

**Minutes of the meeting of the
PARKS, OPEN SPACES, CONSERVATION & FOOTPATHS COMMITTEE
held on Monday 11th March 2024 at 7:30pm
in the Rochford Day Centre, 33a Back Lane, Rochford**

Cllrs present: Chairman S May, L Fane, R Gardner, T Hargrave, Mrs J Strubel, M Strubel & Mrs M Weir.

Also present: One member of the public.

P 24/77 Apologies for non-attendance at meeting:

Members received apologies from Cllrs Mrs L Dalby, Mrs L Massey and A MacPherson.

P 24/78 Declarations of any:

a) Disclosable Pecuniary Interest;

b) Other Registrable Interest; or

on any matter on the agenda for 11th March 2024:

No interests were declared.

P 24/79 Public Forum:

One member of the public was present.

P 24/80 To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 15th January 2024 and to approve the destruction of the notes in respect of that meeting:

The Minutes of the meeting held on the 15th January 2024 were **approved** as a correct record and Members approved the destruction of the notes in respect of that meeting.

P 24/81 Financial Report – February 2024:

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

P 24/82 Action List update – March 2024:

24/82.1 The Clerk would now take over arranging of a visit for Members to see Church Strip.

24/82.2 The wall mural would be completed within the year.

24/82.3 Members were referred to Agenda item 7 (Minute P 24/83).

24/82.4 The Clerk continued to monitor the situation regarding the water leak discharge into Magnolia Nature Reserve. Building works had started on the site in question but it was impossible to gauge if the leak was still occurring due to the weather.

24/82.5 The battery trimmer would be purchased in April 2024.

24/82.6 The tractor glass guard had been fitted. Members agreed to close the item.

24/82.7 The metal gate for Glencroft Open Space had been fitted. Members noted the picture provided.

24/82.8 The Clerk had unofficially heard the weekly playground inspections service would continue to be offered by Rochford District Council (RDC) for 2024/25 and the cost had slightly increased.

24/82.9 The Clerk was still awaiting a date for the Fire Risk Assessment (FRA) for Magnolia Store to be carried out. The Clerk had now contacted another company to try and get works underway.

24/82.10 The Clerk had responded to the resident who had written in about Magnolia Park's facilities. The resident had thanked Council for considering their ideas. Members agreed to close the item. It was **resolved** that Members noted and accepted the Action Update List and agreed to the removal of the closed items.

P 24/83 Spencers Brook work update:

a) The Exemption Permit form the Environment Agency (EA) had been received: The information was noted.

- b) **Site visit with potential contractor had taken place:** The information was noted.
- c) **Quote received for consideration:** It was noted there had been difficulties obtaining multiple quotes; another company had been approached but had no availability for the works required. A Member enquired about what would happen with the silt and the Clerk reminded them that it would be laid on site. It was further noted it was not practical to start works due to the fast flow of the stream due to the abundance of rain. The Clerk relayed that the company who had quoted for works had requested a Cllr be on site for the duration of the works; Cllr T Hargrave would oversee works and be available accordingly. It was unclear how much silt would need to be removed, so consideration was required before commencement of works. It was hoped there would be a clearer picture by June when the weather had settled down. Members agreed it may be prudent to have an on-going maintenance plan for the Brook, following works.
Members **agreed** to accept the quote from Essex Aquatics.
Provisional date for works 17th June 2024: The information was noted.

P 24/84 Magnolia Park playing fields – unauthorised football & rugby practice:

- a) **Emails from park users and football coach;** Members noted the reports and complaints of the organised football activities and rugby practices. It was further noted the activities had started since late January and Council had not been approached for permission. Members were sympathetic about the closure of fields given the poor weather but felt there were several alternative options for those groups. Greensward had indicated they had suitable fields available, at a small cost. Members also felt Clements Hall may have been able to provide a suitable alternative venue, even if that meant using indoor facilities. Members agreed that despite breaching the Byelaws in place, the use of Magnolia field for organised sports teams posed an issue and was prohibitive for other users such as dog walkers. They also had concerns about the impact on the car park given the organised sports groups appeared to have a high attendance, along with the condition of the field should the practices continue. Furthermore, Members did not want to set a precedent for other groups and or businesses who may have started to use the field. It was also noted the Clerk had contacted the Hawkwell Athletic Club and they had offered to put a message out to their coaches to inform them Magnolia field was not able to be used by the groups.
- b) **Consider adoption of Council policy to support the Byelaws (Byelaw attached):**
Members discussed the use of Clements Hall field again and the Clerk informed them that Council had been invited to a site visit for the purpose of deciding the future of the fields.
Cllr T Hargrave left the Chambers at 7:48pm
Members noted there had been issues with Clements Hall field and poor drainage over the years. Members decided not to create a policy in this respect and agreed that any approach from organised groups etc for the use of the field would not be given permission.
Cllr T Hargrave returned to the Chambers at 7:51pm
Members **agreed** it would be prudent to have a sign at Magnolia stating the Byelaws and that organised sports/group activities were prohibited.

P 24/85 Summary of decisions:

- Clerk to now arrange visit for Members at Church Strip.
- Quote for works on Spencers Brook accepted; Clerk to notify Essex Aquatics. Cllr T Hargrave to be present on day (17th March 2024). Consideration to be given regarding how much silt to remove nearer time.
- Byelaws sign to be placed in Magnolia Park to notify users no organised sports activities/groups were permitted to use the field.

The Chair declared the meeting closed at 7:54pm

Chairman