

**Minutes of the meeting of the
PARKS, OPEN SPACES, CONSERVATION & FOOTPATHS COMMITTEE
held on Monday 20th May at 7:50pm
in the Committee Room, The Freight House, Bradley Way, Rochford.**

Cllrs present: R Gardner, R Patient, Ms A Rees-Jones, M Strubel & Mrs M Weir.

1. To elect a Chairman for the civic year 2019-20:

Cllr R Patient nominated Cllr S May as Chairman which was seconded by Cllr Ms M Weir. Cllr R Gardner nominated Cllr Ms A Rees-Jones as Chairman which was seconded by Cllr M Strubel. There were no further nominations and following a secret ballot, Cllr S May was elected Chairman by majority.

2. To elect a Vice-Chairman for the civic year 2019-20:

Cllr R Patient nominated Cllr Ms M Weir as Vice Chairman which was seconded by Cllr R Gardner. There were no further nominations and Cllr Ms M Weir was elected Vice Chair.

As the newly elected Chairman was not present for the meeting, Cllr Ms M Weir, in her capacity as Vice Chairman, chaired the meeting.

3. Apologies for non-attendance at meeting:

Apologies were received from Cllr S May.

4. Declarations of any:

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

on any matter on the agenda for 20th May 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.

5. Public Forum:

No members of the public were present.

6. To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 11th February 2019 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.

7. Action List Update – May 2019:

- 7.1 The wall post in Elizabeth Close Playground would be continued to be monitored and Members were reminded there was a budget provision in the Ear Marked Reserves (EMRs). The Clerk informed Members that the resident who had kindly opened and closed the gate at Elizabeth Close for many years had sadly passed away; she had sent a card of condolence to the family on

behalf of Council. Cllr Ms M Weir enquired if another gate opener was now required. The Clerk was sure no changes would be required and that given the upsetting time for the family it was not appropriate to make those enquires with them.

7.2 The Clerk was waiting to hear if Mr R Cranfield would be carrying out work on the pond around 'Duck Island' and in the over-wintering pond. The Clerk had advised he put something in writing but had yet to receive anything. The Clerk had also received reports that the goldfish were once again visible in the pond and could be a potential issue that would need resolving.

7.3 Members were referred to Agenda item 9 (Minute 9) and informed that the Clerk was waiting for Rochford District Council (RDC) to amend the lease to reflect that a piece of land was no longer within the Magnolia Nature Reserve. The Clerk asked Members if they were happy to proceed with an amendment to the lease. Members spent some time discussing their views on the legality of the land grab with some Members suggesting that HPC were the legal owners at the time. The Clerk reminded Members that HPC leased Magnolia from RDC. Members also discussed the payments around the lease agreement and the Clerk confirmed that she was not aware of any payments being made to RDC for leasing the land. Members agreed that RDC had not managed the situation well and raised concerns about setting a precedent for others to potentially 'land grab'.

It was **agreed** that the Clerk confirm with RDC that an amendment to the lease which would omit the piece of land now owned by a private resident be approved.

7.4 The boggy area in Spencers Park, which was outside the perimeter of the Park, was being dealt with by RDC. Cllr Ms M Weir had visited the area that morning and noted it was not boggy. Cllr Ms A Rees-Jones agreed she would continue to monitor the situation and report back if required.

7.5 Members noted tree works were continuing following the Tree Survey; works in Magnolia for 'moderate and low priority' works were nearly complete with work in Spencers completed and low priority works in Glencroft to be completed.

7.6 Members noted the Glencroft Footpath upgrade works would commence on the 28th May 2019. Cllr Ms M Weir reminded Members that unfortunately the Community Initiative Fund (CIF) had not been successful in this regard.

Members noted and **accepted** the Action Update List and **agreed** to the removal of the closed items.

8. Financial Report - April 2019:

There were no questions and Members **accepted** the Financial Report.

9. Correspondence from resident/Ashingdon Parish Councillor:

a) Letter 18/03/19; the transfer of land in Magnolia Park:

The letter was noted, and Members agreed with the resident that the transfer of land had been both disappointing and not well handled by RDC. It was noted that any issues the resident felt he had in this regard should be made known to RDC, the appropriate party to deal with the matter.

b) Email 03/04/19: offer to assist Council as a volunteer helping with the Public Rights of Way (PRoW) and Magnolia Nature Reserve:

Members discussed past groups such as the 'Friends of Magnolia' and noted that this resident had been part of that group but had never attended any visit or activity/works carried out by them. Members also briefly discussed the difficulties and unsuccessful management of the group which led to its collapse. The Clerk informed Members that two residents still took it upon themselves to care for and maintain the Rose Garden within Magnolia. Members agreed to thank the resident and request the Clerk inform him he would be kept under consideration in case any future groups were formed.

10. Email correspondence:

a) 01/05/19: Request for approval to manage a community project relating to encouraging owners to pick up after their dogs in Magnolia Park:

Members noted the request and discussed the initiative with the overall view it was a positive community project. It was agreed anything that promoted removing/collecting dog waste from the parks should be encouraged. Some Members raised concerns about the fact the project was being run with children in the forefront with the potential of aggressive responses from the public which had been witnessed in the past. It was noted that it was extremely unlikely the children would be running the project unaccompanied. It was **agreed** to give permission for a trial period for the community project outlined; information about the project would need to be fed back to Members for consideration and approval.

Cllr M Strubel enquired if dog fouling signs could be put up in the Park; the Clerk would contact RDC to see if any were available.

Members further noted District Cllr J Gooding's email and were displeased with the tone. It was noted that all correspondence from a District Cllr should be sent to the Clerk and not include a few Parish Cllrs. It was also noted the Clerk had encouraged District Cllr J Gooding to either copy in all Parish Cllrs or none, opposed to a select few, but that she had chosen to disregard the request.

b) 04/05/19: Report about clearing Spencers Brook and request for new wildlife boards in Spencers Park:

Members were thankful that the resident had cleared the brook and were disappointed it had been treated as a dumping ground. Cllr R Gardner raised concerns about the resident entering the brook, noting that there were Health & Safety (H&S) issues and that Council should not condone entering it. Members were unclear who had responsibility for the brook with Cllr Mrs M Weir sure it was HPC's responsibility; Cllr Mrs M Weir would look through historic papers so this could be confirmed with Members and the Clerk.

Members briefly discussed the signs and the Clerk informed Members there had been a Working Group many years ago that had looked at the wildlife closely and had commissioned an artist. The Clerk pointed out that Members would need to carry out the same works for the current day wildlife and work together to produce an appropriate board which would take some time. It was noted that there was no budget for 2019-20 for renewing the boards.

Members requested the Clerk write to the resident to thank him for his work, raise the H&S concerns and inform him that Members would work towards renewing the wildlife boards.

c) 05/05/19: Dog mess in Magnolia Park:

Members noted the information.

11. Summary of Decisions:

- Cllr S May elected as Chairman for 2019-20.
- Cllr Mrs M Weir elected as Vice Chairman for 2019-20.
- Thanks be sent to resident for offering assistance with Magnolia Nature Reserve; assistance not required at the current time.
- Approval given for a trial run for the community project relating to encouraging people to pick up their dog faeces. Clerk to contact RDC to see if any dog fouling signs were available for the parks.
- Thanks be sent to the resident for clearing the Spencers Brook; Cllr Ms M Weir to find information relating to ownership/responsibility of the brook. Resident to also be informed Members will look at replacing wildlife boards.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8:28pm.

Chairman