



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 15th July 2024

Present:

Cllr. Sarah Temple (Chair)

Cllr. Chris Ellams

Cllr. Graham Stothard

Also present:

Claire Jones Parish Clerk

Cllr. Rob Nicklin (virtual attendance – no voting rights)

It was **RESOLVED** to elect Cllr. Temple as Chair of the meeting in the absence of Cllr. Nicklin – **PCA21/24**.

1. Public Participation – no matters were raised.
2. Apologies for absence were noted from Cllrs. Nicklin and O'Neill.
3. Cllr. Temple declared an interest in items 7.5 and 7.7 as her partner held 2 allotments and was a member of the Village Produce Association.
4. Confirmation of Previous Minutes. It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Parks, Cemetery and Allotments Committee meeting held on 22nd April 2024 were accepted as accurate and were duly signed by the Chair – **PCA22/24**.
5. Clerk's report – the Clerk outlined the following:
 - Item 5 - The Clerk had written to the homeowner in the property adjacent to the parish field to inform them about the coping stones work. She had sourced several quotes in relation to play inspection courses for the general maintenance contractor;
 - Item 7.3 – another attempt had been made to contact Peel in relation to the air quality monitoring station lease;
 - Item 8.1 – quotes would be brought to the next meeting in relation to cableway repairs and costs for a full replacement;
 - Item 8.4 – the timer switch had been located in the scout hut. Cllr. Ellams agreed to contact the manufacturer about how to alter the timings;
 - Item 8.6 – the goalposts had been disposed of; and
 - A tree surveyor from CW&C had been in contact in relation to some advisory tree work in the play area and parish field. The Clerk agreed to ask for a quote from

Frodsham Tree Solutions about the removal of deadwood from 2 oak trees and to ask Helsby Garden Services to prune any overhanging branches on footpaths. CW&C had offered to carry out pruning work to two trees at the top end of the play area which were overhanging Chester Road. The Clerk agreed to liaise further with CW&C and Frodsham Tree Solutions about this work.

6. The final budget spend for 2023/24 was noted and the Parks, Cemetery & Allotments Committee budget and reserves balance for the year 2024/25 were discussed as follows:

Budget Code	Description	Budget 2023/24 £	Budget spent 2023/24 £	Budget 2024/25 £	Budget spent to date £	Predicted To 31/03/25 £
201	Allotment maintenance	3,000	4,398	3,150	1,185	3,150
202	Allotment water charge	300	256	315	20	300
211	Cemetery repairs/renewals	1,000	746	1,050	171	500
212	Cemetery maintenance	3,500	4,282	3,675	1,606	4,500
213	Parks and general maintenance work	12,000	11,548	12,600	4,738	12,600
214	Park grass cutting	5,000	2,939	5,250	1,149	4,000
215	Park equipment	2,500	2,588	2,500	738	2,500
TOTAL		27,300	26,757	28,540	9,607	27,550

Reserves 2024/25

Budget Code	Description	Opening balance	Transfers & Receipts	Expected Spend 2024/25	Total
501	Play area improv./upgrades	41,000	9,000	0	50,000
502	Future burial provision	35,252	7,900	0	43,152
504	Cemetery extension area project	4,700	5,000	9,700	0
507	Wheelchair accessible roundabout	5,000	0	5,000	0
520	Parks Masterplan	20,000	0	5,000	15,000
TOTAL		105,952	21,900	19,700	108,152

The following was also noted:

- i) All figures above exclude VAT and are rounded to the nearest £1.
- ii) Budget Code 201 – allotment maintenance contract = £2,880. Hedge maintenance work = £88.
- iii) Budget Code 202 – Last meter reading taken in May 2024 (obscurity issues).

- iv) Budget Code 211 – Look to appoint a contractor to carry out a memorial safety testing exercise.
- v) Budget Code 212 - Cemetery maintenance contract = £4,320. Also some ad-hoc maintenance costs expected (e.g. spoil heap clearance).
- vi) Budget Code 213 – Contract for general maintenance work (park and Helsby-wide) in 2024/25 = £9,990. Also to include £154 contracted hedge maintenance work and any other ad-hoc work as identified. It was agreed to move some additional recent labour costs for bench and planter installation (£733.06) to Environment Committee Budget Code 230 (Street Furniture).
- vii) Budget Code 214 – Grass cutting contract = £3,023 plus an additional £1,000 for weekly cuts of the parish field. Withheld payment of latest invoice as waiting for a list of actual visits so far.
- viii) Budget Code 504 – Extra £5,000 added for the construction element of the project.

7. Allotments

- 7.1. 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 2 letter had been issued in May to a plot holder on Old Chester Road who had since given up their tenancy.
- 7.2. The results of the latest allotment inspection carried out on 3rd July were noted. It was noted that two Stage 1 letters had been issued (one at each site). The Clerk outlined that she was now sending letters out both by letter and e-mail and including photographs, where relevant. It was reported that 3 other plots had been scored as 'Very Poor' in July but these were plots which had recently been taken on by new tenants and were therefore expected to improve in time for the next inspection.
- 7.3. Allotment tenancies and waiting list – the Clerk outlined that all plots were currently occupied. It was noted that there was no waiting list for Old Chester Road at present, and one plot was due to come up for rent shortly. Cllr. Temple agreed to place a notice about the vacancy in the VPA hut. It was outlined that one new tenant had expressed an interest in keeping bees and had agreed to e-mail the Clerk with further details.
- 7.4. The Allotments Policy and Tenancy Agreement were reviewed. It was **RESOLVED to amend the Allotments Policy as follows:**
 - to reword Clause 5 to 'The Clerk to the Council will inform new tenants about an opportunity to join any social media communication groups at each site';
 - in Clause 18, to amend 'will return a fresh signature sheet' with 'will acknowledge/agree to the amendments via e-mail';
 - to reword item 4 under Maintenance of Allotments to reflect that maintaining paths/walkways was now performed by a contractor however tenants still needed to maintain the edges of their plot; and
 - to reword the last sentence on page 7 to '...will be managed by volunteers from the Old Chester Road site' – **PCA23/24**.

It was **RESOLVED** to make the following changes to the Tenancy Agreement:

- **Section 2 – reword second paragraph to ‘There shall be no refunds in rent for partial years. At the Clerk’s discretion, a new tenant may be given a discount in rent if they take on the tenancy late in the year and the plot is in a poor condition; and**
 - **Section 8 and 12 – add references to sending correspondence by e-mail as well as by letter – PCA24/24.**
- 7.5. A report on allotment rents was considered. Given that rents had not been increased for 3 years and that the council was now paying for a contractor to maintain both sites, it was **RESOLVED to recommend to Full Council to increase allotment rents for a small plot to £30 per year and a large plot to £45 per year from 1st October 2024 – PCA25/24.** The Clerk agreed to notify all tenants of the increase in August, stating that it would be subject to approval by Full Council in September.
- 7.6. It was outlined that the S106 application for rabbit-proofing and drainage works at the Queens Drive site had been approved and the Clerk would sign the funding agreement for £1,235.74 upon receipt. The Clerk passed on her thanks to David Temple for his assistance in preparing the application. It was **RESOLVED to purchase the following items using the grant monies once received: 3 concrete posts; 3 tanalised rails; 40 featheredged boards; 6 rolls of green coated chicken wire; 20 tonnes of limestone chippings; 6 bags of postmix; and 2 sets of green coated wire for fixing mesh at an approximate cost of £1,300 – PCA26/24.** It was noted that 3 quotes had been sourced for the limestone chippings as their purchase would be in excess of £500. It was agreed that any spend over the S106 grant monies would be taken from Budget Code 201 (Allotment Maintenance).
- 7.7. It was noted that the Clerk had contacted the council’s solicitor in relation to updating the lease with the Helsby Village Produce Association. It was agreed that a draft lease would be brought to the next meeting for consideration. The Clerk also agreed to seek progress with amending the plan in the lease with RSK and finalising the Air Quality Monitoring Station lease with Peel.
- 7.8. Member’s reports – the Clerk agreed to remove an out-of-date sign from the gate at RSK and to explore writing to residents in the vicinity of the RSK car park in relation to them not having any rights of access in this area.

8. Parish Field and Children’s Play Area

- 8.1. The results from recent weekly and monthly play inspections were noted.
- 8.2. It was **RESOLVED to approve a payment of £280.67 for the electricity used at the scout hut for the parish field lighting and CCTV system since July 2022 – PCA27/24.**
- 8.3. A potential offer of £38,494.50 of S106 funds for enhancing parks and recreation was noted. It was suggested that this could possibly be used towards the future masterplan project.
- 8.4. It was noted that several meetings had been arranged in relation to the guide hut.
- 8.5. It was **RESOLVED to submit an application to Fields in Trust in relation to obtaining a FiT certificate to register the scout hut lease with the Land Registry at a cost of £150 (further costs may also be required) – PCA28/24.**

- 8.6. It was **RESOLVED to obtain a quote from Helsby Garden Services to paint the front edges of the steps at the side of the scout hut and to varnish the handrail – PCA29/24.** The Clerk agreed to examine the handrail initially to see if a replacement might be more appropriate. Cllr. Ellams agreed to keep the scouts updated.
- 8.7. It was noted that several companies had been approached to quote for the design element of the park masterplan project. Cllr. Nicklin agreed to source an additional quote and then the project could be presented for consideration at future council meetings in September/October.
- 8.8. It was noted that the Clerk had made some enquiries about the potential for a climbing wall on the scout hut wall. The Clerk outlined that climbing wall specialists had advised that a free-standing wall would be a better option. CW&C had also advised that S106 funds would only be available if the project was artist-led. It was therefore agreed that the climbing wall should be added to the wish list of projects in the masterplan, rather than developed as a stand-alone project.
- 8.9. Member's reports – It was noted that the deterioration of the guide hut side door had been reported to the guides and would be discussed at the forthcoming meeting with them. The Clerk agreed to contact both primary schools to welcome their recent use of the play area but to ask them to consider giving the council prior notice in future in case of any planned works in the area.

9. Cemetery

- 9.1. A report on cemetery fees was considered. Given the limited space in the cemetery and that other neighbouring burial authorities had recently increased their fees, it was **RESOLVED to increase fees in general by around 5% from 1st September 2024 with several exceptions:**

- **EROB fees in the traditional section to carry a slightly higher cost than fees in the new lawned section (£750 as compared to £700);**
- **Non-resident fees for new graves to increase considerably in line with neighbouring burial authorities (£2,500 in the traditional section and £2,000 in the lawned section); and**
- **Where EROB transfers were particularly complex, the burial clerk to have the authority to impose additional charges – PCA30/24.**

It was also **RESOLVED to amend the definition of non-residents to those ‘..who have proof of residency in Helsby of 10 years or more *within the last 20 years before their death*’ – PCA31/24.**

- 9.2. The Cemetery Regulations were reviewed. It was **RESOLVED to make the following change: to amend the wording in Section 4.1 to reflect the above resolution relating to non-residents - PCA32/24.** It was agreed that the regulations would be considered again after the new lawned section had opened.
- 9.3. It was **RESOLVED to make the following amendments to the Cemetery Risk Assessment:**
 - **Page 2 – remove reference to asbestos under ‘Damage to cemetery garage’;**

- Page 3 – add ‘special arrangements to be made for the disposal of spoil excavated in the course of exhuming human remains’ under ‘Grave digging’;
- Page 4 – remove reference to landscaping the cemetery extension area under ‘Cemetery becoming full’ and delete ‘seek suitable land *for cemetery extension*’;
- Page 5 – remove reference to the cemetery extension landscaping in the action plan - **PCA33/24**.

9.4. Cemetery extension area project – it was outlined that the architect was progressing with the tender package and an initial invoice for £1,196 had been received for payment. The Clerk agreed to request to see a copy of the specification before it was circulated to potential contractors.

9.5. Specialist advice was noted in relation to the disposal of burial arisings. It was agreed to continue with the current disposal procedures but noted that any waste from any exhumations would need to be dealt with differently.

It was **RESOLVED to continue the meeting beyond a period of two hours in order to complete the remaining items on the agenda – PCA34/24**.

9.6. To receive member’s reports – no matters were raised.

10. The outstanding actions log was noted. It was agreed to consider works to cut back any grass creep on paths around the parish field and play area at a future meeting. It was also noted that specifications would be drawn up for future grass cutting, hedge maintenance and tree work for the next meeting.

11. No urgent matters were raised.

12. Date of next meeting – noted as Monday 28th October 2024.

The meeting closed at 9.07pm

Chair’s signature Dated.....