



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 30th October 2023

Present:

Cllr. Rob Nicklin (Chair)
Cllr. Sarah Temple
Cllr. Mike Branigan
Cllr. Graham Stothard

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 Ellams.
3. No declarations of Members’ Interests were made.
4. Confirmation of Previous Minutes. It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Parks, Cemetery and Allotments Committee meeting held on 7th August 2023 were accepted as accurate and were duly signed by the Chair – **PCA15/23**.
5. Clerk’s report - the following was noted:
 - Various matters were outstanding: update on Air Quality Monitoring Station lease; park inspection app; paintwork jobs in the parish field and play area; quote for rocker unit and cemetery tree condition report;
 - Clerk to confirm date for hedge cutting with Hilldale and give notice to allotment tenants to clear pathways;
 - Clerk to confirm date for cemetery and allotment health and safety inspections;
 - Various work was now completed – path in front of storage container, inappropriate ornaments removed from cemetery, remaining S106 monies for parish field lighting now claimed, ash tree at Queens Drive felled, revised policies on website and spoil heap cleared;
 - The padlock had been replaced on the parish field gate;
 - Helsby Hillside School had written to the Council to enquire about the missing basket swing and requesting the Council to consider installing a climbing wall;
 - A syphon had been purchased to clear the water around the meter for the allotments at Queens Drive but it remained illegible;
 - Clerk to chase Countrywide to complete the path edging work in the play area and to discuss a similar job in the parish field with Helsby Garden Services;

- Helsby Garden Services had dealt with a number of nuisance dog issues;
- There had been a complaint about badgers at the Queens Drive allotments; and
- Clerk to obtain revised quotes for new trees in the parish field in December.

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	2,656	3,100
202	Allotment water charge	500	318	300	172	300
211	Cemetery repairs/renewals	400	720	1,000	28	1,000
212	Cemetery maintenance	3,500	2,602	3,500	2,758	3,500
213	Parks and general maintenance	12,000	10,478	12,000	6,439	12,000
214	Park grass cutting	5,000	2,800	5,000	2,939	3,500
215	Park equipment	3,000	22,046	2,500	593	2,500
501	Play area improv./upgrades	8,000	0	9,000	0	9,000 ¹
502	Future burial provision	3,633	0	4,105	0	4,105 ²
TOTAL		39,533	40,914	40,405	15,585	39,005

The following was also noted:

All figures above exclude VAT and are rounded to the nearest £1.

- i. 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.
- ii. 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).
- iii. Budget Code 211 – Look to appoint a contractor to carry out a memorial safety testing exercise.
- iv. 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.

¹ Monies being saved under earmarked reserves. No funds spent in 2023/24

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- v. Budget Code 214 – Grass cutting contract for 2023/24 is £2,939 but a few extra cuts have been requested. Countrywide are paid over a 7-month rather than a 12-month period.
- vi. Budget Code 215 – Includes ROSPA safety inspection at play area and Northwich TC inspections.

Monies also in earmarked reserves for the following projects: Code 504 - Cemetery extension area design project (£5,000); Code 506 - Cemetery garage roof (£7,500); and Code 507 - Wheelchair accessible roundabout (£5,000). Expenditure on the garage roof will be around £1,600. Possibility of a new earmarked reserve for a park vision project.

- 7. Cemetery, Allotment and General Maintenance Contract – the Clerk presented a draft 3-year specification to go out to tender for the next contract. Procurement threshold legislation and the Council’s own Standing Orders were noted. On this basis, it was **RESOLVED to approve the 3-year specification with 2 amendments as follows: to extend the deadline for applications to 8th December and to state under ‘General Requirements’ that the appointed company would be expected to work closely on a day-to-day basis with the Clerk and to report any urgent maintenance issues within 24 hours. It was also RESOLVED to invite contractors to quote via the Contracts Finder website as well as advertising the contract locally – PCA16/23.**
- 8. It was noted that Cllr. Temple would prepare some revised wording in the PCA Committee section of the Council’s Standing Orders in advance of the next Policy and Procedures Committee meeting on 20th November. It was agreed that she would circulate a draft for comment to PCA members in advance.

9. Allotments

- 9.1. It was noted that 9 specialist welding/fencing companies had been invited to quote for work to repair the allotment gate at Queens Drive, replace a fence post at Old Chester Road and to adjust the cemetery gates. The Clerk noted that only 1 company had responded with a quote. Given the urgency of some elements of this work, it was **RESOLVED to appoint Widnes Fabrication to complete the Queens Drive gate repairs (£700), to replace the post at the Old Chester Road allotments (£390) and to weld 2 stoppers onto the cemetery gates (£70) – PCA17/23.**
- 9.2. The results of the latest allotment inspections carried out in August and October were noted. It was outlined that two Stage 2 letters and 6 Stage 1 letters had been issued in October. The Clerk reported that one tenant had yet to pay their annual rent and contact would continue to be made with them both via mail and e-mail.
- 9.3. Allotment tenancies and waiting list – the Clerk outlined that one plot at Old Chester Road was currently vacant. It was noted that the waiting list was considerably longer for plots at Queens Drive. A request from a resident to reduce the size of his plot at Old Chester Road was noted.
- 9.4. Member’s reports – the Clerk agreed to offer 4 wooden pallets to allotment holders at Queens Drive which had been used to deliver the new village planters.

10. Children's Play Area

- 10.1. An update was received on potential wheelchair accessible play equipment. The clerk outlined that she had made contact CW&C for further advice on equipment and was awaiting a response. It was agreed that the matter would be discussed further under Item 11.3.
- 10.2. RoSPA safety inspection and other inspection updates – it was noted that Helsby Garden Services had carried out some of the repairs recommended in the latest RoSPA report. It was outlined that they had reported some wear to one of the tyres on the zipwire as well as some of the chain links on the seat. The Clerk agreed to speak to Northwich Town Council for advice. It was noted that a new basket swing had been ordered.
- 10.3. It was **RESOLVED to make the following changes to the CCTV policy: under 'System Details' to reword the second sentence to '...with images from the cameras being suitable for enlargement to aid the identification of individuals'; and to update any relevant dates in the document – PCA18/23.** The Clerk and Cllr. Nicklin agreed to check that the image resolutions were set to their highest levels. The possibility of adding further cameras was also discussed.
- 10.4. No member's reports were received.

11. Parish Field

- 11.1. Members noted a resident's request to keep the parish field lighting on all night due to recent anti-social behaviour. It was **RESOLVED to switch on the parish field lighting overnight for a trial period of 6 months and to write to all neighbouring properties to alert them to this decision – PCA19/23.** Cllr. Nicklin agreed to hand deliver the letters and speak to any residents, where possible.
- 11.2. Members considered a request by residents for more regular cuts of the parish field during 2024/25. It was agreed that a weekly cut rather than a cut every 2 weeks would give all the Council's grassed areas a better appearance, assist with the playing of football and make it easier to clean up any dog dirt. It was therefore **RESOLVED to request Countrywide to move to a weekly grass cutting service during 2024/25 at an additional cost of £1,500 – PCA20/23.**
- 11.3. Members reflected on the presentation given by Planit-IE at the last Full Council meeting in relation to the development of a long-term park vision exercise. It was proposed that the next steps would be to carry out a walk round and planning exercise, perhaps including wider areas of the village, and contact to Christleton Parish Council who had worked previously with the company. It was **RESOLVED to develop a draft specification for a vision exercise and to arrange a site visit looking at various proposed areas with Planit-IE – PCA21/23.**
- 11.4. Two quotes were considered in relation to repairing/replacing the coping stones on the party wall adjacent to the parish field. Given the complexities of the work and the significant costs involved, it was **RESOLVED to request Helsby Garden Services to secure any loose stones on the higher part of the wall and to poison the buddleia plant rather than carrying out any significant works to the top of the wall – PCA22/23.** The Clerk agreed to notify the adjacent resident, clarifying

that the Council would not be taking on any liability for the wall in carrying out this work.

It was **RESOLVED to continue the meeting beyond a period of two hours to complete the remaining items on the agenda – PCA23/23.**

- 11.5. It was noted that a meeting would be held with Girlguiding Cheshire Forest on 1st November in relation to the future of the guide hut on the parish field. Various conditions as set out in the 1953 lease agreement were noted.
- 11.6. Member's reports – the provision of a commemorative bench for the 80th Anniversary of the D-Day landings in June 2024 was considered. Members were in favour of the proposal in principle but agreed to refer a decision on the purchase and location of the bench to Full Council. The poor state of the benches opposite the Land of Beds was also noted.

12. Cemetery

- 12.1. Quotes to adjust the cemetery gates – see Item 9.1 above.
- 12.2. Cemetery extension area design and garage roof update – it was noted that the contractors had started the work on replacing the garage roof. Cllr. Temple outlined that 2 specialist companies had been to look at the cemetery extension area and a meeting with a third company had been arranged on 1st November. It was advised that several broad concepts would need to be agreed before taking the project any further such as the orientation of the graves in this area and ways to tackle the uneven terrain.
- 12.3. No member's reports were received.

13. No urgent matters were raised.

14. The date of the next meeting was noted as Wednesday 13th December 2023.

The meeting closed at 9.21pm

Chair's signature Dated.....