

**Minutes of the meeting of the
PARKS, OPEN SPACES, CONSERVATION & FOOTPATHS COMMITTEE
held on Monday 11th February 2019 at 7:32pm
in the Committee Room, The Freight House, Bradley Way, Rochford.**

Cllrs present: Chairman Mrs P Young, Mrs E Gadsdon, R Gardner, S May, R Patient, Ms A Rees-Jones, M Strubel, Mrs M Weir.

Also present: Cllr T Manyika (*From 7:38pm*)

Cllr S May, in his capacity as Vice Chairman, chaired the meeting due to Chairman Mrs P Young's late arrival at 7:35pm.

55. Apologies for non-attendance at meeting:

Cllrs Mrs N Shaw and S Wootton had given their apologies.
Members received the apologies tendered.

56. Declarations of any:

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

on any matter on the agenda for 11th February 2019:

No declarations were made relating to a), b) and/or c). Members also made no declarations relating to any change in their Register of Members' Interests.

57. Public Forum:

No members of the public were present.

58. To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 12th November 2018 and to approve the destruction of the notes in respect of that meeting:

The Minutes of the meeting were **approved** as a correct record and Members approved the destruction of the notes in respect of that meeting.

59. Action List Update – February 2019:

- 59.1 Members were reminded there was a budget provision in the Ear Marked Reserves (EMRs) for any necessary work on the wall in Elizabeth Close playground.
- 59.2 Members were reminded of the approach from KeyMed regarding assisting towards the costs of improving the pond. Stillwater had carried out the silt remediation work in December and it was noted this would need to be carried out annually. The Clerk had contacted the Essex Amphibian and Reptile Group (EARG) who had visited the pond and believed the goldfish were no longer an issue. The Clerk was waiting to hear if EARG would be undertaking further work around 'Duck Island' and in the overwintering pond and had requested something to be put in writing if work would be pursued; the Clerk had yet to hear from the EARG regarding this.
- 59.3 Members were referred to Agenda item 8 (Minute 62).
- 59.4 Members noted that they were to alert the office when the boggy area in Spencers Park returned so a site visit could be arranged. Cllr Mrs E Gadsdon described a boggy area near the entrance of Spencers Park. The Clerk would look at the area to ascertain whether it was HPC's responsibility or District Council's.

- 59.5 Members noted that the tree works were continuing with moderate and low priority works underway and/or being scheduled. The Oak tree in Spencers Park had been removed in December 2018 as per the Parks Committee's decision. Members agreed to close the item.
- 59.6 A contact from the EARG had tried to find a company who would assist with a Risk Assessment for the pond but that had been unsuccessful. The Clerk had contacted Southend Borough Council's Parks Department in November but had only received a holding reply. A further chaser email had been sent but to no avail. Members agreed to close the item.
- 59.7 Members were referred to Agenda item 9 (Minute 63).
Members noted and **accepted** the Action Update List and **agreed** to the removal of closed items.

60. Financial Report – January 2019:

Members noted that the Parks budget was only half spent.
There were no questions and Members **accepted** the Financial Report.

61. Parks Update:

Vice Chairman S May read out the contents of the Clerk's report. It was noted that the silt remediation works had been carried out on the pond in Magnolia Nature Reserve. Cllr Mrs E Gadsdon enquired about the water levels and bore hole was reminded that the bore hole had been ruled out as there was no guarantee there would be enough ground water and the costs of such a project were substantial. Cllr Mrs E Gadsdon enquired if the pond was suffering leakage and if anything needed to be done to the basin but it was noted that was not the issue. Members further noted that the Clerk had arranged for a contractor to flail the entire length of the bridle path (BR35) along with the internal footpaths and the area was now a lot more open. The second playground access gate had also been installed and the Clerk provided Members with a recent photograph of the installation. Members further noted the tree works which had been carried out and that work continued in that area.

Members were appalled by the act of arson in Glencroft Open Space and noted that a newly installed bench had been destroyed by fire, some gorse had been set alight and that there had been drug use in the Open Space. The Clerk had contacted the police regarding the arson attack, but nobody had come forward with information. It was agreed an article should be included in the next newsletter, informing residents about the disgraceful behaviour reported and the damage to property. Members discussed alerting the local schools but were mindful that too much publicity could be viewed as a 'badge of honour' and may encourage further criminal activity. Members noted the bench installed had been selected to fit in with the natural environment and had been 'vandal resistant' but that the persistence of those involved had meant the bench's entire seating area had been burned away. Members discussed the presence of young gangs in Glencroft Open Space, with some witnessing their presence and wondered if the Police were aware. The Clerk confirmed that the Police were aware of the problems around Glencroft Open Space but that no action had been taken to date. Members noted that there had been problems historically with gangs and wondered if youth engagement should be explored. Members were reminded of the arson attacks in Magnolia, specifically noting the attenuation pond fire which had taken place in the summer and had been instigated by setting aerosol cannisters alight. Cllr M Strubel suggested a Park Ranger monitor the area but it was noted that RDC employed rangers, but surveillance of that nature was not in their remit. Members further noted that it was important to review the criminal damage expense when considering implementing measures to combat it. Members discussed Council's recent

involvement in the Police Community Special Constables Initiative and hoped that once recruited, the Special Policing team could patrol the areas that were seeing criminal activity.

Members agreed not to replace the bench in Glencroft Open Space as it was a concern the area would encourage further drug and arson issues, but that the matter would be reviewed again at the end of the year. The Clerk confirmed the metal frame which was the only part left, had been removed for the safety of the Open Space users. It was also noted Glencroft Open Space already had a metal seat towards the top entrance (White Hart Lane end) and a further new bench that had not suffered any vandalism.

Members noted there was nothing to report regarding Spencers Park.

62. Land encroachment in Magnolia Nature Reserve:

Members noted the Clerk's report and that the section of land in question was now owned by a private resident following a claim for Adverse Possession in 2008. It was noted RDC had challenged this initially but had not pursued it with a further objection and so the land ownership had been granted to the private resident. Members were shocked to learn the land could be taken in such a manner and that as HPC leased the area, RDC had not consulted with them during the claim. Members noted that a change of lease was required as HPC were no longer responsible for managing that section of land.

Cllr Mrs M Weir suggested fencing a section of land along the 'Church Strip' but was reminded that could not be discussed in the current meeting; the Clerk informed Members this would need to be an agenda item for a future meeting.

63. CIF Grant Application 2018/19: Update

Members noted the Clerk's report and that to date the Clerk had not heard back from Essex County Council (ECC) following the unsuccessful panel meeting. Members were appalled to learn how the meeting had been conducted by ECC and that it was unclear of what amount, if any, of funding would be received.

Members agreed that it was necessary to pursue the footpath in Glencroft Open Space. Chairman Mrs P Young proposed that the project still go ahead and that monies from the underspent Parks budget be used to cover costs. This was seconded by Cllr Mrs E Gadsdon with all Members in agreement. The Clerk informed Members that weather would be a factor for when the project could start but that approximately £14k would be earmarked if the project ran over into the new financial year.

64. Summary of Decisions:

- Clerk to visit Spencers Park to ascertain where boggy area is and if within HPC's boundaries and responsibilities.
- No replacement bench for Glencroft Open Space following destruction; to be reviewed again at end of year. Article about arson and criminal activity to go into next newsletter.
- Footpath project to go ahead regardless of any funding received from ECC; £14k of Parks' budget to be allocated.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8:02pm.

Chairman