

**Minutes of the meeting of the
PARKS, OPEN SPACES, CONSERVATION & FOOTPATHS COMMITTEE
held on Monday 16th January 2023 at 8:10pm
in the Committee Room, Freight House, Bradley Way, Rochford**

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

P 23/50 Apologies for non-attendance at meeting:

All Members were present.

P 23/51 Declarations of any:

a) Disclosable Pecuniary Interest;

b) Other Pecuniary Interest; or

c) Non-Pecuniary Interest

on any matter on the agenda for 16th January 2023:

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

Members **accepted** the declarations made.

P 23/52 Public Forum:

There were no members of the public present.

P 23/53 To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 14th November 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 23/54 Action List Update – January 2023:

23/54.1 There were no updates regarding Friends of Hawkwell Parks (FoHP).

23/54.2 Members were referred to Agenda item 7 (Minute P23/56).

23/54.3 There were no updates regarding Council's adverse possession of Church Strip.

23/54.4 The Ecologist had carried out works for the overwintering pond in Magnolia Nature Reserve. A fence had been erected but a section had been vandalised by drivers of quad bikes over the Christmas period. The incident had been reported to the police and the Ecologist would be making the necessary repairs. Other new fencing had been installed to prevent quad bike access. Motorbikes could still potentially get through, but any further restrictions would be to the detriment of wheelchair, buggy and mobility users. A Member suggested adding natural barriers such as blackthorn to help deter access on vehicles and it was suggested Members should look at this on the February site visit.

23/54.5 Issues with the new accessible roundabout which had been installed in Elizabeth Close playground had been largely addressed by the contractors over the Christmas period. A site visit had been held on the 11th January 2023 and it was noted further adjustment would be required, but all the works were covered under warranty. The Clerk reported there would be work carried out in the week to address the grating issue where the spinning circle touched the outer board; the installers would be filing down a section but if that did not work then

further alterations would be considered. Members discussed the ground surface historic issues which had affected the roundabout bearings and the Clerk reminded Members the new roundabout had been selected due to a different bearing design intended to negate that particular problem.

- 23/54.6** Members had agreed to bring back ideas/proposals to the meeting following their visit to Magnolia Park; Members were referred to Agenda item 9 (Minute P 23/58).
- 23/54.7** A site visit with a representative from Essex Wildlife Trust (EWT) Wilder Villages Scheme had been set for Thursday 16th February 2023 at 11am. Members interested in attending would need to meet in Magnolia car park on that day.
- 23/54.8** The Clerk had 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.
- 23/54.9** The contractor who had undertaken the original works in Glencroft Open Space had assessed the footpath cracks and recommended the matter be reviewed after winter to see if there would be any natural improvements.
- 23/54.10** 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; the other company's estimate was due.
- 23/54.11** Two new battery-operated pieces of equipment had been purchased along with an offset verge cutter. Members agreed to close the item.
- 23/54.12** The Clerk had been asked to investigate selling some of the parks redundant equipment which included two chainsaws, a hand-held hedge cutter and a combination pole saw/hedge cutter. Given the lack of use of the machinery and the Clerk's view that they would not be worth much and the work involved in trying to find buyers would not be cost-effective. A discussion ensued and Members **agreed** it would be best to dispose of the items, either by scrapping them or offering them to the local church and/or Essex Hackspace. The Clerk would make enquiries in the first instance and if the items were not wanted then they would be taken to the local scrap merchant. It was noted that if any of the items were donated recipients would become responsible for them with no onus on Council. It was **resolved** that Members noted and accepted the Action Update List and agreed to the removal of the closed items.

P 23/55 Financial Report – December 2022:

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

P 23/56 Essex County Council (ECC) Public Rights of Way (PRoW) closure of Bridlepath 35 (BR35) through Magnolia Nature Reserve due to badger holes:

The Clerk's report explained BR35 had undergone a part-closure due to several badger holes appearing and making the route unsafe for users. It was noted the barriers which had been erected by ECC had already been moved by people trying to walk through. The barriers were connected by cable ties and, if permitted by ECC, Council's regular contractor would add a chain to try and deter people from opening the barriers. Council's regular contractor had met with two Ecologists from ECC and discussed the diversion proposal. No decision had been made due to the Ecologists questioning whether there were active Dormice in the Nature Reserve, which were also a protected species. The matter would be referred back to ECC for decision on the next course of action.

P 23/57 Magnolia Pond – works required to replace the rotten posts and retaining timbers at the pond edge:

Members noted the Clerk's report and that she was in the process of obtaining estimates to get the work completed.

P 23/58 Magnolia Park & Nature Reserve Working Group (MPNRWG):
a) Notes of the site visit October 2022; The notes were received.
b) Artwork for additional mural panels – available at meeting: Chairman S May presented his artwork to Members. Members praised the proposal. A Member enquired if the paintings would be ready for the King's Coronation. Chairman S May hoped they would be but it would be dependent on the weather.

P 23/59 Annual Playground Inspection Reports received – summary sheets attached. To be referred to Health & Safety Sub-Committee:

Members noted the report only revealed minor issues. The Clerk highlighted that the new basketball/goal post installed in Magnolia Park required a 'no climbing' sign according to advice given in the report. Members felt the addition of the sign may encourage climbing instead of deterring it but agreed it would be prudent to have in place for insurance purposes.

The Clerk also highlighted that there were numerous caps missing on pieces of the play equipment and she was sourcing the appropriate caps.

A Member highlighted the excessive corrosion which had been reported on the chest press adult gym equipment and the Clerk also pointed out one of the exercise pieces was not returning to its correct resting position. It was agreed matters like those should be reviewed by the Health & Safety (H&S) Sub-Committee; Members therefore **agreed** to refer the report to the Health & Safety Sub-Committee.

P 23/60 Summary of Decisions:

- Members to also look at natural hedging options to prevent unauthorised access on day of EWT site visit; those attending to meet in Magnolia car park at 11am on 16th February 2023.
- Clerk to contact the local Church and/or Essex Hackspace in first instance to ascertain if they would like the redundant pieces of machinery; machinery to be scrapped if no traction in that regard.
- BR35 diversion route on hold until ECC Ecologists ascertain whether there are Dormice in Nature Reserve.
- Additional artwork to be added to Magnolia mural wall.
- Annual Playground Inspection Reports referred to H&S Sub-Committee.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8:38pm.

Chairman