

**Minutes of the meeting of the
PARKS, OPEN SPACES, CONSERVATION & FOOTPATHS COMMITTEE
held on Monday, 14th October 2013 at 8.45pm
in the Committee Room, The Freight House, Bradley Way, Rochford.**

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

39. Apologies for non-attendance at meeting:

Cllr Mrs C Cunningham (ill), Cllr R Mitchell (ill), Cllr R Patient (another appointment-funeral) and Cllr Mrs P Young (holiday). Members accepted the apologies tendered.

40. Declarations of any:

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

on any matter on the agenda for 14th October 2013:

None were declared.

41. Public Forum:

None Present.

42. To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 9th September 2013 and to approve the destruction of the notes in respect of that meeting:

Members approved the Minutes of the Meeting held on 9th September 2013 and agreed to the destruction of the meeting notes.

43. Action List Update - October (For Noting & Decision):

- 43.1 Cllr Leach reported non-co-operation from Rochford District Council re. 'co-operation between parishes re. dog fouling' and it was agreed to delete this.
- 43.2 Cllr Mrs Weir updated that the project to create a deadhedge had not come to fruition which was disappointing as the 'Friends' were disheartened and seemed to have fallen away; the rose garden was no longer being managed. Cllr Weir felt that the people who were prepared to do the work had been fobbed off by Council regarding health and safety issues and he aired frustration in that many years ago Teachers and Pupils helped to clear the ponds etc. Cllr Leach clarified that when the project was set up it was determined that it would be a local effort and one of the volunteers had agreed to co-ordinate the process, however, that had not happened. Cllr Leach reiterated that Council did not have toilets and hand wash facilities and as a result schools were reluctant to get involved with the parks. Cllr Sampson advised that Cllr Mrs Young had attempted to contact Mr R Cranfield to no avail, particularly in respect of the Management Plan. Cllr Sampson recommended Council intervened in terms of helping the 'Friends of Magnolia' to organise themselves as it was not the intention of Council to turn their back on them. Members recognised that achievements had been made regarding the 'Friends of Magnolia' such as the Constitution and installation of the shed but more progress was needed. **It was resolved that Cllr Mrs Weir would call**

a meeting of the Friends of Magnolia and Cllrs Sampson and Mrs Weir would liaise with them.

- 43.3 Cllr Sampson updated that the illustrative signs were work in progress.
- 43.4 Cllr Leach recommended the current arrangement worked well and until such time as Council could afford to install a flushing toilet with mains water, the item could be removed from the list and this was agreed.
- 43.5 It was agreed to defer the Management plan to the next meeting.
- 43.6 Cllr Mrs Haskew updated that despite contacting people on the list they had no interest in the garden share on offer and it was agreed to close the project.
- 43.7 It was agreed to incorporate signage as one item and bring back in November.
- 43.8 Nothing further had been heard regarding 5 Glencroft therefore Members agreed to remove the item from the list for return if needed.
- 43.9 The Clerk updated that David Wilson Homes would require access to come across to Spencers in January for the sewers to be connected and this would need to be tidied up.
- 43.10 Cllr Sampson reported the steel had been purchased as open box sections and he would collect the ends to those to create the metal seats. He advised the total cost of the 2 benches had cost approximately £120. Cllrs Sampson and Mitchell would cut off the bolts and affix the seats to the stands in due course.
- 43.11 Cllr Sampson referred to the correspondence and notes of the meeting between Cllrs Mrs Young, Cllr Sampson and the resident and he went through the results in detail. Cllr Mrs Weir was disappointed to read some of the comments and related some historic points relating to the area, footpaths, bridle ways and use of the Payback Team. Cllr Mrs Haskew and Cllr Tutton commended Cllrs Mrs Young and Sampson for meeting the resident to resolve the issues and doing so raised the profile and image of Council.

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

44. Financial Report – September (For Noting):

Members accepted the Financial Report.

45. Proposal & quote to repair `Old` tractor – Cllr L Sampson (For Decision):

Cllr Sampson clarified that the 'new' tractor was 7 years old and the 'old' tractor was probably 20 years old but whilst in Council's custody it had done 2,500 hours. He reported that the old tractor had developed problems with the steering lock and steering box and was no longer operational. Cllr Sampson explained that one tractor used a front loader and one used a back loader and it would take one man a day's work to change the equipment over. He advised it was the old tractor that carried the hedge cutter.

The Clerk went through the estimates from Browns for repair and replacement and informed that Ernest Does were approached but were more expensive. Cllr Sampson added the tractor held virtually no value as it stood unrepaired.

Cllr Tutton had an engineering background and sought the service history of the tractor which was given.

Cllr Leach reported that Council had valued having the flexibility of 2 tractors available and geared the equipment to accommodate having only one Groundsman,

Council had put aside a sum year by year for capital equipment and replacement and the repairs would give at least another 1500 working hours.

Members approved the quote from Browns to repair the old tractor.

46. Medium/Long Term Planning for Capital Equipment – Cllr L Sampson:

The Clerk clarified the Capital Replacement Fund. Cllr Mrs Shaw asked whether Council could build up the funds to afford future issues and the Clerk referred to the requirement of long term planning to cover this and Cllrs Mr and Mrs Weir requested a long term forecast. **Cllr Sampson moved from the Chair that a Working Group be constituted to rationalize Council's provision and Planning, together with the Groundsman and the Clerk. Cllrs L Sampson, J Tutton, D Weir and Mrs M Weir volunteered and the Working Group was agreed.**

47. Criminal Damage in Magnolia:

a. Post & rail fencing (approx. 30m) - Quotes received. (For Decision) Cllr

Mrs Weir suggested it may have been a horse that had felled the fence as the posts were rotted and she recommended the Groundsman repair the posts.

The Clerk advised that this was a very big job needing specialist tools to bore down in the ground. The Clerk referred to the quote to replace the fence. Cllr Mrs Heath suggested a natural barrier of planted trees along the area where the fence had fallen. Members agreed that the barrier was required now and agreed to planting the trees behind the fencing as an additional barrier using the whips that would be delivered in November. It was agreed to ask the 'Friends of Magnolia' to help with this planting. Cllr Weir queried the budget and the Clerk confirmed this would be an overspend as this was unplanned expenditure.

Members approved the quote and expenditure and agreed to go ahead with the fencing and the tree barrier.

b. Arson – 3 seats in Magnolia recreation field (in addition to 2 seats burnt at top of park): Cllr L Sampson proposed from the Chair to remove the benches for 6 months especially with the onset of winter. Members expressed

reluctance but **the motion was agreed.** Cllr Mrs Haskew recommended publishing an article in the newsletter to explain what had happened and encourage people to be vigilant to help deter further vandalism **and this was agreed.** Cllr Leach reported that the Echo would be publishing an article which he had provided a short quote for and the office had provided photos. Cllr Mrs Weir reported a huge amount of bottles and cans recently indicating that parties had taken place and residents had reported noise. Cllr Leach urged that the more crime numbers reported, the better the response from the Police.

c. Resident has enquired about setting up Park Patrols – do members wish to explore this suggestion? Cllr Sampson gave a verbal report on the matter and the **Clerk reported that the Police advised asking the resident to contact the Police if he wanted to take it further. Council agreed not to become involved.**

48. Annual Tree Inspection – Proposal from RDC Arboricultural Officer (For Decision):

The Clerk went through the Arboriculturist's proposal in detail and advised Council to undertake the recommendations within. Members discussed the proposal; it was agreed that Council had a duty of care to carry out the annual tree inspection and **the proposal was accepted.**

49. Report from Wildflower Meadow Working Group (For Noting):

Cllr Sampson referred to the Working Group's report. Cllr Mrs Heath expressed discontent that Spencers was not highlighted for a wildflower meadow and thought that Spencers was the perfect place. Cllr Mrs Shaw explained that Spencers had not been discounted but the Groundsman had pointed out that the wild flowers were coming back in Spencers. Cllr Sampson said the Working Group would take the comments on board and reiterated that it was hoped to give Spencers another year to recover. Cllr Sampson advised this was being pursued as a no cost project with ground preparation by the Groundsman and possibility of borrowing equipment and this was noted.

50. Consider draft budget for Parks Committee for 2014/15 (For Decision):

Cllr Sampson proposed going through the budget giving the Clerks recommendations which would give an overall increase of around 2%.

- Cllr Sampson gave a total of £48,100 as opposed to £46,732.
- Cllr Mrs Haskew queried the cost of Grounds Maintenance which was due to an extra man for tree coppicing.
- Cllr Mrs Haskew asked whether Council had a commitment to increasing salaries and Cllr Sampson responded that was an issue for Personnel Committee and Council. Cllr Leach explained that Council abided by National (NALC) Guidelines.
- P3, Vehicle Running Costs and Agricultural Machinery were queried and the Clerk gave satisfactory explanations.
- Cllr Leach expressed concern of the overall increase added to the Finance budget but that a clearer picture would be presented after GP's budget predictions were known. Cllr Mrs Haskew pointed out the new homes would generate slightly more precept and Cllr Weir cautioned that having approved the Fiscal Policy the budget may have to come back.

There were no further queries and Cllr Sampson thanked the Clerk for all her preparation. **Members voted on the Parks Committee draft budget for 2014/15 and after a show of hands the budget was accepted with one Member against.**

51. Notification of award of Free Tree Pack from Woodland Trust – Trees arriving 1st week in Nov - Where and who will plant trees? (For Decision):

Cllr Mrs Weir recommended planting along the Hawkwell Brook at Spencers and this was agreed. Cllr Sampson advised caution due to the sewer connection works; this was queried and the Clerk recommended discussion at the site meeting with David Wilson Homes' Project Manager when that meeting was arranged.

Cllr Mrs Shaw proposed that Council write a letter to the Rayleigh Lions to seek volunteers; this was agreed and Cllr Mrs Shaw volunteered to send the letter as well as putting herself and her family forward for planting works.

Cllr Mrs Weir agreed to seek help from the Friends of Magnolia.

52. Summary of Decisions:

- Cllr Mrs Weir to call a meeting of the Friends of Magnolia and Cllrs Sampson and Mrs Weir to liaise with them.
- Review of signage to be dealt with as one agenda item in November.
- Closure of action list points agreed as above.
- Members approved the quote from Browns to repair the old tractor.
- Working Group constituted to review medium/long term planning for capital equipment; Cllrs Sampson, Tutton, Weir, Mrs Weir, Groundsman and Clerk.

- Agreed expenditure to replace fallen fencing in Magnolia and agreed planting of whips to create a natural barrier behind.
- Agreed to remove vandalised benches from Magnolia recreation field.
- Agreed to publish Newsletter article to explain what had happened to the benches and encourage people to be vigilant.
- Council agreed not to become involved with residents Park patrols.
- Accepted Arboriculturist's proposal.
- Wild Flower Working Group to note comments re. Spencers.
- Draft Parks budget for 2014/15 accepted.
- Cllr Mrs Weir to seek help from 'Friends of Magnolia' for planting whips.
- Cllr Mrs Shaw to write to Rayleigh Lions re. planting whips.
- Approved planting whips along Hawkwell brook – Clerk to raise with David Wilson Homes' Project Manager at site visit re. sewer connection works.

The meeting was closed at 10.10pm

Chairman

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