Minutes of the Meeting of the
PARKS, OPEN SPACES, CONSERVATION & FOOTPATHS COMMITTEE
held on Monday 11th November 2019 at 8:36pm
in the Committee Room, The Freight House, Bradley Way, Rochford.

Cllrs present: Chairman S May, R Gardner, Ms A Rees-Jones, T Manyika, Mrs N Shaw, M Strubel & Mrs M Weir.

34. Apologies for non-attendance at meeting:
Apologies were received from Cllr R Patient.
Members received the apologies tendered.

35. Declarations of any:
a) Disclosable Pecuniary Interest;
b) Other Pecuniary Interest; or
c) Non-Pecuniary Interest
on any matter on the agenda for 11th November 2019:
No disclosures were made.

36. Public Forum:
No members of the public were present.

37. To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 16th September 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.

38. Action List Update – November 2019:
38.1 It was noted there had been no change in condition of the Elizabeth Close Playground wall and there was a budget provision in the Ear Marked Reserves (EMR) if any work was required.
38.2 There had been no updates regarding the outstanding issues with the pond and approaches from KeyMed. Cllr R Gardner believed KeyMed's grant policies had changed and enquired if it would be worth contacting them. The Clerk advised that the item had changed since the initial approach from KeyMed and it was unclear what the next steps for the pond were. The Clerk had contacted Stillwater Management but had received no response.
38.3 Members noted some low priority tree works had been completed in Spencers Park and Glencroft Open Space.
38.4 The Clerk had referred the enquiry regarding Glencroft Open Space's top gate access to the RDC Legal Team and was awaiting a response. The Clerk felt that the matter would only be a possible issue if the existing resident was to move.
38.5 Members were referred to Agenda item 7 (Minute 40).

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

39. Financial Report – October 2019:

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

40. Magnolia Park Update:

a) Quotes (2) for replacement piece of play equipment:

Members discussed the two options which had been provided by Yates Playgrounds and Wicksteed. The Clerk explained that she had only found two suppliers for the 'Rocking Horse'. Members discussed the two pieces and unanimously agreed that the Wicksteed product was most suitable and accepted the quotation of £8,334.35 which also included repairs to the damaged safety surfacing. The Clerk would contact the insurance company to claim for arson damage. It was noted the existing piece which had been destroyed had been priced around £1,800.

Members discussed the matter of vandalism and agreed it would be prudent to explore the idea of adding a sign that stated Council's strong stance against vandalism. Cllr M Strubel suggested contacting the Police regarding sourcing funds via the 'Proceeds of Crime' route; Cllr R Gardner noted that route would probably require a specific set of criteria.

b) Quotes for repairs required to safety surfacing under the swings in Magnolia playground:

Members noted a further quote was required. The Clerk raised concerns about the new Wicksteed representative having experienced several problems with the quote provided.

41. Agree Parks Budget 2020/21 for recommendation to the Finance Committee:

Members noted the Grounds Maintenance budget for Magnolia had been reduced due to less work planned on the pond, the removal of the bore hole option and need for additional/replacement fencing. It was further noted the Criminal Damage budget had been increased for the playgrounds given the spate of arson. The jungle mulch in Elizabeth Playground was cracking and would require repair and the budget had been increased accordingly. (From £800 for 2019-20 to £2k for 2020-21). The Clerk had not received any notification of an increase in the bin emptying service so had reduced the budget by £2k as the current year's budget included an expected increase. A £400 contingency for the Parish truck had been included in the Vehicle Running Costs budget and Members noted the truck had to be repaired in the year; further noting the vehicle was getting older. It was difficult to ascertain costs for the project to the renew the Wildlife Species Boards but Members agreed an increase in the Capital Projects budget of £1k from £2k in 2019-20 to £3k for 2020-21. Cllr G Gardner suggested contacting the Essex Wildlife Trust when the project started. Cllr M Strubel mentioned a wildlife board at Hogarth Way but the Clerk pointed out that was not HPC's board and was not in Magnolia Park. Cllr Mrs M Weir noted the pathway by the pond had become very boggy was almost impassable; the Clerk would look at the area in due course. Cllr M Strubel enquired if Southend Borough Council (SBC) had assisted with the Magnolia Pond; the Clerk explained she had contacted them on multiple occasions, but SBC had not offered any assistance.

Members **approved** a Parks Committee budget of £55,425 for 2020-21 for recommendation to the Finance Committee.

42. Formulate the Parks Committees' response to Full Council in regard to the Strategic Plan objectives:

Chairman S May would prepare a report in time for January's Full Council meeting.

43. Suggestion to resurrect 'Friends of Magnolia' by Cllr Mrs M Weir:

Cllr Mrs M Weir explained the idea was to reform a group so small jobs could be completed by volunteers, but also to cover jobs in all the parks and open spaces, not just Magnolia. It was noted the group which existed before had faced working difficulties and due to all the Health & Safety requirements. Cllr Mrs M Weir gave examples of possible jobs that could be carried out such as painting the compound container and clearing a ditch. The Clerk advised Members if the idea was to be pursued then it would be extremely important a Leader for the group came forward, noting that historically a lack of leadership and organisation led to the group's demise. It was further noted the insurance company would have to be notified if working with volunteers.

Members agreed to refer the item to the Community Engagement Working Group (CEWG) for further research and discussion.

44. Water Stations in Parish Parks; suggestion made to District Cllr Mrs J Gooding by resident(s):

Members enquired if District Council's parks had any water stations. Members raised concerns about the installation of such a feature, noting practicability issues and the possible high costs involved. Members were unclear of the reasons for such a feature. The Clerk informed Members that no requests had been received directly from residents; it was agreed that until any such requests were received Members would not pursue the matter.

45. Email request from Rochford District Council (RDC) Open Spaces Officer for support in relation to upgrading the Hawkwell Common Playground:

Cllr Ms A Rees-Jones enquired if any feedback had been received from residents about the playground. The Clerk advised that there had been the occasional call from residents about the playground and complaints about its poor state. It was noted RDC had publicised their intention to upgrade their playgrounds and had allocated a sizeable budget for these upgrades.

Members agreed to offer support to the RDC Open Spaces Officer to obtain additional grant funding; the Clerk would write a supporting letter accordingly.

46. Summary of Decisions:

- Wicksteed 'Rocking Horse' play equipment piece agreed for Magnolia Playground; Clerk to contact insurance company to pursue insurance claim.
- Clerk to source additional quotes for the swing safety surfacing in Magnolia playground.
- Members to explore idea of adding anti-vandalism signs to playgrounds/parks.
- Clerk to visit Magnolia Pond to assess boggy area.
- Parks budget agreed for recommendation to the Finance Committee.
- Chairman S May to prepare summary report for Strategic Plan in time for January's Full Council meeting.
- Idea of resurrecting 'Friends of Magnolia' Group to be referred to the CEWG with scope to extend group to other parks/open spaces.
- Installation of water station in parks to be revisited if any residents contact Council.
- Support to be given to RDC regarding sourcing additional funding for the Hawkwell Common Playground; Clerk to write a letter of support.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 9:21pm.

Chairman