

**Minutes of the meeting of the
PARKS, OPEN SPACES, CONSERVATION & FOOTPATHS COMMITTEE
held on Thursday 14th January 2021 at 1:30pm
using the online Zoom meeting platform**

Cllrs present: Chairman S May, R Gardner, R Patient, Mrs N Shaw, M Strubel & Mrs M Weir.

15. Apologies for non-attendance at meeting:

Apologies were received from Cllr T Manyika.

16. Declarations of any:

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

on any matter on the agenda for 14th January 2021:

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.

17. Public Forum:

No members of the public were present.

18. To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 15th October 2020 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.

19. Action List Update – October 2020:

- 19.1 There was a budget provision in the Earmarked Reserves (EMR) for the wall in Elizabeth Close. It was noted the recent heavy rain may cause problems for the wall.
- 19.2 Stillwater Management had completed the silt remediation works on Magnolia pond. Members agreed to remove the item.
- 19.3 Rochford District Council (RDC) had carried out the Tree Surveys; only a few low priority items remained, primarily in Glencroft Open Space.
- 19.4 RDC may apply for a Right of Easement over the land at the White Hart Lane entrance of Glencroft Open Space but it was not seen to be a priority unless issues would arise with the landowner. The item would be kept under review.
- 19.5 The boggy area by the pond in Magnolia Nature Reserve had been assessed by a contractor and a quote had been received for works to improve the drainage system at the top end of the pond. This included adding a manhole cover. The quote also included repair works for the path near the pond and the path from the basketball court to the bridlepath. Work was due to commence.
- 19.6 An article asking for people to register their interests to potentially join 'Friends of Hawkwell Parks' had been put in the last edition of the Newsletter. Two expressions of interest for litter picking had been received. The matter would be put on hold until the end of lockdown before the Community Engagement Working Group (CEWG) could consider this further.

19.7 Members were referred to Agenda item 8 (Minute 22).

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

20. Financial Report – December 2020:

The Clerk reported that at month nine expenditure was underspent at 56.3%. There were some outstanding amounts to pay, which included the bin emptying and other works carried out by RDC. The Clerk forecast the budget would be underspent at the end of the financial year.

Cllr R Gardner enquired how the bin emptying service had been, given that more people were now using the parks and open spaces due to the lockdowns. The Clerk felt the service had been extremely good, noting the individual who looked after Magnolia in particular, was very vigilant and even would litter-pick, if needed. No complaints had been received from the public about the bins.

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

21. Agree Parks budget 2021-22 (Bid 1) for recommendation to the Finance Committee:

Chairman S May asked the Clerk to go through the report. The Clerk highlighted that the proposed budget showed increases across several cost centres and that the current year had been busy in the parks and open spaces despite the pandemic restrictions. The Criminal Damage cost centres for the parks and open spaces had increased to try and cater for Anti-Social Behaviour incidents, noting that often incidents occurred in fits and starts. The Play Areas budget had increased to allow for safety surfacing repairs at Elizabeth Close Playground, along with possible drainage works which may need to be carried out to rectify problems with the roundabout.

Cllr Mrs M Weir asked if the Adult Gym had been sectioned off again due to the current pandemic restrictions; the Clerk confirmed it had, but the playgrounds remained open, as per the guidelines issued by the Government. Cllr R Gardner asked if Council were promoting social distancing in the playgrounds and the Clerk confirmed that swings had been removed to try and encourage social distancing in the spaces. It was noted this would remain the case until the guidelines changed. The Clerk reported that some Councils had begun to close their car parks but at the current time she felt Magnolia car park should not be closed.

There were no further questions and Members **agreed** the Parks budget of £54,675 for 2021-22 be passed to the Finance Committee for recommendation.

22. Report on Parks Equipment: Quotes for consideration following Committee's decision to dispose of redundant items and purchase new equipment:

Members noted the Clerk's report which included quotes from three suppliers. There was a brief discussion about the merits of replacing the equipment.

Cllr Mrs M Weir moved that the quote from George Browns for the new finishing mower, chipper and flail head be accepted and that the Clerk should make the necessary purchases along with the trade-in of the existing pieces of respective machinery, for a total cost of £11,425.00 This was seconded by Cllr Mrs N Shaw with all Members in agreement.

Gratitude was given to the Contractor who had worked hard to liaise with the suppliers and who had given his professional opinion on the machinery.

23. Receive Annual Playground/ Adult Gym Inspection reports:

Members noted the information and that the reports had not revealed any major works. The Clerk informed Members there were a few jobs in hand.

24. Correspondence from resident:

Members noted the information and agreed that in line with Council's policies the matter could not be discussed again following the decision made at their last meeting in October 2020.

It was agreed this would be relayed to the resident. The resident would be informed that should they wish to revisit the matter they would be entitled to contact Council again from April 2021.

Chairman S May asked Members if they had any other matters to discuss. Cllr M Strubel asked if Council had agreed to the Talking Bench and was reminded that Council had declined that at their last Parks meeting. It was noted District Council would be promoting such a bench in Cherry Orchard.

25. Summary of Decisions:

- Parks Budget of £54,675 for 2021-22 agreed; to be passed to Finance Committee for recommendation.
- Purchase of finishing mower, chipper and flail head agreed, along with trade-in of existing respective machinery; Clerk to contact George Brown's and instigate trade.
- Clerk to contact resident to notify them of Council's policy following decision and to be made aware the matter could be revisited from April 2021, if required.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 1:50pm.

Chairman