



Helsby Parish Council

Minutes of the Parks, Cemetery and Allotments Committee meeting held at 7pm in the parish office at Helsby Community Sports Club* on Monday 25th October 2021

Present:

Cllr. Sarah Temple – Chair
Cllr. Terry O'Neill
Cllr. Peter Duffy
Cllr. Patricia Holder

Also present:

Claire Jones Parish Clerk (via Zoom)
One member of the public

**Meeting venue changed to enable the Clerk to join the meeting via Zoom to avoid any potential spread of Covid (wi-fi service available in the parish office).*

1. Public Air Time – It was **RESOLVED that the meeting be suspended for public participation – PCA44/21**. A local resident spoke about her late husband's wishes for his ashes to be interred in an area adjacent to the cemetery railings next to his allotment plot. She outlined that there were already two memorial stones by the railings and she believed that other ashes had been interred in that location several years ago. There being no others matters brought to the Committee's attention, it was **RESOLVED that public participation be closed and the meeting reconvened – PCA45/21**.
2. Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr. Gardner.
3. No declarations of disclosable interests were made.
4. Minutes of the previous meeting. It was **RESOLVED that the minutes of the Parks, Cemetery and Allotments Committee meeting held on 26th July 2021 be accepted as accurate and signed by the Chair – PCA46/21**.
5. Matters arising from the previous minutes. The Clerk outlined under Item 6 that CW&C had yet to respond on the S106 application for the picnic tables. It was noted under Item 7 (spending ideas) that progress had been made by a local resident in relation to the fencing at the lower end of the parish field. Under Item 8.8, the Clerk outlined that she had now responded to the Local Wildlife Site Partnership to accept the Council's entry into their wildlife register and to note their recommendations. It was also noted that she had sent them some slow worm records from the last four years. Under 8.9, the Clerk outlined that the allotment rents had now been increased and she had received all rental fees from tenants for the forthcoming year. Finally, it was noted under Item 8.10 that

Helsby Garden Services would be trimming the hedging at the Old Chester Road allotment site shortly and the Clerk had notified all tenants with plots on the Youds Cottage side, requesting them to clear an area for the work to be completed.

6. The current 21/22 budget spend was noted (see table below). In relation to Budget Code 202, it was agreed that the Clerk would investigate the higher than usual charges with Water Plus once a final reading had been taken at the end of October. It was outlined that an additional £4,000 had been vired from Code 241 (Salaries) to cover the additional costs of the general maintenance contractor under Budget Code 213. It was noted under Budget Code 215 that a reclaim of £2,634 had been submitted to CW&C.

Budget Heading Code	Description	Budget 2021/22 £	Budget Spend to Date £	Predicted To 31/03/22 £
201	Allotment maintenance	600	1084.99	1084
202	Allotment water charge	200	385.17	385
212	Cemetery maintenance	4200	2975.00	3000
212a	Cemetery repairs/renewals	400	0	0
213	Parks maintenance	6000	4821.43	6000
214	Park grass cutting	5000	3733.80	4500
215	Park equipment	3000	3289.00	4000
222	Materials	300	0	0
226R	Play area improv./upgrades	8000	0	8000
260R	Future burial provision	2843	0	2843

7. Allotments

- 7.1 In relation to the allotment inspection carried out on 13 September, it was noted that four Stage 1 letters had been sent out along with one Stage 3 letter (eviction notice).
- 7.2 It was noted that a health and safety inspection had also been carried out on 13 September accompanied by Cllr. Gardner as the Chairman of the H&S Committee. Cllr. Temple outlined that the main issue picked up was a number of uncovered water butts and it was noted that the Clerk had written to the plot holders concerned to request that they be covered or removed. It was also outlined that a general message had been sent to all allotment holders in relation to ensuring that pathways were left clear at all times.
- 7.3 The results of the latest allotment inspection carried out on 18 October were noted. It was outlined that Stage 1 letters had been sent to 6 tenants asking them to put their plots in order in advance of the next inspection to take place in early Spring, rather than the usual 30 days.
- 7.4 The latest allotment tenancies were noted. It was outlined that there was currently one vacancy at Plot 7L OCR where the last tenant had been evicted and the Clerk was in discussions with the next person on the waiting list. It was also noted that there had been 4 new tenancies since the last meeting at plots 2B, 11, 17 (OCR) and 3F (QD). It was noted that the remaining people on the waiting list were largely

- existing tenants and it was agreed that an article would be placed in Helsby News in Spring to attract interest.
- 7.5 In relation to the hinge repair at Old Chester Road, it was noted that the contractor was waiting for gas for their portable welding unit.
- 7.6 It was noted that a request had been received from the Patients Participation Group at Helsby and Elton GP Practice for the Council to provide some allotment space to support the general mental health and well-being of some of their patients. The Clerk agreed to contact Frodsham Town Council to obtain some feedback on a similar project already underway there. It was **RESOLVED to recommend to Full Council to grant permission to the group in principle subject to further discussion and to the following conditions: a named individual(s) to be listed on the tenancy agreement as organiser of the project; the group to be subject to the same standards as the existing allotments holders – PCA47/21**. It was agreed that the Clerk would provide the group with a copy of the Council's Allotments Policy to ensure that they fully understood their responsibilities prior to signing an agreement, pointing out in particular that no sheds/structures were allowed. It was also noted that the group would need to go on the waiting list for a plot given that there were no vacancies at present.
- 7.7 No member's reports were received.

8. Children's Play Area

- 8.1 The Clerk shared a number of quotes in relation to the purchase of a new metal bin for the play area. It was **RESOLVED to recommend to Full Council to purchase a blue Bensham bin from Earth Anchors at a cost of £508. It was also RESOLVED for Northwich Town Council to remove and dispose of the existing damaged bin in the play area at a cost of £122.50 – PCA48/21**. The Clerk agreed to seek a quote from Northwich Town Council in relation to the installation of the new bin. It was agreed that the installation would take place after the CCTV system was in operation.
- 8.2 It was noted that the 3 replacement trees would be planted shortly in the play area/parish field by Ascent Arboriculture.
- 8.3 CCTV project update and draft CCTV policy – A draft CCTV policy was noted. The Clerk outlined that the document was still work in progress and it would be updated once there was a full understanding of how the new system would work in practice. The Clerk reported that the Council had been awarded a grant of £4,000 towards the project from the Protos Community Benefit Fund and this would be claimed once the project had been completed. It was also outlined that the planning application for the CCTV mast was making progress through CW&C.
- 8.4 Member's reports – Cllr. O'Neill reported an incident of paint spillage in the play area the previous weekend and noted that this had been cleared promptly by the general maintenance contractor. The Clerk outlined that Eddie Bougen had reported the fly tipping of garden waste onto the play area from a neighbouring property. It was agreed that she would write to the resident concerned.

9. Parish Field

- 9.1 Lighting project update – the Clerk outlined that she had completed a purchase order with the chosen contractor and would organise a pre-start meeting as soon as possible with the contractor, Cllrs. Temple and Holder and potentially the scout and guide groups. Cllr. O'Neill asked the Clerk to ensure that the contractor presented a risk assessment and method statement in advance of starting any work. It was agreed that the Clerk would write to local residents about the lighting and CCTV projects.
- 9.2 It was noted that the local resident had now removed the new fencing at the lower end of the parish field. The Clerk outlined that she was seeking quotes for the removal of the 20 conifer trees behind the guide hut and approval for a contractor would be sought at the Full Council meeting in November.
- 9.3 It was outlined that a meeting had been held with Helsby Garden Services in relation to a number of projects required in the parish field. It was **RESOLVED to recommend to Full Council to accept the following quotes: £106 to replace the kickboard in the field shelter, £302 to carry out path edge repairs at the top end of the field to Parkfield Drive and £192 to repair the ground in front of the bench – PCA49/21**. Members agreed with the recommendation to avoid paving slabs in front of the bench and to finish the repair using mesh and grass seed.
- 9.4 Following complaints about dog fouling on the parish field, it had been agreed to look into enhanced signage. At a meeting with Helsby Garden Services, it was agreed that wooden posts fastened into the ground using metal ground screws would offer the most robust solution. It was **RESOLVED to recommend to Full Council to purchase 5 ground screw spike supports at a cost of £82.90 along with 5 No dog fouling A4 signs at a cost of £58.45 – PCA50/21**.
- 9.5 Tree and Hedge Maintenance Contract – levels of public liability insurance for future contracts were discussed and the Clerk outlined that a minimum of £10m appeared to be the current recommendation. The Clerk agreed to speak to the Council's own insurers on this matter. It was noted that it had proved difficult to find local tree surgeons with this level of cover. Cllr. Temple suggested that a longer-term contract (up to 5 years) might offer an incentive for contractors to take out higher levels of insurance cover. It was agreed that the Clerk would draft a new specification based on the previous contract but over a 5-year term, seeking advice annually for any necessary tree work.
- 9.6 No member's reports were received.

10. Cemetery

- 10.1 Risk assessment – Cllr. Temple outlined that this had been drafted following advice given by ICCM at various training courses earlier in the year. It was outlined that this document was intended to capture any current gaps/issues in our cemetery management practices. The Clerk thanked Cllr. Temple for her comments on the document and agreed to incorporate these. It was **RESOLVED to recommend to Full Council to approve the cemetery risk assessment, subject to the inclusion of Cllr. Temple's comments - PCA51/21**.

- 10.2 Members considered a request from a local resident to inter her late husband's ashes along the fence line between the cemetery and the Old Chester Road allotment site. Members were unclear as to whether an interment had previously taken place in this area and the Clerk agreed to check the cemetery records and contact Rev. Mills in this respect. Concern was expressed about potentially setting a precedent for other similar requests in future and maintenance difficulties due to the railings/proximity to allotments. Therefore, it was **RESOLVED on balance to refuse the request, however if Full Council were minded to grant approval, the PCA Committee's recommendations would be for a completely flat memorial stone no larger than 18" x 18" with no decorations and on the understanding that the plot would be mown/strimmed along with the rest of that area - PCA52/21.** It was also noted that any approval should be given on the recognition of the deceased's high profile in the local community over many years.
- 10.3 Members considered a complaint received in relation to grass cuttings being left on graves following strimming. It was noted that the Clerk had taken advice from ICCM on the matter and it was acknowledged that this was a challenging issue for many cemeteries across the country. The Clerk outlined that discussions were being held with the general maintenance contractor and the matter would be explored more thoroughly next Spring.
- 10.4 It was **RESOLVED to recommend to Full Council to approve the Clerk's attendance at an ICCM workshop on the management of memorials at Keele Cemetery at a cost of £135 plus mileage - PCA53/21.**
- 10.5 No member's reports were received.
11. Urgent matters - It was **RESOLVED to recommend to Full Council to approve the contract with Helsby Garden Services for the Cemetery, Allotments and General Maintenance Contract 2021/24, subject to the inclusion of strimming between plots at the Old Chester Road allotments in the allotments section and subject to a review in March 2023 - PCA54/21.**
12. Date of next meeting – Wednesday 15th December 2021.

The meeting closed at 20:52.

Chairman's signature Dated.....