

Greener Staplehurst Group

Meeting – 23 August 2021 (Zoom)

Present:

Mina McPhee (Chair)
Jose Castro
David Charge
Stuart McPhee
Martin Ralph
Paddy Riordan
Adele Sharp
Peter Spearink

1. Apologies

David George
Jon Grimwood
Louise Pettifer
Richard Smith
Natasha Thomas
Jacqui Veitch

2. New Chair

Mina McPhee was proposed, seconded and voted in as the new Chair.

3. Minutes of last meeting

Approved.

4. Matters arising from minutes of last meeting

a. Engagement Communications Plan

We agreed a communications plan at the last GSG meeting to be put forward to the Parish Council. This was approved at the last PC meeting and is now being implemented. A copy of the proposed Wimpey Field Conservation Area Open Day poster was circulated with the agenda. This has now been agreed with a couple of minor amendments. **Action: MM to forward a copy to PR and Parish Clerk for publishing onto the PC facebook page. Alison to also print copies for the notice boards around the village and for A5 copies for handing out at Spar and Sainsbury (MM to approach the retailers).**

The suggestion was made that posters and a sign up form should be made available at the Youth Club on 18th September (Litter Clean Up Day). **Action: MM to create posters and sign up form and work with the Comms Team to get this organised. All GSG members are invited/encouraged to take part in the clean up activity around the village that day.**

5. Beds Update

a. Parade

MR reported back on the huge amount of work undertaken on the parades last weekend by community and 4 DoE volunteers. The summer blooms and foliage have been cut down and the beds weeded. The woodchipped area was cleared of rubbish, cigarette butts and weeds. Three key points were made:

- The parade beds are a showpiece for the village and the villagers have requested that they be kept looking lovely and have contributed financially to their

maintenance and upkeep. These will therefore almost always have cultivated plantings.

- MR indicated that there was now a requirement for autumn and winter interest in the beds since gaps have now appeared. Once the expenditure is approved by the Parish Council the group can get these planted. Money (£1000) ringfenced for GSG is available from the Parish Council on production of a proposal. **Action: MR, in conjunction with DC and DG will pull together a proposal of plants (including budget) that will provide interest for the next six months.**
- The point was made, and accepted by those present, that while the group is mindful of the need to reduce/remove the use of pesticides wherever possible, in the case of the Parade, exceptions will have to be made and spot pesticides used to remove weeds that are in the chipped area, particularly while there are not sufficient volunteers to remove weeds manually. **Action: JG has bark chips ready for laying down around the parade beds and this work will be undertaken during the last week of August.**

b. Herb Bed

Now that the weeds have been cleared from the herb bed, the wooden stepping stones should be laid down quickly before more weeds invade the space. **Action: JG to liaise within the group via WhatsApp and arrange this.**

The suggestion was made and agreed that a competition be held for the village children to choose a name for the herb bed. This will create interest around the village and help increase engagement. It was suggested that a small gardening/plant related prize and trophy be presented to the child with the winning entry. It is proposed that the winning entry be chose at the September GSG meeting. **Action: PR to undertake this project via Facebook and liaison with the school.**

c. Great Dixter cuttings

DG has cuttings from the Great Dixter meadows. There is a need for the cut to be very short so that the seed has a chance to get to the ground. The scythe will be used for close cutting and scarification. Yellow rattle seed is also available and this will be put down. **Action: MR and the DoE volunteers will be working at Jeffrey close to cut down the meadow strip and spread the cuttings.**

It was noted that the DoE volunteers are covered by their own insurance through the DoE Award. MR is in the process of getting permission from the parents of the DoE volunteers so that any photographs taken of these volunteers can be used for GSG social media activities.

It was noted that the cutting of the bumble birds strip must be left to the spring.

6. Lamp post and railings manger baskets.

The proposal was discussed that Staplehurst should place flower baskets on public spaces such as lamp posts and railings. In this past this idea has been rejected by MBC. However, it was reported that Cox Heath is displaying planted baskets similar to those now being proposed. The point was made that any activity related to this must be approved by MBC. **Action: PR to investigate how Cox Heath manage and fund this together with any relevant permissions.**

If approved, it was suggested that this might be the kind of project that the Staplehurst Horticultural Group (SHG) might like to support. This would be a good opportunity to invite representation from

that group to GSG. **Action: AS has agreed to find out if SHG is interested in being represented on GSG.**

7. Wimpey Field

PR kindly provided a quick summary of how the Wimpey Field came into the ownership of the Parish council.

a. BioBlitz Update

PS reported that the 2021 Bioblitz was attended by the highest number of people since the event has been run. The children enjoyed the pond dipping activity. Great crested newt were found. The overgrowth of grass and brambles meant that no reptiles were spotted.

In view of the success of the event, it is proposed that the event be held twice a year – at Easter and during the summer (as in earlier years). **Action: GSG to put the proposal with funding request to Parish Council, within the overall budget request for next year.**

b. WF Upkeep

There was an in -depth discussion about the best way of managing the maintenance of Wimpey Field. There is agreement in the Group that there is a need for a paid employee to undertake regular maintenance which can be augmented by volunteers and the Payback team. It is vital that Wimpey Field be maintained appropriately for both nature conservation and wider engagement with the village residents. **Action: A proposal to be put the Parish Council to consider funding a regular employee. SM to request agenda item.**

During the pond dipping, difficulties were encountered in getting some children over the fence that surrounds the pond. **Action: GSG to propose to the Parish Council that a gate (with lock) be installed on the pond perimeter fence so that this difficulty is eradicated, while retaining safety.**

PR and AS have sought the agreement of the residents adjoining the conservation area to seek their agreement to having a new gate fitted at Wimpey Field that will allow easier access for larger vehicles to the site. The residents have two weeks to respond with any comments. Funding has been agreed by Parish Council for this. **Action: Once the two-week consultation period is over arrangements will be made by Parish Council to replace the gate, to facilitate maintenance.**

c. Security

JG has provided the Parish Clerk with information about video cameras and how they could be installed. Each camera is likely to be about £250. **Action: JG to provide recommendations for discussion at the next GSG meeting about how many cameras should be installed and their locations.**

PR reported that he and Alison (Parish Clerk) are to meet a representative from the Anti-social Behaviour Department at MBC to discuss the issues that the village is having. He also reported that the Areas Chief Constable will be at an Open Parish Meeting on **Tuesday 28th September** when the residents will be invited to put their concerns and questions to him. **Action: all GSG members are encouraged to attend.**

The point was made that security would be improved and anti-social behaviour reduced if the village were to provide a designated fire pit/barbecue area, and or other facilities, for young

people. While relevant to a discussion about Wimpey Field, it was agreed that this is beyond the Group's remit and to be considered by the Parish Council. **Action: Parish Clerk to put on a future PC meeting agenda.**

8. Any other business

a. GSG annual plan and budget

On 20th October the Parish Council's Strategy Group will consider its annual plan and budget. In advance of that GSG needs to put together a plan of activity and proposed budget so that a funds bid can be made. **Action: MM will circulate a draft plan for GSG members to input into so that we can get something finalised at the September meeting.**

b. GSG membership and meeting attendance

The group needs to formalise the terms of membership of GSG so that members attend meetings regularly to join the discussion and help the group make considered decisions for the benefit of the village. **Action: this matter will be discussed at the next GSG meeting.**

Date of next meeting

Monday 20th September 8.00pm

Mina McPhee

24th August 2021