

**Minutes of the meeting of the  
PARKS, OPEN SPACES, CONSERVATION & FOOTPATHS COMMITTEE  
held on Monday 16<sup>th</sup> May 2022 at 7:30pm  
in the Rochford Day Centre, 33a Back Lane, Rochford**

**Cllrs present:** R Gardner, S May, M Strubel, M Vallance & Mrs M Weir.

**Also present:** Ray Cranfield (Essex Amphibian & Reptile Group) and three members of the public.

**P 22/1 To elect a Chairman for the civic year 2022-23:**

Cllr Mrs M Weir nominated Cllr S May which was seconded by Cllr M Vallance. Cllr R Gardner nominated Cllr Mrs L Dalby which was seconded by Cllr M Strubel. There was a ballot and it was **resolved** that Cllr S May be elected to serve as Chairman for the civic year 2022-23.

**P 22/2 To elect a Vice-Chairman for the civic year 2022-23:**

Cllr M Vallance nominated Cllr Mrs M Weir which was seconded by Cllr S May. Cllr R Gardner nominated Cllr M Vallance with no seconder. It was **resolved** Cllr Mrs M Weir was elected to serve as Vice-Chairman for the civic year 2022-23.

**P 22/3 Apologies for non-attendance at meeting:**

Apologies were received from Cllr Mrs L Dalby and Cllr R Patient. Members received the apologies tendered.

**P 22/4 Declarations of any:**

**a) Disclosable Pecuniary Interest;**

**b) Other Pecuniary Interest; or**

**c) Non-Pecuniary Interest**

**on any matter on the agenda for 16<sup>th</sup> May 2022:**

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 22/5 Public Forum:**

Ray Cranfield (Essex Amphibian & Reptile Group) and three members of the public were present.

**P 22/6 To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2022 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 22/7 Action List Update – May 2022:**

**22/7.1** There had been no changes to the wall at Elizabeth Close.

**22/7.2** The high priority works derived from the tree surveys had been carried out; other works would be carried out throughout the summer.

**22/7.3** There were no updates regarding Friends of Hawkwell Parks (FoHP).

**22/7.4** The Smart Water had been delivered and application would take place in due course.

**22/7.5** Three Magnolia trees had been planted in Magnolia Park. The wall had also been painted by Members of the Magnolia Park Nature Reserve Working Group (MPNRWG). The mural would be painted in time for the Jubilee weekend, along with the installation of the plaque.

The trees required regular watering and some Members had been undertaking that at the weekends when the contractor was unable to do so. The MPNRWG had been disbanded at Full Council's Annual Meeting.

**22/7.6** There were no updates regarding the badger hole along the bridlepath within Magnolia Park Nature Reserve. Mr Cranfield felt that the steel plates which had been temporarily placed over the badger setts along the bridlepath were the best solution. The Clerk pointed out that Council had arranged for this in the first instance as emergency works but the responsibility was with Essex County Council Public Rights of Way (ECC PRoW) who were consulting with Natural England to see if there would be a more permanent solution.

**22/7.7** Mr Cranfield suggested employing a company to arrange for the fish to be electrocuted and netted from the pond. It was noted the aim would be to kill the fish as it was not possible to relocate them. Mr Cranfield pointed out the goldfish which had been illegally dumped in the pond could be killing the protected Great Crested Newts (GCN). It was further noted that Mr Cranfield had suggested digging out a pond within Magnolia Nature Reserve to allow the GCN to have a space protected and away from the fish. A Member enquired about the dangers to other species present in the pond should the electrocution method be used; Mr Cranfield pointed out species such as dragonfly etc were not protected. It was agreed that enquires about the potential electrocution of the goldfish be made with Stillwater Management and Mr Cranfield. It was further agreed that something needed to be done within the year given that the fish population was getting out of control. The matter would be brought back to the Parks Committee in due course.

**22/7.8** Members were referred to agenda item 9. (Minute P 22/9).

**22/7.9** The repair works for the gullies in Magnolia Playground had been carried out.

**22/7.10** A 'No Mow May' competition was underway and had been promoted on Facebook, the website and on the notice boards. The deadline for entry was 7th June 2022. The Clerk asked Members to encourage children to get involved. It was **resolved** that Members noted and accepted the Action Update List and agreed to the removal of the closed items.

#### **P 22/8 Financial Report – April 2022:**

The Clerk informed Members expenditure was as expected.

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

#### **P 22/9 Church Strip – Correspondence from solicitors:**

It was **resolved** that Council employ the services of the solicitor as set out in the documentation with regards to making a formal application to register the land referred to as 'Church Strip'.

#### **P 22/10 Criminal damage/Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) log – damage in Council's parks March-May:**

The Clerk informed Members there had been further arson and criminal damage since the report had been sent out; the rocking horse in Magnolia playground had also been set alight using an aerosol can. The Clerk explained to Members there was a lot of criminal/ASB behaviour at present and referred to the highly offensive hate crime graffiti that had been carried out across both the Hawkwell and Hockley parishes, which the police were aware of.

#### **P 22/11 Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) East Ponds Team – Wildlife ponds funding for pond projects:**

Mr Cranfield informed Members he was aware of the group but felt they would not be suitable in assisting Council as the criteria for funding would not be met; examples would be that a new pond would need to be created that was isolated, away from anywhere dogs may roam and where there were no wild fowl such as ducks or where there may be invasive vegetation.

A Member enquired if a pond in Spencers Park could be cleared as it had disappeared under heavy vegetation. It was felt it may be a good habitat for GCN; both the Clerk and Mr Cranfield were unaware of the pond and it was agreed a site visit would be needed to ascertain its location and condition.

Members discussed the offer from Mr Cranfield and his group to look at digging a new over-wintering pond for the GCNs and noted the cost would be covered by Mr Cranfield's group. It was **resolved** that Council pursue Mr Cranfield's offer in principle to create an over-wintering pond in Magnolia Nature Reserve along with improvement works on 'Duck Island'; more details would be provided in due course for further consideration.

**P 22/12 Glencroft Open Space – damage to top gate:**

Members noted the photos of the top gate and the Clerk explained there had been several attempts at destroying the gate and it was now beyond repair. Members felt it would not be prudent to purchase a replacement wooden gate given it was likely it would face similar damage. It was therefore **agreed** the Clerk should purchase a metal gate and have it fitted accordingly.

**P 22/14 Consideration to add two new pieces of adult gym equipment in Magnolia field:**

Members considered two pieces of equipment: a pull-up bar and hyper extension bench. The Clerk reminded Members that the choice of two items was the result of feedback from a youth team who had held sessions in Magnolia Park. Several Members raised concerns about the safety of the equipment and the frustrations of witnessing children use the adult gym equipment, despite having the correct signage installed, were discussed. A Member enquired if the proposed equipment would be set in concrete and if suitable safety surfacing would be provided; the Clerk assured Members that the installation of the equipment would comply with the necessary safety standards and that a reputable company would be used for the installation. A Member enquired about the installation costs and the Clerk estimated they would be around £700. A Member enquired if additional equipment would incur additional costs when it came to the playground inspections; the Clerk felt that would be unlikely. It was **resolved** that Council purchase and have installed a pull-up bar and hyper extension bench to add to the existing adult gym within Magnolia Park.

**P 22/15 Consideration to add a new basketball net/combined goal post on the basketball court in Magnolia Park:**

Members discussed the options presented in the report provided and **agreed** that the basketball net/combined goal post which offered a taller basketball post be purchased and installed; the Clerk would look at suitable suppliers. The Clerk also informed Members that some of the surfacing may require repair where it had sunk.

**P 22/16 Correspondence from residents**

**a) Importance of wildlife areas:** Members felt like Council was doing what it could in relation to the preservation of wildlife areas, noting there was a balance between maintaining the parks and open spaces and leaving areas for wildlife.

**b) Skatepark:** Members questioned why Clements Hall skatepark had been viewed to be dangerous. Members discussed the addition of a skatepark in all sites and felt such none would be a suitable location. Members felt Magnolia Park offered a suitable selection of other equipment/activities and allowed an adequate space for general recreation. A Member had engaged with several youths while visiting Magnolia Park and relayed that they had requested improvements to the BMX track. Members referred to the earlier items discussed at the meeting, noting new equipment would be added to Magnolia Park. The Clerk suggested that Ashington Park may be a more suitable location given its size; a Member thought a skatepark had been planned for that location but was unsure of the outcome. A

Member enquired if Council had any joint ventures with District Council in relation to its parks, but the Clerk explained that HPC funded themselves and had always maintained and managed their parks.

It was agreed the Clerk would revert to the resident to explain Council would not be pursuing a skatepark in any of its open spaces and parks. It was noted District Council would be better approached given their management of Clements Hall skatepark.

**P 22/16 Summary of Decisions:**

- Cllr S May elected as Chairman for 2022-23.
- Cllr Mrs M Weir elected as Vice Chair for 2022-23.
- Enquires about the potential electrocution of goldfish to be made with Stillwater Management; Mr Cranfield to liaise and revert to Clerk.
- Members to encourage/help promote entries to 'No Mow May' competition
- Solicitor to be employed for registration of 'Church Strip'
- Offer from Mr Cranfield regarding pond works accepted in principle; over wintering pond to be dug out for Magnolia Nature Reserve with possible additional works on 'Duck Island;' details to follow. Funding covered by the group.
- Site visit also required regarding Spencers Park pond; Mr Cranfield to visit.
- Clerk to arrange for metal gate to be fitted at the White Hart Lane entrance to Glencroft Open Space.
- Pull-up bar and hyper extension bench to be purchased and installed in Magnolia Park; pieces to be added to existing adult gym.
- New basketball net/combined goal post to be purchased and installed on the basketball court in Magnolia Park; possible surfacing works also required. Clerk to look into suitable suppliers.
- Clerk to respond to resident regarding the importance of wildlife areas.
- Clerk to respond to resident regarding the addition of a skatepark; Members not in favour of installing a skatepark in any of its parks/open spaces.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8:22pm.

Chairman