

**Minutes of the meeting of the
PARKS, OPEN SPACES, CONSERVATION & FOOTPATHS COMMITTEE
held on Monday 22nd May 2023 at 7:26pm
in the Rochford Day Centre, 33a Back Lane, Rochford**

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

P 23/1 To elect a Chairman for the civic year 2023-24:

Cllr R Patient nominated Cllr S May as Chairman which was seconded by Cllr Mrs J Strubel. There were no further nominations and Cllr S May was elected Chairman.

P 23/2 To elect a Vice-Chairman for the civic year 2023-24:

Cllr R Patient nominated Cllr Ms M Weir as Vice Chairman which was seconded by Cllr Mrs J Strubel. Cllr A MacPherson made a self-nomination which was seconded by Cllr T Hargrave. Following a secret ballot, Cllr A MacPherson was elected Vice-Chairman.

P 23/3 Apologies for non-attendance at meeting:

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

P 23/4 Declarations of any:

a) Disclosable Pecuniary Interest;

b) Other Registrable Interest; or

on any matter on the agenda for 22nd May 2023:

Cllr Mrs L Massey declared an interest by virtue that her spouse was a regular contractor for Council.

Cllr R Gardner declared an interest as a member of the Essex Wildlife Trust (EWT).

Members **accepted** the declarations made.

P 23/5 Public Forum:

No members of the public were present.

P 23/6 To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 3rd April 2023 and to approve the destruction of the notes in respect of that meeting:

The Minutes of the meeting held on the 3rd April 2023 were **approved** as a correct record and Members approved the destruction of the notes in respect of that meeting.

P 23/7 Financial Report – April 2023:

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

P 23/8 Action List Update – May 2023:

23/8.1 A Member enquired if the item on Friends of Hawkwell Parks (FoHP) should be removed from the action list. It was noted that volunteers were still sought for various projects, but the issue had been that there had been no one willing to lead a group.

23/8.2 The diversion route which avoided the badger holes on the bridlepath in Magnolia Nature Reserve was in place. The Clerk reported that the hate crime graffiti, which had been an issue in 2022, had unfortunately resurfaced and several signs and posts had been graffitied along that section of the bridlepath. It was noted all incidents were being reported to the police, who were aware of the return of incidents and an investigation was underway to try

and find the culprit(s). Rochford District Council (RDC) also were aware of the matter. A Member suggested publicising the incidents to make residents aware of the abhorrent crime, but it was agreed such publicity was not appropriate and Council should take the lead from the police who were more experienced in dealing with such matters.

23/8.3 There were no updates regarding Council's adverse possession of Church Strip. The Clerk reminded Members that the process with Land Registry could take up to one year.

23/8.4 An Ecologist had given an update at the Annual Parishioners' Meeting. The Chair noted the new pond had been a success with Great Crested Newts (GCNs) found to be present. The Clerk also reported that nearby the new pond an illegal encampment had been found up a tree and it had been removed.

23/8.5 The roundabout at Elizabeth Close was still being monitored by the installer. There was a possibility that the piece would have to be reinstalled.

23/8.6 The Chair of Parks would progress the wall mural when the weather permitted.

23/8.7 Members were referred to agenda item 9 (Minute P 23/9).

23/8.8 The works to add no parking chevrons in Magnolia car park would start once the weather permitted.

23/8.9 The pond edge repair works had been completed and Members noted the pictures provided. Members agreed to close the item.

23/8.10 The Mens' Shed was unable to assist due to the short notice but Cllr A MacPherson together with a volunteer and Council's regular contractor ensured that the planter was built in time and filled with soil. Cllr T Hargrave and a volunteer from Potash Garden Centre planted various plants and the office arranged for a suitable plaque to be made and affixed in time for the coronation. The Chair thanked all those involved. Cllr T Hargrave asked for assistance with the watering; a later agenda item would address that issue (P 23/12.)

It was **resolved** that Members noted and accepted the Action Update List and agreed to the removal of the closed items.

P 23/9 Essex Wildlife Trust (EWT) – follow up from site visits:

a) Magnolia Park & Nature Reserve: Members noted the email.

b) Spencers Park: It was noted some of the recommendation made may not be possible, particularly around retaining grass cuttings for animal hay as Council did not have the means to do so. A discussion ensued about the pond and brook/weir in Spencers. A Member claimed a pond had been created around the 1980s and had been managed by Council. It was unclear who ultimately now had responsibility for it along with the weir; Cllr Mrs M Weir would go through historic papers to see if there was information about Council's ownership transfer, which she believed involved Anglian Water. A Member felt the Environmental Agency (EA) would know who owned the waterways and requested the Clerk contact them accordingly.

It was noted there was some conflicting advice from the EWT and the Ecologist about the potential works for the brook/weir and there may be a need for a working group to communicate with both parties to establish what would be the best way of progressing any works.

Members noted the recommendation from the EWT to have a River Champion and it was **agreed** that Cllr T Hargrave be Council's River Champion.

c) Quote for Glencroft Open Space and Management Plan:

It was **resolved** that Members accept the quote provided by Essex Ecology for £1,700.

P 23/10 Request from resident regarding memorial bench in Magnolia Park:

Members discussed the request at length, noting the sensitivities around the request and referring to Council's existing memorial bench policy.

It was **resolved** that the request for a memorial bench in Magnolia Park be declined.

P 23/11 Consideration of remedial works to the surfacing beneath seats in Spencers Park (Cllr A MacPherson):

Members noted the pictures provided which showed that some benches across Council's parks and open spaces had water pools when it rained, close to where people's feet would be situated when seated. Members discussed the options of using wood chippings or pre-casting concrete slabs to try and resolve the issue. It was **agreed** that wood chippings be placed in the areas. A Member claimed Council had a pile of wood chippings which could be used. It was further **agreed** that the matter be revisited for an alternative option should the wood chippings not solve the problem.

P 23/12 Consideration to implement a watering system at Magnolia store for effective watering of the King's Coronation planter and Queen's Jubilee Trees (Cllr A MacPherson):

It was noted that Cllr T Hargrave had been undertaking the watering of plants in the King's Coronation planter and the task had been fairly arduous given the location of the water and distance to the planter. Cllr A MacPherson suggested adding three IBC containers to the side of the Magnolia Store, covered by a roofing system, and installing a light submersible pump and hose pipe which could be run through the compound railings. The intention would be to collect rainwater from the roof of the Magnolia Store which could be used throughout the year. A Member suggested installing a permanent irrigation system as an alternative idea, with the pipes embedded under Magnolia field, through to the mains water as they felt not enough rainwater would be harvested.

It was agreed that the Clerk investigate costs for the watering system proposed by Cllr A MacPherson; Members would consider the matter further at the next meeting.

P 23/13 Summary of Decisions:

- Cllr S May elected as Chairman for 2023-24.
- Cllr A MacPherson elected as Vice-Chair for 2023-24.
- Clerk to contact EA about ownership of the brook/weir at Spencers Park.
- Cllr T Hargrave elected as River Champion for Council.
- Request for memorial bench in Magnolia Park declined.
- Wood chippings to be laid in eroded areas by benches across Council's parks and open spaces.
- Clerk to investigate costs for an IBC watering system at Magnolia Park store.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8:29pm.

Chairman