

	Meeting (No)	Community & Environment (4)
	Date	8 October 2024
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	C&E Manager's Report	CE4/36

Allotments

The Raby Park Road plot clearance work was paused in mid-July due to contractor availability. Since the last scheduled C&E meeting, £162.50 has been spent on clearance work and we will shortly be beginning the process of removing rubbish from site and shredding brambles.

The annual CWaC pest control contract for the Raby Park Road site was renewed at a cost of £231.52+VAT (C&E minute 112b, 06.02.24).

The Ropewalk site Water Plus contract has been transferred to Neston Town Council from a CWaC combined account and backdated to 1 April 2024. As we are currently querying the start readings on the bill, we are not yet in a position to provide a definite figure for the five months from 1 April to 31 August, but it will be somewhere in the region of £1,000+VAT.

The Ropewalk standpipe is very old and in poor condition and there is an unexplained increase in water consumption which could be caused by the old standpipe leaking. We have been contacting contractors to obtain quotations to replace with a WRAS-approved standpipe (see agenda item 51). In order to reduce expenditure in the meantime, we gave advance notice to tenants that the water supply at The Ropewalk would be turned off in early October and will remain turned off until the source of the leak has been identified and appropriate remedial action taken.

The recently introduced allotment probationary period appears to be working well and is giving officers the opportunity to intervene at an earlier stage which will, hopefully, reduce the number of overgrown plots in the future.

Since the last scheduled meeting, I have attended a one-day allotment training course. It was reassuring to learn that in most respects we are aligned with best practice. Following on from this training, we will be undertaking new site risk assessments over the course of the coming months which will come to C&E for approval at a future date. Advice was also received in relation to the keeping of animals on site and this is reflected in the suggested change to the policy (see agenda item 43).

Professor Clarkson Prize

We continue to ask the High School for updates as to when the initial prize will be awarded. We had originally agreed that the Professor Clarkson prize would be presented in the autumn 2023 term and this was then pushed back until later in the 23/24 academic year and then it was postponed again. The most current information (28 June) is that there isn't anything in the calendar yet for the school awards event. If this continues, we may need to consider taking the award in-house and arranging the presentation directly.

Noticeboard Replacement (Minute 122, 13.02.24)

The replacement noticeboard has been installed at West Vale.



The replacement was publicised on social media and we received the following post in response:

Is there any chance you would put a noticeboard in the Greenfields or Marshlands Road area? I am just aware that elderly people are more likely to use the bus from Greenfield and Marshlands Road areas and not likely to walk over to West Vale to see what is going on, especially if a noticeboard was by a bus stop.

We explained that we currently have five noticeboards in the town but that we would pass on the suggestion to C&E Committee. Members may wish to bear this resident suggestion in mind when considering budgets for the next financial year.

Signage

The directional arrows have now been added to the fingerpost at the Station Road entrance to the Wirral Way.



Neston and Parkgate Friends of the Wirral Way (C&E Minute 9b, 11/06/26)

The inaugural meeting of the Neston & Parkgate Friends of the Wirral Way was held on 16 July and was very well attended. The meeting appointed a chair, secretary and treasurer and the group now has a bank account. The agreed donation of £250 has been paid and we sourced noticeboard keys and Wirral Way maps for the volunteers.

Female Society (C&E Minute 11, 11/06/24)

Contact was made as requested following the last C&E meeting and confirmation received that no formal Council representation was necessary. Cllr Kynaston is a Female Society committee member and has agreed to liaise and feed back to C&E regarding any identified issues of mutual interest.

Junior Council

A Junior Councillor has been elected by each of the four primary schools for the 24/25 school year. To help everybody to get to know each other, an introductory afternoon tea was arranged for junior council members, their parents, the mayor and deputy mayor. The guest of honour was Cllr Griffiths in her capacity as an original member of the "senior" council.

The Junior Councillors presented Cllr Griffiths with flowers in recognition of her 15 years of service and invited her to become an honorary member of the Junior Council. The picture below shows all four Junior Councillors and the honorary member of the Junior Council. They are modelling the Junior Councillor badges and Junior Mayor pendant.



My thanks to the Community Engagement Officer for all her hard work in arranging this tea and going the extra mile by baking for it as well.

The cost for afternoon tea supplies, refreshments and presentation = £68.01.

The Junior Council will meet in the near future to discuss their plans for the year.

Remembrance Sunday (C&E Minute 22c, 06.08.24)

The traffic management scheme has been confirmed at a cost of £920+VAT and the event application has been submitted. Cllr Davies will be the Council's on the day co-ordinator. Four traffic management company operatives will attend the event and will be located at the main closure points.

Christmas Lights Switch-on Event (C&E Minute 132, 09/04/24)

The traffic management scheme has been confirmed at a cost of £920+VAT. Four traffic management company operatives will attend the event and will be located at the main closure points. The event application has been submitted.

Anticipated costs are within budget and a breakdown of expenditure will be brought to C&E after the event.

Activities will be provided at four different locations during the afternoon, culminating in the switch-on at The Cross at 6pm. Publicity materials are currently being designed and then the events will be publicised both in print and online.

Equals Card Payments (C&E Minute 130, 09.04.24)

Since the last scheduled meeting, the following payments have been made using the C&E Manager's Equals card:

Annual Purple Guide subscription for the Christmas lights switch-on event (The Purple Guide is an online resource providing H&S advice/best practice for outdoor event management and the associated risk assessments) £25+VAT.

Junior Council afternoon tea and presentation at a cost of £42.57 (remaining expenditure for this event paid via staff expenses).

50 Junior Mayor badges at a cost of £110.50+VAT (C&E 11.06.24, minute 9c). These will be badges for the children to wear when "on duty" and to keep as a reminder of their time on the Junior Council. As much of the cost appeared to be associated with creating the mould for the design, it proved considerably cheaper to purchase a larger quantity of badges (£87.86 for four badges or £110.50 for 50).



Junior Councillor Badge

Neston Town Council Website

Recent guidance recommends that local council websites should use a .gov.uk domain. We are currently investigating options to move to a .gov.uk domain whilst ensuring that we don't lose any neston.org.uk in the process.

A Junior Council page has been created on the website and will be used to inform website visitors about the Junior Council and its activities throughout the course of the year.

Floral Maintenance Contract

A mid-term contract review meeting was held as per the terms of the contract (see also agenda item 52).

During the review meeting it was reported that there had been theft from the railways station planters. I asked for the planters to be restocked (the cost will be added to the next invoice) and we will keep this under review. If it becomes a regular occurrence then we may wish to reconsider the floral displays at this location.

The contractor also raised concern about the difficulties of planting under the Welcome sign opposite Spring Croft in Parkgate due to the shade cast by the tree canopy. We discussed options for a more woodland-style planting scheme at this location and the contractor is to investigate options and update the planting accordingly.

We discussed the condition of the planters at the Bushell Fountain and the parish church which we think will be usable for at least the next year or two. I have asked the contractor to provide an estimate for making replacement Bushell Fountain planters and are awaiting the costings. We continue to add to the Floral Maintenance EMR in anticipation of this future expenditure.

Marsh Dredging (C&E Minute 21, 06.08.24)

RSPB now has the required permissions from Natural England to undertake the dredging at Quayside, but it has not been possible to start the work as the marsh is currently too wet. The window to complete the work will remain open until the end of October and it will be completed this month if there is a sustained period of dry weather. If, however, the ground conditions do not improve during the next few weeks, it may be necessary to postpone the work until next year. The final decision about when to undertake work on the marshes lies with the RSPB's Dee Estuary Site Manager and he is providing the Marsh Working Group with regular updates.

Community Issues

Officers continue to address issues raised by residents as they arise. For example, arranging relocation of a clothes bank that was causing inconvenience to pedestrians in Little Neston and liaising with Royal Mail to get a post box brought back into use in Parkgate. In addition, officers continue to help residents to report issues to CWaC on a regular basis and signpost to other services as appropriate.

Audrey Duncan
Community & Environment Manager