MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE GRAPPENHALL HEYS ESTATE COMMITTEE AT THE GRAPPENHALL HEYS WALLED GARDENS ON TUESDAY 24th FEBRUARY 2026

Present: Councillors Fernyhough (Chair), Hockenhull and McQuillian.

Also present: Oliver Groos (Gardener/Manager), Kate Fitch (Outreach Officer).

In Attendance: Colette Fellows, Clerk to the Council

ACTION

25. Apologies for Absence
It was **resolved that** apologies and reasons for the absence from Cllr Browne, and Davies be accepted.

26. Disclosures of Pecuniary Interests
No disclosures were made.

27. Walled Garden Finances
27.1 The Clerk provided an overview of the current financial situation.

- Expenditure to date was running at 87% against a budget of 87.5%
- Predicted Expenditure to finish at 92%.
- The Budget was set at £152.3K

27.2 The Clerk presented the financial position of the Arnold Stansby account for 2025/2026. The Arnold Stansby fund currently stood at a value of £2.3 million. The original purchase price of the fund was £1.74 million, giving a growth since 2005 of £560,000. Estimated income is £134k, current cash book £119k.

Members raised a question in regard to Section 106 monies, in relation to help support the repair of the Walled Gardens. The Clerk will email members the answer. In the meantime, the Clerk will compose a letter to be sent seeking all developers in South Warrington that are using the gardens as a promotional aid, donations. **CF**

28. List of Works
Attached is a list of works currently being undertaken at the Walled Garden and the Grappenhall Heys Estate.

29. Handyman list of works
The completed work by the handyman will be emailed to members.

30. Gardener Managers Report
30.1The Gardener/Manager (G/M), Oliver Groos, presented a progress report (attached).
The garden manager to explore options to be able to access the glasshouses for repairs in the way of special ladders. **OG**

30.2 Permission was sought to use a small area of land to produce wood products for the garden (to establish a coppice wood. It **was resolved** to accept the proposal. **OG**

31. Outreach Officer's Report
The Outreach Officer presented a progress report (attached).
Members requested that room hire charges and events charges are market tested against similar establishments. **KF**

Members discussed how we can generate different income opportunities, if the Walled Garden was to hold bigger ticket events, then support would be needed from members. In the interim the Outreach Officer to try and fill the rooms on days with smaller scale activities, garden tours and working with local sixth form colleges on promotional material which can be used on the website and socials.

KF

32. The Mens Shed Project

The Clerk would like to host a workshop at the Walled Garden to explore the initiative further. The Chair to send possible dates to the Clerk to coordinate for March 2026. **CF/LF**

33. Fountain Café

The Clerk updated Adam Halford of Primrose along with the café manager Robert Groom the Council's resolutions in response to their requests. The Clerk has not received any further response from Primrose.

34. Glasshouse Repairs

The Clerk invited several companies to tender for the repair work at the Walled Garden. The companies below agreed to a site visit and to send in costings.

a) Maysand Ltd
b) Rosslee Construction
c) Clan Contracting Ltd

Unfortunately, only Rosslee Construction tendered for the complete works, Maysand Ltd were only interested in the repairs as set out in the Surveyors report and Clan Contracting have still to submit.

The Clerk proceeded to contact other companies with a view to alternative repairs/replacement of the Fountain Café.

a) Alitex
b) Hartley Botanical
c) White Cottages

Under the Financial Regulations (Nov 2024) under the Procurement section 5.6. It states that:

For contracts estimated to exceed £60,000 including VAT, the Clerk shall seek formal tenders from at least three suppliers agreed by the Council.

The Clerk shared quotes at the meeting. The Clerk along with her colleagues will proceed to gather information supported by a resident who was involved in the original project. Enabling a business plan to be prepared for repair/replace and or repaint/repair. **KF/OG/CF**

35. Arboriculturist Biennial Tree Survey

A tree survey has been carried out (see attached report) on the 4th February by Lally Tree Management. The report recommends various work with a moderate priority be undertaken. The Gardener/Manager should proceed in obtaining three quotes for the necessary works, then report back.

List of Works

	Item	Action Point	Lead	Status	Update
1.	Village Green Bench	Flag Stones for wear/tear area for feet	OG	Cost to be sought	A Suitable stone to be sources in the winter months.
2.	Village Green pathways	Needs top layer resurfacing	CF/OG	On	Currently no risk to public. Some remedial works to be done near the gate at Wolfe Close
3.	Walled Garden	Jubilee Beacon display	OG		A to be erected in front of the display.
4.	Walled Garden Benches	Stones for feet area, sympathetic to gardens	OG/BR		Red paving bricks to be used.
5.	Pond	Blanket weed	OG		A routine annual job
6.	Benches	Re-sanded and oiled	BR	ongoing	Winter project for handyman
7.	Information board	Flag stones are needed to prevent mud and water gathering.	BR/OG	ongoing	A continuation of the path (red brick to be installed)
8.	Outside Pond (Wolfe Close)	One meter clearance and blanket weed.		Complete	
9.	Glasshouse Leakage (Fountain Café)		CF		A structural engineer and quantitative surveyor are now working on a cost estimate and schedule of works with specifications.
10.	Inside ladies toilet – broken tap	Tap will not turn off. Sometimes it a build-up of slutch. A professional needed to investigate.	BR	Complete	
11.	Sunblind or screen	The café area gets too hot in the summer and since some of the blinds have failed, an alternative is needed.	OG	Complete	.

12.	Sinkhole	Outside of the gardens (main) a hole appeared in the grass (maybe a water line to pond)	OG/CF		B Rose has infilled
13.	Noticeboard	To move outside the gardens for 24-hour access	OG	Ongoing	The notice board has been taken down for repair, before being re-sited.
14.	Classroom	Re-organisation/clear-out	KF	complete	This is been completed, a better storage solution would be helpful.
15.	Donation station	QR Code station for donations to the Walled Garen	KF		Not viable currently due to charges.
16.	Animal Signage	'Do Not Feed'	OG		
17.	Promote non feeding of wild animals on social media platforms and website		KF		
18.	Hedgerow from Woodland Trust	Contact Cllr Ford for residents views	OG		No further action

Estates Committee - Walled Garden Report Feb 2026

We have some missing glazing in the roof of the glasshouses that are inaccessible. I will start a brainstorm with Brian as to the best way to give him or me access to the roof to complete these small tasks inhouse. I might ask for some advice from people in the Scaffolding/roofing trade to make suggestions. I hope to eventually procure a small amount of equipment that doesn't cost too much and which we can store on site.

Squirrels have targeted bulb species that they typically like, in my previous experience I have lost a few but in this case they have eaten every crocus. My feeling is that we have adopted the squirrel population from the development site but hopefully this will reduce as populations diffuse into the wider environment.

I have done all the winter work required to fulfil the summer plans I proposed to you in September. I am about to start the spring work to continue the next stage of this improvement.

I have removed some of the overstood laurels along the North wall to give some ornamental plants some space including a four meter Ginko which was completely encased in a laurel bush. I plan to continue this next winter including Rhododendron Ponticum opinions differ among gardeners whether or not to eventually remove all Rhodedendron ponticum or just partially remove.

Neil Oxley at the Woodland trust has allowed me to manage their land within ‘a few’ meters of our heritage walls. I plan to coppice everything which will yield valuable woodland edge habitat, keep scrub from leaning on the walls and large trees from rooting too close to the walls.

By the time of the meeting I will have laid the short hornbeam hedge in front of the composting area. I am doing this to promote growth from the base. It is currently thin and top heavy. Also I am hoping the novel management would be of interest to the public. Typically this is an agricultural practice. Seeing as it is only found in competitions, habitat restoration and enthusiastic estate owners I think now there is reason to display this as a garden craft if done with the care of detail found in competition hedging.

I have a mailing list for volunteers. I have started a newsletter (more frequent in the growing season) to help keep volunteers on track - if any of you want to be included let me know. It's typically very short but will be an opportunity for you to follow along in the work we are doing.

Seed sowing has begun.

Please let me know if there are details and topics important to you that I typically haven't mentioned in my reports. I can make a point to include these in future reports.

management@ghwalledgarden.org.uk

Community Outreach Officer Report for Estates Committee – 24th February, 2026

For noting: Wreathmaking in November and December achieved income of nearly £3,700.00. After costs (wreath frames, ribbon, wires, labour and refreshments) we will still have realised close to £3,000.00 profit.

The 3C's Club (Coffee, Cake and Community) has met on four occasions now (last Tuesday of the month – 1.30pm-3.30pm.) Attendee figures to date are around 12-15 people per session and topics covered so far have included a talk from the local Police on current scams and frauds, a horticultural quiz, a visit from Melody Makers Choir and making fabric pumpkins. At the next session (24th February) we will have a talk by Cheshire Wildlife Trust about their local campaign for recording wildlife sightings.
One of our regular garden volunteers who helps with the running of this group has offered to run a monthly book club on an alternate Tuesday afternoon (e.g. the first Tuesday in the month) with the possibility of this being a 'twilight' session – say 6-8pm from April to September.

Interestingly we have more 'advanced' bookings of space at the garden already through the year than I can ever recall previously happening. Calculating the time slots booked at current rates will generate over £2,300 from these 'one off bookings'.

The 'Have a Go' Group continues to be popular – currently with 13 members.

The two art groups – Moore Art Group and Heys Art Group attend weekly on Tuesday mornings and Wednesday mornings respectively.

Thinking ahead to potential fairs at the garden – our Autumn and Winter Fairs are usually the most popular/well supported. With uncertainty about what is happening with the central glasshouse (Community Space) it is impossible for me to say whether these events will be taking place this year (many of the regular stallholders require the protection of the glasshouse for their goods) When the build was ongoing with the heritage lottery, fairs were held 'offsite' I understand, notably at the Bellhouse and at Grappenhall Heys Community Primary School. Do the Estates Committee think the idea of perhaps holding an event at the school (if they are in agreement) would be a good idea?

Oliver and I are exploring the idea of a 'family fun day' in the garden during the Spring/Summer.

To date we have one firm booking for a 'garden tour' at the garden. I intend to make contact with all the past groups that have visited us in recent times, reminding them of what we offer, and also to make contact with other groups locally, who may not have considered visiting. If the Estates Committee are in agreement I was thinking we could approach the local radio station Mix 56 (based in Lymm) and possibly offer them an interview, or even regular slot/update 'what to do in your garden now' type of thing!

Over the last 12 months we have had the schoolroom hired for a couple of 'away day' type events – one through a rural planning company and one through United Utilities via one of our garden volunteers. Feedback for this type of use was very positive, so I intend to work on a promotion of room hire for this purpose – informal meetings/away days/team building etc. Marianne (our volunteer) is happy to do some spiel to accompany this.

CJF/Feb26

Agenda item 30.2
Why?
The small, wooded area shown in the map has been planted predominantly with hazel and field maple. My proposal is to manage the wood to produce wood products such as poles and binders from Hazel. Poles and binders can be used to make herbaceous plant supports and bean pole wigwams for instance.

What?
Coppicing is the traditional method for producing such products. Traditionally coppicing involves levelling an entire copse in order to harvest the long/straight regeneration in 3-7 years' time. I am proposing a more sensitive and low-key management strategy (better suited to this small area) whereby removing only the largest stems of each stool will open gaps in the canopy and trigger regeneration from the base. Field maples and any other species will be left alone as they will not produce the product we require.

Potential benefits
It would be good land management to prevent the hazels from becoming overstood as Hazels only live to 80 years if un-managed, coppicing can increase the life of hazels to several hundred years (*woodland trust*). The practice will keep the woodland safe as it limits the age of stems preventing occurrence of dead and unsafe limbs. Coppice woods are known to ecologists to support a high level of biodiversity due to the practice simulating 'forest edge habitat' *(Wildlife trust).*

Precautions
Where Volunteers will be involved the management plan should involve its own risk assessment which will include proper instruction in manual handling, dead wooding, removing lower limbs to aid safety in accessing the site, no power tools are necessary for any of the management foreseeable as managed stems are generally small.

Visual impact
The woodland will look for the most part the same as it does now only with the addition of dead hedging around the perimeter as a means to manage waste brushwood that arises from the management.

References:
Woodland trust
https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/trees-woods-and-wildlife/british-trees/a-z-of-british-trees/hazel/

Wildlife trust
https://www.warwickshirewildlifetrust.org.uk/coppicing-and-thinning

