

**Minutes of the meeting of the
PARKS, OPEN SPACES, CONSERVATION & FOOTPATHS COMMITTEE
held on Monday, 11th November 2013 at 7.30pm
in the Committee Room, The Freight House, Bradley Way, Rochford.**

Committee Present: Cllr Mrs P Young (Chairman), Cllr L Sampson (Vice Chairman), Cllr Mrs L Haskew, Cllr Mrs A Heath, Cllr V Leach (ex-officio), Cllr R Mitchell, Cllr R Patient, Cllr Mrs L Shaw, Cllr J Tutton, Cllr D Weir and Cllr Mrs M Weir.

53. Apologies for non-attendance at meeting:

There were no apologies for absence.

54. Declarations of any:

- a) **Disclosable Pecuniary Interest;**
- b) **Other Pecuniary Interest; or**
- c) **Non-Pecuniary Interest**

on any matter on the agenda for 11th November 2013:

None were declared.

55. Public Forum:

None Present.

56. To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 14th October 2013 and to approve the destruction of the notes in respect of that meeting:

Members approved the Minutes of the Meeting held on 14th October 2013 and agreed to the destruction of the meeting notes.

57. Action List Update - November (For Noting & Decision):

- 57.1 The Clerk updated that the fencing had been re-instated and thanks were recorded to the 'Friends of Magnolia' for planting the whips alongside this stretch of bridleway.
- 57.2 Cllr Sampson updated that he was awaiting the illustrative signage artwork to come through and as soon as it was received it would be brought to the Committee.
- 57.3 The Clerk reported Spencers was lacking one bin as it had rotted from its base and Members agreed replacement and a fault was reported with the lid on the Elizabeth Close dog bin.
- 57.4 It was confirmed that the sewage pipe connection would be raised at the site meeting with David Wilson Homes next week.
- 57.5 The Clerk circulated photographs of the metal seats recently installed at the top of Magnolia Park and thanks were bade to Cllrs L Sampson, R Mitchell and the Groundsman for the quality and installation.
- 57.6 The Clerk reported repair and return of the Tractor.
- 57.7 The Clerk reported that the Arboriculturist had been very busy as a result of recent storm damage but he would contact the Groundsman to commence the Tree Inspections as soon as possible.

Members noted the Action List Update and agreed closure of completed items.

58. Financial Report – October (For Noting):

The Clerk reported the total expenditure percentage figure of 79.8% for Parks for the year to date and it was likely that Parks would be overspent by the end of the year. There were no questions and Members accepted the Financial Report.

59. Agree Amended budget for Parks Committee for 2014/15 for recommendation to Finance Committee (For Decision):

59.1 The Clerk explained that due to separating items in the Property Maintenance cost centre with the introduction of the Health & Safety Budget the BT Redcare Alarm cost was missing from the bid; having inserted that back in, the cost centre was brought up to £1K as opposed to £300 on the draft budget. **Members accepted the amendment.**

59.2 Concern was expressed over lack of budgeting/contingency for tree maintenance as much work may be needed as demonstrated by the recent storm damage and repairs were an essential duty of care. The Chairman clarified the budget and recommended a revisit, if needed, following the Tree Inspection due across the parks which would give a clearer idea of requirements. Members debated whether to increase the budget now or later or vire necessary funds from reserves at a later date and some strong and conflicting views were expressed. **It was resolved to await the recommendations from within the Tree Inspection Report after which time the budget could be revisited.**

59.3 The wages bill was queried and the Clerk clarified that the budgeted figure for 2012/13 did not reflect the actual figure for 2012/13.

The amended budget for Parks Committee for 2014/15 was approved for recommendation to Finance Committee and it was noted that the budget may be revisited upon receipt of the Tree Inspection Report.

60. Groundsman's Uniform (£100) – Cllr Mrs Shaw (For Decision):

Cllr Mrs Shaw relayed background information and detailed the Council rate costs and supply of the uniform which she displayed examples of. The total cost of £100.48 was quoted inclusive of Hi-viz coat, fleece, trousers and T-shirt and Cllr Mrs Shaw volunteered to embroider some of the clothing. A comparison had been made with Ernest Doe and prices came out at 200% increase. The Clerk clarified the Protective Clothing budget and what clothing the Groundsman had at present. Laundering of the uniform was queried and it was clarified that the Groundsman understood this was his responsibility. After discussion, **Members agreed as a corporate body a uniform was necessary and were happy to proceed with the recommendation to purchase the uniform as set out from Be-Safe with a review in terms of renewing uniform as and when necessary.** The Clerk was asked to open an account with the supplier and the Chairman thanked Cllr Mrs Shaw.

61. Storm Damage in Magnolia and Spencers Park - Report attached (For Noting):

The Clerk went through the works that had been completed and advised that permission had been granted by RDC for works to go ahead with the Ash and Oak that were under TPO's. Cllr Sampson wished to publicly thank the Groundsman for his dedication and support, changing his schedule and working at 7am on Saturday to ensure the work could be done. The report was received and **approved.**

62. Report from Wildflower Meadow Working Group - Meeting 25.10.13 (For Noting):

Cllr Sampson referred to the Working Group's report and updated that proposals would be put before the Committee in January and this was **approved**.

63. Review of Magnolia Park Management Plan (Verbal Update):

Cllr Mrs Young informed that she had tried to call a meeting previously but this now had to be brought forward and a new date would be set for next week at the end of the meeting; **this was agreed with Members of the Working Group**.

64. New Signage for Parks (including decision whether to include Responsible Dog Walking Signs):

The Chairman advised that much of the specific signage that had been on the list had been dealt with under separate actions and some had been added. There was a need to identify which signage was still required and to bear in mind that no specific budget existed, instead grant funding would be sought. It was queried whether the species boards were the same as previously and Cllr Sampson clarified that new artwork had been used. After discussion, **Members approved a Working Group consisting of Cllr Mrs Shaw and Cllr Sampson to quantify requirements during the wild flower walk-round with findings brought back for review**.

65. Free Trees received from Woodland Trust: Site meeting required about location of tree planting by Hawkwell Brook (For Decision):

Cllr Mrs Weir reported the 'Friends of Magnolia' planted 100 whips in Magnolia, 1 every foot over 30 metres with approximately 200 whips remaining; the team were very enthusiastic and planting alongside Hawkwell Brook had also taken place before Cllr Mrs Weir had read her meeting papers. She described the planted locations, which were not yet finished, and that the area pending the sewage connection work had been left.

It was pointed out that the edge along the Brook was quite significantly overgrown and it was in the Groundsman's work program to clear that bank in readiness for planting post the Parks Committee meeting. Whilst not wishing to dampen people's enthusiasm, the importance of consultation was made clear especially as the sewer line connection was pending and the Groundsman's work schedule would now be affected. In addition, Cllr Mrs Shaw had already requested assistance in planting from the Lions and Rotarians and they had made contact with the office.

Management of the 'Friends of Magnolia' was raised and Cllr Sampson pointed out that he had offered to have a meeting with them which was to be organised by Cllr Mrs Weir; this was debated and **Cllr Mrs Weir agreed to obtain a date from the 'Friends' and arrange a meeting with Cllr Sampson**.

It was resolved that an assessment of the planting along the Brook would be made on Friday by Cllrs Mrs Young and Cllr Sampson.

66. Letter from RDC Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, Leisure, Arts and Culture re. List of Informed Walks Project (For Decision):

Cllr Leach recommended the request to Cllr Steptoe to include footpath 7 and it was recognised that there was potential in the future to look at routes. Cllr Mrs Weir suggested getting in touch with Mr Eddie Short and previous Parish Plan Members to see if any information was readily available and this was **agreed**.

67. Summary of Decisions:

- Agreed to replace bin in Spencers.
- Cllr Mrs Shaw and Cllr Sampson to quantify signage requirements during wild flower walk-round - findings to be brought back for review.
- Approved amended Parks budget for 2014/15 for recommendation to Finance and noted potential revisit upon receipt of Tree Inspection Report.
- Approved Groundsman's uniform purchase as set out – Clerk to open account with supplier.
- Storm damage report and works approved.
- Approved Wild Flower Meadow report; proposals to go before January Committee.
- Magnolia Park Management Plan Working Group meeting date to be set following Parks Committee.
- Cllr Mrs Weir to organise a meeting of the 'Friends of Magnolia' and Cllr Sampson.
- Cllrs Mrs Young and Cllr Sampson to conduct assessment of planting along Hawkwell Brook.
- Clerk to contact Eddie Short/Members of disbanded Parish Plan re. List of Informed Walks.

The meeting was closed at 8.43pm.

Chairman

Footnote to Members: Please recycle this document from within the Full Council Papers for use at the next Standing Committee Meeting.