

**Minutes of the meeting of the
PARKS, OPEN SPACES, CONSERVATION & FOOTPATHS COMMITTEE
held on Monday 13th November 2023 at 7:30pm
in the Rochford Day Centre, 33a Back Lane, Rochford**

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

Also present: One member of the public.

P 23/54 Apologies for non-attendance at meeting:

All Members were present.

P 23/55 Declarations of any:

a) Disclosable Pecuniary Interest;

b) Other Registrable Interest; or

on any matter on the agenda for 13th November 2023:

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

P 23/56 Public Forum:

One member of the public was present.

P 23/57 To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 9th October 2023 and to approve the destruction of the notes in respect of that meeting:

The Minutes of the meeting held on the 9th October 2023 were **approved** as a correct record and Members approved the destruction of the notes in respect of that meeting.

P 23/58 Financial Report – October 2023:

The Clerk reported that the budget was almost on target, with a slight underspend. There were no questions and Members **accepted** the Financial Report.

P 23/59 Action List update – November 2023:

23/59.1 Work to re-route the section of BR35 was complete. Members agreed to close the item.

23/59.2 The Land Assessment had been undertaken by Land Registry. The Solicitor had also now provided an approximate value for the land so there would be no need for Council to pay for a separate land valuation. It was noted the land had been valued at £80k. The Solicitor was now awaiting a decision on the application for the Adverse Possession.

23/59.3 The Clerk reported the roundabout in Elizabeth Close was now functioning well. Members agreed to close the item.

23/59.4 The wall mural would be completed next year.

23/59.5 Members were referred to Agenda item 7 (Minute P 23/60).

23/59.6 A walnut tree had been purchased from Potash Garden Centre and had been planted within some protective fencing. It was agreed to close the item.

23/59.7 Members were referred to Agenda item 8 (Minute P 23/61)

23/59.7 Cllr T Hargrave had planted bulbs under the Magnolia trees in Magnolia Park.

23/59.8 The water leak in Magnolia Nature Reserve had appeared to have stopped. The Clerk had spoken to the Rochford District Council (RDC) Officer and they were undergoing work to ascertain more information about the pipe and its location. It was noted the resident who owned

the property where the pipe was sited had claimed no knowledge of the pipe. It was thought the water was not foul water. The RDC Officer would potentially decommission the pipe, if required. It was **resolved** that Members noted and accepted the Action Update List and agreed to the removal of the closed items.

P 23/60 Spencers Brook Update- Email advice:

a) Email from the Environment Agency (EA) regarding work permits:

Members discussed the need for certain permissions to carry out the works on the Brook. The options of leaving the silt and Pennywort on site opposed to having it taken away by a licenced carrier were also discussed. The Clerk informed Members there was a lot of work to do to ensure everything would be carried out correctly. It was noted risk assessments would be required and it would be likely works would only be able to start in the Spring.

b) Emails between Council, Essex Wildlife Trust (EWT), Chelmer Canal Trust (CCT):

Members noted the emails.

Members unanimously **agreed** to proceed with the silt and Pennywort removal.

P 23/61 Capital Expenditure for Parks Equipment:

Members noted the Clerk's report. In respect of a grass collector, it was **agreed** that Council do not include an additional amount of money in the Parks Capital Purchase budget for 2024-25; Members felt it would be prudent to employ the services of a specialised contractor with the grass collecting machinery and trial them for a year. A Member suggested collecting the grass to mulch and use on Council's land, but it was noted that method was used in far bigger operations than Council carried out. It was further noted that Council would trial the grass collection in Glencroft and, if successful, would extend that to Spencers Park.

Members discussed the need for a battery trimmer/brushcutter with battery and it was **agreed** that £590 be added to the 2024-25 Parks Capital Purchase budget.

Members also discussed the need for a protective guard on the tractor due to the potential damage caused by flying debris when using the offset verge cutter. It was **agreed** a tractor guard be purchased as a piece of safety equipment. This would be purchased from the 2023-24 Capital Purchase budget.

P 23/62 Agree Parks budget for 2024-25 (Bid 1) for recommendation to the Finance Committee:

Members noted the contingency for Spencers Park Brook work. Additionally, an increase in the utilities budget and that the litter/dog bins budget had reduced slightly. The Capital Projects budget included an amount for a wildlife species board along with an allocation for a new trimmer/brushcutter.

There were no questions and the Parks Committee budget for 2024-25 of £65,775 was **agreed** by Members and passed to the Finance Committee for recommendation.

P 23/63 Summary of Decisions:

- Works on Spencers Brook to proceed following Members' approval.
- Grass cutting collection in Glencroft to be carried out by a suitable contractor in 2024-25.
- Approval granted for a battery trimmer for Capital Purchase budget for 2024-25.
- Approval granted for a tractor protective guard; to be purchased from 2023-24 Capital Purchase budget.
- 2024-25 Parks budget of £65,775 approved for recommendation to the Finance Committee.

The Chair declared the meeting closed at 7:52pm

Chairman