

**Minutes of the meeting of the  
PARKS, OPEN SPACES, CONSERVATION & FOOTPATHS COMMITTEE  
held on Monday 13<sup>th</sup> February 2023 at 7:05pm  
at the Rochford Day Centre, 33a Back Lane, Rochford**

**Cllrs present:** Chairman S May, R Gardner, T Hargrave, A MacPherson, Mrs L Massey, R Patient, Mrs A Styles, M Vallance, Mrs M Weir.

**P 23/61 Apologies for non-attendance at meeting:**

Apologies were received from Cllrs Mrs L Dalby, Mrs J Strubel and M Strubel.

**P 23/62 Declarations of any:**

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

**on any matter on the agenda for 13<sup>th</sup> February 2023:**

Cllr Mrs L Massey declared an interest by virtue of Council's regular contractor being her spouse.

Members **accepted** the declarations made.

**P 23/63 Public Forum:**

There were no members of the public present.

**P 23/64 To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2023 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 23/65 Action List Update – February 2023:**

- 23/65.1** There were no updates regarding Friends of Hawkwell Parks (FoHP).
- 23/65.2** Members were referred to Agenda item 7 (Minute P23/67).
- 23/65.3** There were no updates regarding Council's adverse possession of Church Strip.
- 23/65.4** The Ecologist had carried out repair works on the vandalised fence and would start planting over the next few weeks. In early Spring, the Ecologist would intend to hold a community morning at the pond where he would have a few Great Crested Newts (GCN), held under licence, to show the public and explain the project. The Clerk would let Members know the date once arranged.
- 23/65.5** Grating issues were still ongoing with the new accessible roundabout in Elizabeth Close playground; the contractor was in the process of trying to resolve them. All works were under warranty.
- 23/65.6** Members had agreed the additional mural artwork. This would commence once the weather improved.
- 23/65.7** A site visit with a representative from Essex Wildlife Trust (EWT) Wilder Villages Scheme had been set for Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> February 2023 at 11am. The Clerk had reminded Members of the EWT agreement. Several Members confirmed they would be in attendance.
- 23/65.8** The Clerk had again chased a quote which was due for the removal of a car parking space by adding yellow chevrons to denote no parking in Magnolia car park. An additional company would be approached for a quote. Cllr R Gardner recommended another contractor; the Clerk would bear them in mind.

- 23/65.9** Works in Glencroft Open Space on the footpath cracks could take place in Spring, if required.
- 23/65.10** The Clerk had contacted two companies about safety surfacing repairs for the small springy in Elizabeth Close playground. One company had declined estimating as they felt the job was too small. Members were referred to Agenda item 9 (P 23/69).
- 23/65.11** The Clerk had approached the local church about the redundant parks equipment and they had indicated they would like to take the equipment. The Clerk would draw up a letter stating the items donated to the church, date of transfer and that Council would not accept liability for them in the future. A church representative would collect the equipment and sign the agreement in due course.
- 23/65.12** The annual play inspection report had been refereed to the Health & Safety Sub-Committee.
- 23/65.13** Members were referred to Agenda item 8 (Minute P 23/68).  
It was **resolved** that Members noted and accepted the Action Update List and agreed to the removal of the closed items.

**P 23/66 Financial Report – January 2023:**

The Clerk reported that the overall budget was 112% spent, but the overspend was skewed by the capital expenditure which would be taken from the Reserves and/or other budgets at year end. Therefore, with the capital expenditure taken into consideration, the budget was on target at 83% spent.

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

**P 23/67 Essex County Council (ECC) Public Rights of Way (PRoW) closure of Bridlepath 35 (BR35) through Magnolia Nature Reserve due to badger holes - Update:**

Members noted the Clerk's report and that works would commence soon. The Clerk reported that the temporary barriers were continually being moved by members of the public.

It was **resolved** that Council approve the use of its regular contractor to assist with the preparation of the permission diversion within the Nature Reserve, where Essex County Council (ECC) did not have the necessary resources available to undertake the required works.

**P 23/68 Magnolia Pond – works required to replace the rotten posts and retaining timbers at the pond edge (quote attached):**

It was **resolved** that the quote for work to replace the rotten posts and retaining timbers at the pond edge be accepted.

**P 23/69 Safety Surfacing under springy at Elizabeth Close Playground; quote for replacement surfacing attached:**

It was **resolved** that the quote for the replacement surfacing under the springy at the Elizabeth Close Playground be accepted.

**P 23/70 Memorial plaques in Spencers Park – requests from residents:**

**a) History of plaques in Spencers Park;** The Clerk explained that the scheme historically started in 2001 and plaques were placed on certain allocated trees within Spencers Park. The allocation of trees ran out in 2008 and Council stopped advertising the scheme and it therefore closed. It was noted there had been a few exceptions since that date with permission given to add new plaques and or replace existing ones.  
The Clerk advised that should any further exceptions be made, the implementation of a policy would be prudent going forward.

**b) Adding one new plaque to an existing one:** Members **agreed** by majority that a further exception could be made, with costs to be met by the requestee.

**c) Enquiry about missing plaques and a request to replace them:** It was noted the plaques in question were in the office. Members **agreed** by majority to reinstate the plaques on a backing plate and have it reinstalled. It was agreed the resident(s) cover all costs and that maintenance would not be covered by Council.

The Clerk would draft a policy for the memorial plaque installation to ensure any future requests could be dealt with by the office with more clarity around what was permissible and covered under the scheme.

**P 23/71 Cllr T Hargrave – consideration for creating a long-lasting green area in commemoration of the King Charles III Coronation in one of Council's parks:**

Cllr T Hargrave proposed that a green area be created within one of Council's parks to include wild flowers and for it be themed to commemorate the King's Coronation. Cllr T Hargrave felt it would be beneficial to both the community and wildlife. Members discussed the idea and suggested a raised flower bed be created where wildflowers could be grown. Cllr T Hargrave offered his assistance with growing plants for the beds through his employer. It was agreed Members investigate the possibility of a raised bed for the King's Coronation on the EWT site visit scheduled for Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> February. It was noted it would be important to be mindful of ongoing maintenance should an area be created.

**P 23/72 Request for permission for a geocache in Magnolia Nature Reserve (emails attached):**

The Chairman explained the concept of geocaching for those Members who were unaware of what it was. Members discussed the location of the geocache and raised questions about it potentially causing harm to the Nature Reserve by attracting too many people searching within the Reserve. It was noted that often groups/individuals who participated in geocaching were respectful of the areas and nature. Members wondered if the resident had considered Council's other parks. A Member noted that the sign was made from single use plastic and that Council were trying to promote a more environmentally friendly approach which this partly negated.

Members **agreed** to the idea of having a geocache in Magnolia Nature Reserve in principle, but thought it would be prudent for the resident to meet with Members and/or the Chairman to discuss the matter further and to agree where the geocache would be best placed.

**P 23/73 Summary of Decisions:**

- Permission granted for Council's regular contractor to assist Essex Highways with the new permissive diversion for BR35.
- Quote for works along pond edge accepted; Clerk to pursue.
- Quote for works for safety surfacing in Elizabeth Close playground accepted; Clerk to pursue.
- Spencers Park memorial plaques exceptions to scheme accepted; Clerk to notify residents and make aware costs to be covered by them; policy for plaques to be drawn up in the future.
- Members to meet at Magnolia to discuss green area for the King's Coronation on Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> February.
- Geocache in Magnolia Nature Reserve agreed in principle; resident to be invited to meet Members/Chairman to discuss matter further.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 7:38pm.

Chairman