

**Minutes of the meeting of the
PARKS, OPEN SPACES, CONSERVATION & FOOTPATHS COMMITTEE held
on Monday, 18th June 2012
at the Freight House, Bradley Way, Rochford, Essex**

Councillors Present: Chairman Cllr Mrs M Weir, Cllrs Mrs E Chippette, Mrs C Cunningham, Mrs L Haskew, Mrs A Heath, V Leach, R Patient, D Weir and Mrs P Young
Also Present: Dave Abrams – Groundsman and Members of the Hawkwell Parish Plan Group – Mr E Short and Mr J Hickman.

The Chairman of Council informed there had been some confusion experienced over Committee Membership. He advised that Cllr Patient as Vice Chair had agreed to become ex-officio on the Parks Committee which would give a full voting Vacancy and Cllr Mrs Young would like to fill it. **The Chairman sought Members approval for this which was given.**

Cllr Leach then requested nominations for Chairmanship of the Parks Committee and Cllr Mrs Heath nominated Cllr Mrs Young which was seconded by Cllr Mrs Haskew. Cllr Weir requested an explanation of the confusion mentioned and expressed concerns as to whether the correct procedures had been followed in accordance with the code of conduct and standing orders. Cllr Leach clarified the error was in respect of Membership; Members that were not Committee Members were elected to positions of authority. Cllr Leach apologised to Members and reassured that the error had been put right as expeditiously as possible. Cllr Patient also apologised stating that he had not realised that Cllr Mrs Young was not a Member of the Parks Committee.

Members accepted the explanation and apologies.

Cllr Leach asked Members for a show of hands in respect of the proposal for Cllr Mrs Young to take the Chair of Parks and the motion was carried.

Cllr Mrs Young took the Chair and called for election of a Vice Chairman. Cllr Mrs Cunningham nominated Cllr Mrs Heath and this was seconded by Cllr Mrs Haskew.

There were no further nominations and with Cllr Mrs Heath content to stand, the motion was carried.

13. Apologies for non-attendance at meeting:

Cllr Mrs J Barney (unwell) and Cllr Mrs Cooke (holiday), Members accepted the apologies tendered.

14. Declarations of Interest:

None.

15. To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 21st May 2012 and to approve the destruction of the manuscript notes in respect of that meeting:

Members approved the Minutes of the Meeting held on 21st May 2012 as a true record and agreed to the destruction of the manuscript notes in respect of that meeting.

16. Parks – Action List Update:

The Clerk went through the action list.

- **Footpath signs – complete artwork and arrange siting:** The Clerk informed she would chase up a response as discussed at Full Council.

- **Clerk to seek RDC approval re QEII Field:** Should approval be given at the June Executive, Council could apply for funding through the Autumn for sports activities, a plaque would be received and the park would be renamed “Magnolia Park QEII Fields in Trust”.
- **Co-operation between parishes re. dog fouling:** Ongoing as per report.
- **Resurrection of ‘Friends of Magnolia’:** See Minute 18.
- **Agreed purchase of Ford Ranger:** Ongoing as per report.
- **Clerk to arrange replacement finger post on Ashingdon Road end of Footpath 7:** Ongoing as per report.
- **Clerk to sort HPPG recommendations:** Actioned. Working Group to meet.
- **HPC to object to TPO removals:** The Clerk referred to the map within the papers and gave an explanation that out of the 14 trees, only 6 were being protected, therefore, there had been 9 TPO removals for which surveys would have been undertaken. Cllr Mrs Chippette queried whether any of the TPO removals referred to the tree complained about by a resident backing onto Glencroft and this was confirmed. A discussion took place regarding procedure; some Members thought RDC should seek permission prior to removing the TPOs and that some of the trees themselves had been removed. The Clerk advised that Council now had more information available about the TPO’s in place and clarified that RDC did have to notify Council of any TPO removals on its land but they did not need to seek permission. The Chairman recommended a regular review of TPO’s to ascertain whether the TPO and the trees remained in place.
- **Response to Pat James (resident) letter of complaint:** Item to be closed.
- **Respond to RDC about Annual Open Spaces/Play Space Programme:** Email sent.

17. Financial Report:

The Clerk had no concerns and reported there was no major expenditure for Parks during May. There were no questions and Members accepted the Financial Report.

18. Friends of Magnolia & receive notes of meeting of 27th May 2012:

The Chairman, Cllr Mrs Weir and Cllr Leach had met with the Friends of Magnolia on 27th May and Cllr Mrs Young reported the parishioners were very keen. She referred to her notes of the meeting and Members worked through points 1 to 12 with their findings bullet pointed below.

- Biggest problem would be finances.
- Cllr Mrs Weir thanked the Groundsman for cementing in the loose metal rail.
- Suggested Council approach Cory Environmental Trust regarding funding for wheelchair access together with funds in order to replace illustrative signs in Magnolia because they educate users of the park. The Clerk to investigate costs/grants.
- Dog Bins were discussed in detail regarding location, emptying and consideration to request for a bin at the start of the bridle path. It was ascertained there was a bin available to replace the red dog bin at the Lincoln Road entrance and siting it in a more obvious position was discussed and agreed. A suggestion was made to notify parishioners of the cost of dog bin emptying via the Newsletter. It was resolved that the locations of dog bins would be reviewed at a later date.

- The Clerk was asked to organise reposition of Magnolia Park sign at Lincoln Road entrance to a more obvious place. The Clerk advised that this sign was illegible due to graffiti so if and when a new sign was made it would be installed in a more suitable location.
- Suggested that it would be desirable to seek bird/bat box donations from the Bat Society and Cllr Mrs Haskew to include request for donations via the Newsletter.
- Suggested advertising Friends of Magnolia on the Noticeboard.
- Dedicated article to Parks in the Newsletter was discussed.
- Dave Abrams informed he had litter pickers and bags available.
- Dave Abrams advised that the wood chippings would only add to the bog (muddy end of pond footpath), a drain would solve the problem but at a huge cost.
- Members discussed various products/chemicals for use in treating pond weed. Dave Abrams informed a licence was required from Defra to manage the pond because of the Great Crested Newts and health & safety would prevent manual clearance because of Hepatitis. Cllr Leach warned the pond was the last remaining dig from the brickfields and within 2 inches of the surface it was a genuine concern. There was a timeframe of 10 months where it was illegal to work on it, thus leaving only 2 winter months where work would be possible but the weather usually proved to be a problem. Viability of introducing Green Grass Carp to consume the duckweed was discussed at length; there was concern about Carp feeding on the newt eggs which was disputed. It was agreed to seek advice on green grass carp.
- Mr Short informed he wished to devise a device to retrieve bottles/cans from from the pond and sought the Groundsman's opinion. Dave Abrams expressed concern about Health & Safety.
- Danger signs around the pond were talked of and it was advised that they were repeatedly stolen.
- The Clerk sought approval for works to make safe a tree where the main bow had split during strong winds and caused a potential hazard. Members agreed for the Groundsman to chop off the fallen half.
- Cllr Leach raised, as an issue of user safety, that it be delegated to the Clerk to agree assistance for the Groundsman when needed for 2 man jobs. Cllr Mrs Chippette moved the recommendation and this was agreed.
- The Clerk had received a request from the Scout Hut for the Groundsman to dig out stinging nettles which would require a hole cut through the hedgerow. Members discussed products available to kill nettles and the Groundsman advised products for domestic use could not be used in the Park. Members debated the request and it was resolved that the Groundsman be asked to eradicate the nettles on the Scout side if the Scout Leader would allow access.
- Dave Abrams informed there was a water tap in store but not on the outside. Water facilities to be reviewed for future.

19. Wild Flower Garden:

Cllr Mrs Heath spoke in support of the project. She felt not enough seed had been put down last time and to make it a success this time round a lot of money would need to be spent to do it properly. Possible equipment may be needed for the tractor and research and advice sought; a recent programme had suggested that wild flower gardens helped cut down on vandalism.

The Clerk informed a rotavator would cost approximately £2K. The Groundsman had previously borrowed one but that was no longer available; Members discussed that a rotavator may not be needed but if it did, hire could be investigated.

The Chairman had some information regarding important preparations that would need to be done. She talked of Meadow Flower Turf which would act as a blanket to suppress weeds and that wild flower seeds would not be able to establish until the weeds were dealt with. She mentioned there would be the issue of watering and suggested laying the turf in the Autumn/winter period.

Cllr Mrs Weir advised there was a difference between a wild flower bed and a meadow.

Cllr Mrs Haskew suggested calling in help from parishioners interested in horticulture via the newsletter.

Cllr Mrs Chippette recommended the project be kept in mind and reviewed at the next budgeting round and this was agreed. The Chairman asked that some of the committee do some research and work out the best way forward with the project bearing in mind it would be reviewed at the next budgeting round.

20. Request from resident for a Radar Gate in Magnolia Park:

The Chairman opened for discussion the possibilities of installing an appropriate gate on the right hand side of the park. Cllr Leach spoke about the existing radar gate and the route along the bridle path. He advised there would be problems giving access into the Nature Reserve from the north east corner and there was a lengthy debate. Cllr Leach informed that initially the legality would need to be checked as to what formal access there was from Hogarth Way into the park. Cllr Mrs Young explained that the resident could only go one way around the park in the wheelchair; in effect they had to go around twice to exit as only one disabled access was currently provided. Cllr Leach clarified that Council had no legal right to create access on the eastern side of the park.

Cllr Patient suggested a review of all the access to the park under the disability act; he hoped there was sufficient access for wheelchairs and electric scooters and Council should seek guidance.

The Clerk informed the cost for the same gate currently installed would be £300 and Cllr Mrs Haskew suggested looking at grant funding.

Cllr Mrs Heath recommended researching legalities first with budget and grant funding to follow and this was agreed.

21. Request from a resident for a Bench with memorial plaque:

Cllr Leach suggested Spencers may be a practical location being near to the residents address and sought Members views. Cllr Mrs Heath recommended a bench with a back to lean on and Cllr Mrs Weir was content as long as the bench would not be placed too close to the houses. **Members were content to grant the request providing the resident was willing to cover the costs involved.** The Clerk was asked to respond to the resident accordingly.

22. Approve quote for replacement of broken concrete posts and gravel boards in Magnolia Car Park:

Cllr Patient raised that the quote was undated, carried no VAT details and he thought it was very poorly presented and unprofessional. The Clerk informed that Hawkwell Fencing had verbally quoted more than double the estimate on the table but they had declined to take it further after being incapacitated in an accident. The quote attached to the papers had been sought quickly due to short timescale before

the meeting as a result. The Clerk emphasised the state of the fence was dangerous and Dave Abrams advised that one area of the fence had been hit by a car. He informed Members that the Contractor in question had originally installed the fencing for Council in the first place.

Cllr Weir thought in order to satisfy standing orders Council should be provided with 3 quotes and he expressed strong opinions about it. Cllr Mrs Chippette did not feel more quotes were needed but was content to suggest another 2 quotes to make it correct and legal. The Clerk warned this may not happen quickly and reminded of the delicate state of the fence. The Chairman added that Council had a health and safety issue here and action needed to be taken quickly.

Cllr Leach advised difficulties had been experienced many times before in getting people to quote because Council were a small operation; having seen the way the posts were fractured Council could have serious problems and he suggested the Clerk obtain another quote but put a time limit on it.

The Chairman recommended a 2 week time frame and that the Clerk go ahead with the quote attached, should she be unable to get a better quote and this was approved.

23. Summary of decisions:

- Cllr Mrs Young was approved as Member and Chairman of Parks.
- Cllr Mrs Heath was confirmed Vice Chairman.
- One action to be removed from Action Update List.
- Regular review of TPOs.
- Apply to Cory Environmental Trust for funding to replace illustrative signs.
- Replace red dog bin with new one in store and reposition (Lincoln Road entrance to Magnolia).
- Reposition Magnolia Park sign (Lincoln Road) if and when a new sign made.
- Review dog bin locations.
- Seek bird/bat box donations from the Bat Society/request donations via Newsletter.
- Advertise Friends of Magnolia on the Noticeboard.
- Seek advice re. introducing Green Grass Carp to pond to eat duckweed.
- Agreed for Groundsman to lop fallen part of split bow of tree in Magnolia.
- Approval delegated to the Clerk to agree an assistant for the Groundsman to manage 2-man jobs.
- Agreed for Groundsman to remove nettles on the side of the Scout Hut if permission given.
- Provision of water facilities to be reviewed for use by Friends of Magnolia.
- Committee to research flower garden preparation and costs involved - bring back for budgeting round.
- The Clerk to research legalities re. disabled access into Magnolia.
- Approved request to purchase bench (seat with back) providing all costs met by resident, to be sited in Spencers away from houses. Clerk to write to resident.
- Clerk to source additional quote within a 2 week time frame and to go ahead with works to be carried out by company providing best quote.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 9.45pm.

Chairman

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