8.1. An update was received on potential wheelchair accessible play equipment. The clerk outlined that some health and safety concerns had been raised through clerks' forums about trampolines. It was agreed that the clerk would contact CW&C for further advice on equipment.

8.2. The contents of the latest RoSPA safety inspection held on 27th April 2023 for the play area were considered. It was **RESOLVED for the clerk to liaise with Helsby Garden Services on various matters, to put together a specification for any painting work and to obtain a quote to replace the spring on one of the rocker units – PCA10/23**.

8.3. To receive member's reports – it was noted that a contract had been signed with Northwich Town Council for the monthly play inspections, but no reports had yet been received.

9. Parish Field

9.1. It was noted that the clerk and Cllr. Temple had met a tree specialist on 22nd June to discuss the types and locations of 8 new proposed trees in the play area and parish field. Quotes from several contractors were duly noted. However, given that the optimum time for planting had been advised as February/March, it was agreed that the clerk would request revised quotes in December.

9.2. Cllr. Temple agreed to take measurements for the coping stone work. Cllrs. Branigan and Temple agreed to send details of potential contractors to the clerk.

9.3. Members considered a request from Helsby Guides to pay for a replacement pump in the guide hut which was potentially damaged due the disconnection of gas during the parish field lighting project. As a gesture of goodwill rather than accepting any liability, it was **RESOLVED to pay the invoice to Cheshire Boiler and Electrical Services at cost of £360 – PCA11/23**. It was also agreed to write to the Guides to highlight the conditions under which the Council had agreed to pay for the boiler repair.

9.4. To receive member's reports – no matters were raised.

10. Cemetery

10.1. A report on cemetery fees was considered. It was **RESOLVED not to increase fees during 2023/24 – PCA12/23**. Members agreed to continue to waive all fees for the interment of under 18's.

10.2. The Cemetery Regulations were reviewed. It was **RESOLVED to make the following changes: 2.2 – add 'to the public' in the first sentence; 5.2a - remove**

‘and sex’; 7.2 - remove ‘underground or’ from second paragraph; and add new clause under 9 ‘If a new inscription is added to a memorial before an interment, the funeral director must confirm in writing to the council that the interment has taken place. If the interment does not take place, the inscription must be removed at the ploholders expense’ - PCA13/23.

- 10.3. It was **RESOLVED** to make the following amendment to the cemetery risk assessment: Page 1 – add ‘Contractor to keep up to date with relevant training courses’– **PCA14/23**. It was agreed that the clerk would also make relevant changes to the action plan at the end of the document and to put the amended document on the website.
 - 10.4. It was noted that Wrought in the Port were unable to make the adjustments to the cemetery gate. The clerk agreed to add this work to the project outlined under 7.2.
 - 10.5. Cemetery extension area design – Cllr. Temple outlined that she had been in contact with several contractors and would bring further information to the next meeting. Garage roof - it was noted that Advantage Roofing and Cladding had visited the site in April but had failed to provide a quote despite several requests. The clerk agreed to source further asbestos roof specialists.
 - 10.6. To receive member’s reports – no matters were raised.
11. Urgent matters – it was noted that a draft business plan had been circulated for comment and the chair agreed to put a budget together for the proposed masterplan for the future development of the parish field and play area.
12. It was agreed that the date of the next meeting would be re-arranged as the chair and clerk could not attend on 23rd October.

The meeting closed at 9.00pm

Chairman’s signature Dated.....