

**Minutes of the meeting of the  
PARKS, OPEN SPACES, CONSERVATION & FOOTPATHS COMMITTEE  
held on Monday, 15<sup>th</sup> April 2013 at 8.45pm  
In the Committee Room, The Freight House, Bradley Way, Rochford.**

**Committee Present:** Cllr Mrs P Young (Chairman), Cllr V Leach (ex-officio), Cllr Mrs K Cooke, Cllr Mrs C Cunningham, Cllr Mrs L Haskew, Cllr R Mitchell, Cllr R Patient (ex-officio), Cllr L A Sampson, Cllr D Weir, Cllr Mrs M Weir and Mr E Short.  
**Also Present:** Cllr K Binding, Cllr J Scrivener, Cllr Mrs L Shaw and Cllr Mrs J A Tutton.

**95. Apologies for non-attendance at meeting:**

Cllr Mrs A Heath (unwell). Mrs P Peacock (other appointment). Members accepted the apologies tendered.

**96. Declarations of any:**

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

**on any matter on the agenda for 15<sup>th</sup> April 2013**

None were declared.

**97. To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2013 and to approve the destruction of the notes in respect of that meeting:**

Members approved the Minutes of the Meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2013 as a true record and agreed to the destruction of the notes in respect of that meeting.

**98. Parks – Action List Update – April (For Noting):**

**98.1** As no response had been received from Greensward despite two letters following up, Members agreed to remove the item from the list.

**98.2** Cllr Mrs Young reported that Council were fully compliant with one disabled access into Magnolia meeting the minimum requirement. The desire for further disabled access was raised and the Chairman clarified that this request had been to look at the legal aspect; increasing the disabled access formed part of the grant funding research for this year.

**98.3** Cllr Mrs Young updated that she was in the process of proof reading the draft Management Plan which would be brought to the next meeting of Parks for endorsement.

**98.4** Cllr Mrs Young circulated three quotes for small, simple, lockable sheds all at similar costs and readily available for purchase online, now the Clerk was in receipt of the Council Debit Card. Cllr Mrs Young advised the price should also allow for shelving and the location was already being discussed with the Groundsman.

**98.5** Cllr Mrs Haskew apologised that she had not been able to provide updates as she had been without email for some time. She reported that Hove and Brighton Council had updated that some matches were very successful and some had not worked so well due to people's expectations; no signatures were required but references were requested from the Gardeners. Cllr Mrs Haskew understood the Parish did not wish to manage this as a project therefore she requested permission to take on liaison with the people offering their gardens and contact the interested gardeners.

Cllr Leach could see no reason why Council could not delegate for a Councillor to perform a specific role in matching up the functions and he recommended Council delegate it in order that Cllr Mrs Haskew would be covered under liability insurance. Generally Members were in agreement but Cllr Weir expressed concern and requested that legal advice be sought and asked that his request be minuted. Cllr Mrs Young asked Cllr Weir if he would be prepared to conduct the research which he argued was not his function. Some strong opinions were expressed. Cllr Mrs Young did not see the need for legal advice and business was moved on after the Chair summarised that **Cllr Mrs Haskew would progress the garden share liaison.**

**Members accepted the Action List Update and approved for the removal of completed actions.**

**99. Financial Report – March (For Noting):**

There were no questions and Members accepted the Financial Report.

**100. ‘Friends of Magnolia’ - Verbal Update:**

**100.1** Cllr Mrs Weir raised that the ‘Friends of Magnolia’ were waiting to hear from Ray Cranfield regarding dead fencing training. Cllr Mrs Young reported that Mr Cranfield had presented his apologies for not commencing the training due to work commitments; he was unable to attend the meeting.

**100.2** Cllr Mrs Young had heard from Lesley Athey that RDC were arranging to place a dog and litter bin by the entrance to Magnolia from Hogarth Way and they would be financing and maintaining those bins and this was noted.

**100.3** Cllr Mrs Cooke thought that Council ought to provide equipment for the ‘Friends of Magnolia’. Cllr Mrs Young said she would look at the requirements going forward once it was established what was needed and that the ‘Friends of Magnolia’ formed part of the grant funding research but there was a need to start somewhere.

**101. Update on Funding – Cllr L Sampson (verbal update):**

**101.1** Cllr Sampson reported that he had successfully applied to Cory Environmental Trust regarding replacing the species boards in Spencers and Magnolia and that £400 would be awarded, hopefully by June.

**101.2** Cllr Sampson attended a Prince’s Trust meeting in March seeking funding for this financial year; the request was placed on the probable list and they were likely to respond in Council’s favour.

**101.3** Cllr Sampson anticipated hearing back from ‘Awards for All’ about May time. Members congratulated Cllr Sampson for all his work.

**102. ‘Playground Inspection Reports – attached (For Noting and Action):**

The Clerk advised there were a couple of medium risks within the reports but most of them were low and she had passed copies of the Playground Inspection Reports to the Groundsman. Members and the Clerk were pleased with the quality of the reports including the pictures making them easy to understand and the Clerk informed the Inspector was much cheaper than ROSPA. Cllr Mitchell pointed out a risk of the playground gate (in Elizabeth Close) springing back and catching fingers and he agreed to look into that and provide more information. Cllr Sampson advised funding had been applied for these areas and pending funding some items could be replaced. **Members were happy to accept the reports.**

**103. Consider Operational Plan for Parks 2013/14 – draft attached (for Decision):**

Cllr Mrs Young read through the Operational Plan point by point and **Members accepted the Operational Plan for Parks for 2013/14.**

**104. Consider LCRS Risk Report for items relating to Parks (For Action):**

Members referred to the LCRS report from Full Council Papers. Cllr Mrs Young advised that a lot of the points were part of regular inspections that the Committee were already moving forward with and could finalise those action plans once the Management Plan was in place.

The Clerk advised that RDC would deal with fly tipping in certain areas but reiterated that Council did not have any security or cameras in place and the Chairman raised that part of the Groundsman's job role included monitoring. Cllr Mrs Cooke wished to highlight that Essex Police had warned Farmers of a scam where people were taking money to clear sites and they were dumping rubbish on farmland wrapped up as hay bales. Council were content that with monitoring and site inspections in place Council were picking up on issues before they become a problem.

**105. Consideration of Letter from RDC re. Management of Sports Pitches and Pavilions within Rochford District:**

Cllr Mrs Young summarised that, as discussed at Full Council, it was decided to decline taking on a financial burden at this time but more information was required.

**106. Magnolia Recreation Field – Drainage Solution (For Discussion):**

Cllr Mrs Young reported she had visited the site with the Groundsman; a pump had been hired to attempt to remove the water but it was effectively moving the water around as there was nowhere for it to go and a solution was required. The Clerk explained the water had cut off access to get along part of the bridlepath.

Members asked if the flooding was a result of inclement weather and Cllr Mrs Weir advised that it happened historically which was one of the reasons why District Council had handed it over due to drainage.

Cllr Mrs Young described the flooded areas and that the smelly black silt clay was contaminating and just one impact would be that the Groundsman would be unable to cut the grass.

Cllr Sampson reported that so far the Groundsman had pumped out 250,000 gallons of water into the drain in the carpark but the flow was coming from the woods bringing the silt with it and was scouring out a basin in the recreation field; one solution would be to put in a land drain as the silt was forming a lining.

Cllr Mitchell spoke of a similar happening elsewhere and the solution came at a cost of over £21K but he also warned against over drainage which would raise other issues.

Cllr Mrs Young cautioned that the edge of the pond had overflowed and could not be safely walked past.

Cllr Weir spoke that having served Council for 20 years this had always been a problem, he expressed strong views and cautioned that there may be a problem pumping water down the carpark drain but it was confirmed that it was a storm water drain and the Groundsman had conducted checks. An intense debate followed; Cllr Mrs Young stood up and Cllr Weir requested a record in the minutes that the Chair of Parks told him to shut up! Cllr Leach requested point of order for it to be re-established which it was.

Mr Short thanked Cllr Mrs Young for bringing the issue to Council and he reiterated that over 6 months the flooding had been ugly and a quagmire for the users of the park and though a solution would likely be costly he hoped this could be funded for the community.

Cllr Mrs Weir raised that David Wilson Homes were planning to donate money to drain Clements Hall playing field and suggested looking into a joint scheme but this was not taken further.

Members contributed suggestions to undertake research for a solution such as contacting the environment agency, agricultural drainage specialists, costing resources to find a solution, etc. **Cllr Weir moved that Council seek expert advice as soon as possible getting all the facts on the table including a report of the overall costs. Cllr Mitchell seconded and after a show of hands the motion was carried.**

The Clerk reported the pump was costing £90 per week per pump with one pump hired for two weeks so far and the second pump hire commencing that day.

Members were content for review on a daily basis and to rely on the advice of the Groundsman and the Clerk.

Cllr Mrs Weir felt permission from English nature should have been sought prior to pumping. Cllr Leach clarified that the pump was on the recreation field and not in the designated nature reserve. Members were informed that the Groundsman was erecting a barrier between the willows and the recreation field prior to pumping every day ensuring the pond was dammed.

Cllr Leach advised that the newts were fairly mobile and had been seen recently nearby the Anglian Water Tank behind Hogarth Way and crossing the bridlepath. Members agreed that it would be good practice to contact English Nature and the Environment Agency.

Cllr Mrs Cooke pointed out for the record the cost of the Groundsman's time dealing with this issue which prevented him from carrying out work anywhere else and Cllr Patient wished to record Council's thanks to the Groundsman for his initiative.

#### **107. Summary of Decisions:**

- Agreed to remove 'Clerk to sort HHPG recommendations' from Action Update list.
- Cllr Mrs Haskew to progress the garden share liaison.
- Cllr Mitchell to provide more information regarding risk of playground gate springing back and catching fingers.
- Members accepted the Operational Plan for Parks for 2013/14.
- Clerk to seek expert advice as soon as possible regarding Magnolia drainage solution including a report of the overall costs.
- Clerk to contact English Nature and Environment Agency regarding pumping water from Magnolia recreation field.

The meeting was closed at 09.50pm

Chairman

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