

**Minutes of the meeting of the
PARKS, OPEN SPACES, CONSERVATION & FOOTPATHS COMMITTEE
held on Monday 21st June 2021 at 8:32pm
in the Rochford Day Centre, 33a Back Lane, Rochford**

Cllrs present: Chairman S May, Mrs L Dalby, Mrs E Gadsdon, R Gardner, R Patient, M Strubel & Mrs M Weir.

Also present: Mr J Satwell (Bar n Bus CEO)

P 21/18 Apologies for non-attendance at meeting:

Apologies were received from Cllr T Manyika.
Members received the apologies tendered.

P 21/19 Declarations of any:

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

on any matter on the agenda for 21st June 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.

P 21/20 Public Forum:

No members of the public were present.

P 21/21 To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 24th May 2021 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.

P 21/22 Action List Update – June 2021:

- 21/22.1** The Clerk had carried out a site visit following contact from a resident adjacent to the playground who had thought a wall was leaning following their foliage clearance works. Rochford District Council (RDC) Building Control had also assessed the wall and it had been deemed that no action was required at the present time.
- 21/22.2** The Clerk was in the process of obtaining quotes for a new tree survey.
- 21/22.3** The matter relating to the legalities surrounding the entrance of Glencroft Open Space had been left with the RDC legal team.
- 21/22.4** The resurrection of 'Friends of Magnolia' had been put on hold until the end of the Coronavirus restrictions. When ready, the CEWG would consider it further.
- 21/22.5** Members and the Clerk had carried out a site visit with the resident who had been given permission to install a memorial bench in Magnolia. The Clerk would place the order for the bench and liaise with the resident regarding a suitable memorial plaque. Members noted the exemplary work of the regular contractor during their visit to Magnolia Park and Nature Reserve and requested it be put on record, with thanks to be passed to them via the Clerk. It was agreed recognition for the high standard of work should also be mentioned in the next newsletter.
- 21/22.6** The Clerk had obtained some information on a tracker for the chipper, but the device was not suitable given it would have to be deactivated every time the chipper would need to be moved. The Clerk would obtain more information about alternative devices.

- 21/22.7 The Clerk had obtained one quote for the replacement height barrier and expected the insurance company may require an additional quote(s) which would be hard to source.
- 21/22.8 The vandalised signs in Magnolia would be replaced shortly.
- 21/22.9 The concrete and metal which had surfaced in Magnolia field had been removed by the contractor that day. It was agreed to close the item.
- 21/22.10 Members enquired if District Council's plans to plant additional trees would include HPC's own parks and it was re-confirmed that RDC were currently only looking at Clements Hall and Hawkwell Common. Members mentioned planting trees along verges, but it was noted that would be problematic given the underground gas and electric presence. Members were then referred to Agenda item 9a (Minute P 21/26 a).
- 21/22.11 The new dog waste/litter emptying contract had commenced on the 15th June. The bins had been emptied as per schedule with no further feedback received.
It was **resolved** that Members noted and accepted the Action Update List and agreed to the removal of the closed items.

P 21/23 Financial Report – May 2021:

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

P 21/24 Presentation by Jamie Satwell CEO of Bar 'n' Bus (BnB) regarding community events in Magnolia Park:

Mr Satwell provided Members with information on the BnB which had started 26 years ago in Southend. He explained the drive of the group was to build up a wider programme in the Castle Point and Rochford area, focusing on working with youths and offering advice and support where needed by using a 'street pace' approach, having a local youth worker out in the area predominately on foot. It was noted the BnB currently visited Ashingdon and Magnolia Park every Wednesday. It was explained that the BnB faced challenges when it came to organising activities as the aim of the group was not necessarily to create large, marketed events as the group worked towards youth engagement within their own setting. It was noted the Youth Workers would often carry equipment which could be carried on foot and set up spontaneously, such as pop-up football, kite activity kits.

Mr Satwell informed Members that there were currently no planned dates or times for activities specific to Magnolia Park but that if opportunities arose it would be beneficial to feedback to Members to see if larger scale activities could be held within the park. A Member enquired if the group had insurances in place should any form of activity be held in Council's parks, and it was noted that the BnB had all the appropriate insurances and would carry out any relevant risk assessments. A Member enquired if Mr Satwell had heard of Essex Hackspace as they provided a useful service which may attract local youths. The Clerk pointed out Anti-Social Behaviour continued to be a problem at Clements Hall and enquired whether the BnB had considered that venue. A Member noted that there was often smashed glass over at Clements Hall and enquired whether the work of BnB would extend to educating children/youths about the dangers and implications of such behaviour. Mr Satwell explained that the geographic spread was often a challenge given there were very few youth workers. It was noted the group were due to set up a Mentoring programme in Greensward Academy but unfortunately that initiative had fallen through.

The Clerk advised the BnB that Council would need at least a couple of weeks' notice to allow for things such as arranging gate and height barrier access etc should Members give the BnB permission to use Magnolia Park to hold events/activities.

It was **resolved** that Members agree in principle to allow BnB to hold certain events/activities in Magnolia given certain conditions were met and approved the Clerk, Chairman and Vice Chair.

Mr Satwell thanked Members for their time and left the meeting at 9:02pm.

P 21/25 Consideration for new litter and dog bins in Spencers Park:

Members noted the pictures and report provided by the Clerk which showed the poor condition of the bins in Spencers Park.

It was **resolved** that all Members approve the purchase of new bins for Spencers Park.

A Member suggested adding an article in the newsletter about advising residents to 'bin it'

P 21/26 Items put forward by Cllr Mrs L Dalby:

a) Tree planting – information from The Woodlands Trust

Members noted the information provided by Cllr Mrs L Dalby. Cllr Mrs L Dalby suggested a site visit with the regular Contractor be arranged to obtain advice about where best to plant new trees and which species would be suitable for which areas. After that visit, it was then hoped a plan of how many trees to be planted could be agreed with an aim to plant the trees by November. It was also suggested should the initiative be pushed back to March 2022 then a way of tying in the Queen's Jubilee event could be discussed, such as adding plaques to trees. A Member suggested employing a specialist drone operator so aerial shots of Magnolia Nature Reserve could be obtained, and the barren spots could be identified. Members agreed that would be something worth exploring and requested further information be obtained. The Clerk pointed out the importance of the management plan when it came to the Nature Reserve and those bare spots were often required for the birds and nature; she further stressed the importance of understanding the current landscape and acknowledgement of how many trees were currently in the Nature Reserve and that it would be advisable to visit all Council's open spaces.

A Member pointed out that the tree by the bogie was potentially diseased and may need removing but the Clerk had arranged for an Arboriculturist to assess the tree and they had deemed it to be ok. A Member suggested having an area set aside for a lavender garden for the Queen's Jubilee and to include plants to attract wildlife.

b) 'Friends of Hawkwell Parks (FoHP)' – information on the Essex County Council (ECC) Micro Grants for litter picking kits for volunteers:

Members noted the information. A Member enquired if Cllr Mrs L Dalby was proposing to set up an additional litter picking group as there were now several in the district. It was noted the FoHP was intended to be a group that carried out multiple tasks, of which litter picking would be just one. A Member suggested that the remit of the group be clarified, including publishing information on the level of commitment expected, to ensure people who may want to join the group were aware of what would be involved. Cllr Mrs L Dalby suggested using the litter picking aspect as a way of attracting volunteers given the popularity of the task and to entice them to perform other tasks when required.

A Member pointed out that some iron work had been discarded in a pond and was concerned the ferrous oxide would kill the pond life. The Member also noted that following a site visit, they had seen other issues within the Reserve which needed addressing. It was agreed a Working Group should investigate the issues raised. The Clerk suggested it may be beneficial to use a contractor which had the right equipment to remove the iron works from the pond.

It was **resolved** that a Working Group be established consisting of Cllrs Mrs L Dalby, R Gardner, S May and Mrs M Weir. The Working Group would arrange a suitable time for a site visit to assess the issues in the Nature Reserve and report back to the Clerk and Council with suggestions and ways forward for resolving any issues identified. The Clerk requested photographs be taken during their visit to make the areas and issues easier to identify.

c) Council verge ideas:

It was noted that HPC were not responsible for any Council verges. Cllr Mrs L Dalby was concerned about the level of complaints on social media about RDC's areas which had not been attended to; Cllr Mrs L Dalby thought it was important to educate people that it was important to leave areas unattended to attract wildlife, despite them appearing to look untidy

and unsightly, and that it was good for nature. She felt there was a lack of education relating to biodiversity and leaving areas to grow. Cllr Mrs L Dalby requested educational material be placed in Council's noticeboards and/or newsletter, or if there could be some form of social media campaign.

A Member pointed out that RDC were responsible for the areas in question and the Clerk also explained that the complaints and reasons for leaving the areas unattended may have been related to operational issues; HPC had not received any such complaints about its parks and open spaces. It was noted HPC left wildlife areas in its parks and open spaces and had done for many years. It was agreed that if an article would be included in the newsletter it should be positive and relate to what HPC were doing in its own parks and open spaces.

P 21/27 Summary of Decisions:

- Clerk to pass on thanks to regular contractor for exemplary work in maintaining parks and open spaces; newsletter to also mention high quality of works.
- Permission granted to BnB with the proviso that certain conditions are met and approved by the Clerk, Chairman and Vice Chair when considering using Magnolia Park for activities/events.
- New bins to be purchased for Spencers Park.
- Further information regarding drone footage of Magnolia Park to be obtained.
- Working Group consisting of Cllrs Mrs L Dalby, R Gardner, S May and Mrs M Weir established; group to organise a site visit to Magnolia Nature Reserve to identify areas of concern, including iron works currently dumped in pond.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 9:25pm.

Chairman