

**Minutes of the meeting of the
PARKS, OPEN SPACES, CONSERVATION & FOOTPATHS COMMITTEE
held on Monday 20th September 2021 at 7:24pm
in the Rochford Day Centre, 33a Back Lane, Rochford**

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

P 21/28 Apologies for non-attendance at meeting:

Apologies were received from Cllr T Manyika.

Cllr Mrs E Gadsdon had given unofficial apologies; it was noted such a method was against the correct procedure.

P 21/29 Declarations of any:

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

on any matter on the agenda for 20st September 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 21/30 Public Forum:

No members of the public were present.

P 21/31 To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 21st June 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 21/32 Action List Update – September 2021:

21/32.1 The condition of the wall in Elizabeth Close playground had not changed.

21/32.2 The Clerk was in the process of obtaining quotes for a new tree survey which would be carried out over the winter. A Member raised concerns about several trees which had been cut back within the Church Strip. The Clerk explained the contractor had carried out works relating to the health of the trees and the fact they were encroaching on the power cables. It was believed the works carried out would ensure regrowth of the trees but a Member believed the trees would take 15-20 years to regrow. A Member expressed their disapproval for not knowing about the trees being cut back and Members briefly discussed the health and safety implications of the tree works. The Clerk reassured Members any future works would be explained in detail accordingly and, where necessary, decisions on works would be sought from Members. Members discussed the registration of the 'Church Strip' and felt the land should be earmarked for burial ground for the Church. A Member felt it would be prudent for Council to register the land accordingly. The Clerk enquired if it would be more practical for the Church to register it given it ultimately would be used for their purposes; Cllr Mrs M Weir felt it was the responsibility of the Parish Council to take over the land on the church's behalf and it was requested the Clerk look into the process of registering the land.

21/32.3 There were no updates regarding the legalities surrounding the entrance of Glencroft Open Space. It was agreed the item be removed but re-added should any issue arise.

21/32.4 Members were referred to Agenda item 9 (Minute 21/26)

21/32.5 The memorial bench for Magnolia Park had recently been delivered and the Clerk was in the process of arranging installation. A Member expressed discontent that the bench had not

been installed already; the Clerk pointed out that the delivery was scheduled for late October but had arrived earlier than anticipated so things were actually running ahead of schedule.

- 21/32.6** The Clerk had obtained some information on a tracker for the chipper, but the device was not suitable. The Clerk had been unable to find suitable alternative devices. Members suggested marking the chipper using 'smart water'; the Clerk would investigate accordingly.
- 21/32.7** The replacement height barrier would be installed in October. It was noted the insurance company had settled the claim. Members agreed to close the item.
- 21/32.8** The vandalised signs in Magnolia had been replaced. It was agreed to close the item.
- 21/32.9** Cllrs R Gardner and Mrs L Dalby had carried out a site visit to all parks. Some Members expressed their discontent that they had not been involved in the visits but were reminded the visit had been agreed by Members and was for the benefit of the new Cllr to see the parks and open spaces managed by Council.
- 21/32.10** It had been agreed to allow Bar n Bus to use Magnolia Park field for activities under the proviso certain conditions would be met and approved by the Clerk, Chairman and Vice Chairman with suitable notice.
- 21/32.11** New bins for Spencers Park had been delivered and would start to be installed in October.
- 21/32.12** A Magnolia Park Nature Reserve Working Group (MPNRWG) had been established which included Cllrs Mrs L Dalby, S May, Mrs M Weir and R Gardner. Cllr Mrs L Dalby volunteered to take the lead and organise the first meeting. Members briefly discussed the planting of the types of new trees and the Clerk reminded Members that site visits would be needed before deciding on the type of trees and when to plant them.
- It was **resolved** that Members noted and accepted the Action Update List and agreed to the removal of the closed items.

P 21/33 Financial Report – August 2021:

The Clerk noted that the Parks budget was underspent but that there would be more expenditure due over the Autumn.

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

P 21/34 Request from Hawkwell Baptist Church to hold their Christingle Event in Magnolia Park on 19th 2021:

Members **agreed** in principle to allow the Hawkwell Baptist Church to hold their Christingle Event in Magnolia on the proviso a risk assessment would be received a few weeks before the event. Additionally, more information was required about the fire pit and the parking arrangements, noting that 300-400 people visiting the event would potentially bring considerable traffic and a need for suitable parking.

P 21/35 Fishing on Magnolia Nature Reserve Pond – issue raised by Cllr Mrs L Dalby:

Cllr Mrs L Dalby explained that she had witnessed an individual fishing on the pond within the Nature Reserve. Cllr Mrs L Dalby had approached the person and asked that they stop but had experienced a hostile response with the individual refusing to leave and claiming they were allowed to fish as there were no signs telling them it was not permitted. Cllr Mrs L Dalby had made a further attempt to educate the individual about the protected species of newts in the pond but the individual continued to be agitated and refused to leave. It was noted the signs which had historically been there had been vandalised and no longer existed. A Member raised concerns about Cllr Mrs L Dalby's safety, noting it could be dangerous approaching people when it came to contentious issues.

A Member felt it was important to remove the fish from the pond and reinstate a sign. The Clerk would investigate options to remove the fish.

P 21/36 Friends of Hawkwell Parks (FoHP) – next steps:

Members showed disappointment at the lack of willing members. A Member suggested holding a special day aimed at encouraging people to join. Cllr Mrs M Weir would source the historic risk assessments before any such activity/day could be organised.

P 21/37 Verbal report in recent park matters

a) Ragwort in Glencroft

The Clerk informed Members a resident had complained about the amount of Ragwort in Glencroft given the concerns about its effect on animals, particularly horses. It was noted that Glencroft was approximately 90m away from a grazing field and therefore the contractor had carried out works to remove much of the Ragwort from Glencroft. It was noted it would not be possible to eradicate the weed and that it was not a notifiable weed. However, Council would keep on top of the situation accordingly. It was further noted the contractor had also carried out similar works in Spencers.

Members agreed that the de-weeding of the Ragwort would potentially be a suitable job for the FoHP.

b) Badger hole in bridlepath in Magnolia Nature Reserve

The Clerk pointed out that there had been a similar situation years ago with the badgers eroding the bridleway. It was noted the contractor had carried out temporary emergency works and the matter had been reported to Essex County Council Public Rights of Way (ECC ProW). There had been no response from ECC ProW to date. A Member recorded thanks to the office for attending to the matter efficiently.

P 21/38 Parks budget 2022/23: Consider items for possible inclusion in the 2022/23 parks budgeting process commencing November 2021

A member suggested a review of Council's seats with the view to renew those in need of replacement.

A Member suggested renewing Council's park signage where required. A Member suggested installing bird boxes in the parks.

P 21/39 Summary of Decisions:

- Clerk to investigate 'smart water' for marking the new chipper.
- Cllr Mrs L Dalby to organise first meeting for the MPNRWG Group.
- Hawkwell Baptist Church permitted to use Magnolia field in principle; risk assessments to be sent to Council and matters relating to parking and fire pit to be addressed.
- Clerk to investigate options for removal of fish from Magnolia pond.
- Cllr Mrs M Weir to retrieve historic risk assessments relating to having volunteers join FoHP.
- Ideas for 2022-23 budget discussed; new seats (*to refer to General Purposes Committee as not a Parks Committee budget item*); new signage in the parks as required, installation of bird boxes.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8:16pm.

Chairman