

**Minutes of the meeting of the
PARKS, OPEN SPACES, CONSERVATION & FOOTPATHS COMMITTEE
held on Monday 18th September 2023 at 7:30pm
in the Rochford Day Centre, 33a Back Lane, Rochford**

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

Also present: Mr R Cranfield, Ecologist.

P 23/34 Apologies for non-attendance at meeting:

Apologies were received from Cllr R Gardner.

P 23/35 Declarations of any:

a) Disclosable Pecuniary Interest;

b) Other Registrable Interest; or

on any matter on the agenda for 18th September 2023:

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

Members **accepted** the declarations made.

P 23/36 Public Forum:

One member of the public was present.

P 23/37 To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 24th July 2023 and to approve the destruction of the notes in respect of that meeting:

The Minutes of the meeting held on the 24th July 2023 were **approved** as a correct record and Members approved the destruction of the notes in respect of that meeting.

P 23/38 Financial Report – August 2023:

The Clerk reported that at month five, Parks was 35.6% spent against a benchmark spend of 41%; the Clerk pointed out the underspend would even out through the coming months.

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

P 23/39 Action List update – September 2023:

23/39.1 Members agreed to close the item on Friends of Hawkwell Parks (FoHP).

23/39.2 Members were referred to Agenda item 8 (Minute P 23/41).

23/39.3 The Clerk had chased the solicitor and had been informed the application was still showing as pending and it was usual for the given deadline to over-run. The Clerk reminded Members it had been over a year since submitting the application.

23/39.4 There were no updates regarding the overwintering pond relating to Great Crested Newts (GCNs). The Clerk requested that the Ecologist let the office know if any works were to be carried out. It was agreed to close the item.

23/39.5 The installers of the roundabout at Elizabeth Close were proposing to install some packers underneath the decking boards which will involve removing the top section. The Clerk was awaiting confirmation of a start date for those works.

23/39.6 The Chair of Parks reported there had been no further progress with the wall due to some health matters but hoped to continue with it soon.

23/39.7 Members were referred to Agenda item 7 (Minute P 23/40).

- 23/39.8 Cllrs S May and Mrs L Dalby had offered to assist Cllr T Hargrave with the watering of the King's Coronation flowerbed. The outside tap and water harvesting system had been installed. Members noted how impressive the flowerbed looked and praised Cllr T Hargrave for maintaining it. Members agreed to close the item.
- 23/39.9 The new access gate had been added to the compound fence, park side. Members agreed to close the item.
- 23/39.10 Cllrs Mrs L Dalby and T Hargrave undertook a meadow survey in Glencroft Open Space at the end of August and the data had been sent. It was noted the survey would likely be carried out twice a year.
- 23/39.11 The Clerk had sent a letter to the resident about an incident with a dog in Magnolia Park. No response had been received. Members agreed to close item.
- 23/39.12 Cllrs T Hargrave and A MacPherson had been investigating the cost and size of a suitable Walnut tree. It was likely that it would be purchased from Potash Garden Centre and would be about 7ft. Appropriate stakes and trunk protection would be required. It was recommended the tree be planted around November time.
It was **resolved** that Members noted and accepted the Action Update List and agreed to the removal of the closed items.

P 23/40 Essex Wildlife Trust (EWT) – follow up from site visits:

a) Feedback following visit to Spencers Brook: The Clerk updated Members that there had been a site visit in August to Spencers Brook with Cllr T Hargrave who was Council's River Champion, the Clerk and Essex Wildlife Trust (EWT) Representatives. The purpose of the visit had been to look at the brook/weir and investigate concerns about the water flow and Pennywort build-up. It was noted there also had been an intention for another meeting for a water vole survey, but that had since been cancelled; the Clerk would enquire if a new date could be arranged.

A long discussion ensued about the ways in which the Pennywort could be removed, with several opinions expressed. Members discussed volunteers manually removing the Pennywort and an alternative option of using possible mechanical methods. The Ecologist advised Council to approach the Environment Agency (EA) in the first instance to ensure any works would be permissible. It was noted the Clerk had previously contacted the EA, and they had confirmed it fell within their jurisdiction and the stream was classed as a main river. However, it was unclear about the ongoing maintenance of the brook in relation to the EA; the response had been ambiguous in that regard. It was agreed that the Clerk make contact to seek further clarity and to see if any permissions were required before any works were undertaken by Council. It was also noted that any works would require appropriate budget consideration.

Members also discussed the issue of the build up of silt, but it was noted that the Pennywort would need to be tackled before any works to remove the silt could be carried out.

Conflicting views were expressed about the existence of the weir, with some believing it was an aesthetic introduction and diversion method to allow water to into Council's pond, while others felt it formed part of a flood alleviation scheme.

b) Glencroft Management Plan: Members discussed the recommendation to collect grass cuttings and it was noted Council did not have the appropriate machinery at present. Options around being able to fulfil the recommendation would have to be explored in due course. It was noted Glencroft was currently being managed very well by Council's regular contractor and that the Management Plan only suggested enhancements and a few different working methods.

P 23/41 BR35 – Site meeting with Essex County Council Public Rights of Way Officer (ECC PProW regarding permanent diversion plan:

Members noted the email from the ECC PProW and discussed the fact that a Dormice survey had not been undertaken despite earlier suggestions that would be necessary. It was further noted the ECC PProW had volunteers to carry out the work and Council's regular contractor would be on site to assist.

Cllr T Hargrave left the chambers at 8:11pm.

The Clerk pointed out that if the badgers were to leave the site in the future, there potentially could be works to repair the existing bridlepath.

Members noted the good will of the landowner who had allowed the temporary diversion to run through their land.

Cllr T Hargrave returned to the Chambers at 8:14pm

It was **agreed** that the ECC PProW carry out the necessary works, as directed.

P 23/42 Consideration to plant suitable bulbs under the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Magnolia trees – Cllr T Hargrave:

It was **agreed** that suitable bulbs be planted under the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Magnolia trees; Cllr T Hargrave would source and plant the bulbs.

P 23/43 Summary of Decisions:

- Clerk to contact EA with regards to potential permissions for any works on the Spencers pond/brook.
- Options for machinery/works for grass removal in line with the Glencroft Open Spaces Management Plan recommendation to be explored.
- Works outlined by ECC PProW given the approval by Members.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8:19pm.

Chairman