

**Minutes of the meeting of the
PARKS, OPEN SPACES, CONSERVATION & FOOTPATHS COMMITTEE
held on Monday 14th October 2024 at 7:05pm
in the Rochford Day Centre, 33a Back Lane, Rochford**

Cllrs present: Chair A MacPherson, L Fane, T Hargrave, S May, & Mrs M Weir.

P 24/32 Apologies for non-attendance at meeting:

Apologies were received from Cllrs Mrs L Dalby, R Gardner and Mrs L Massey.

P 24/33 Declarations of any:

a) Disclosable Pecuniary Interest;

b) Other Registrable Interest; or

on any matter on the agenda for 14th October 2024:

No declarations were made.

P 24/34 Public Forum:

No members of the public were present.

P 24/35 To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 16th September 2024 and to approve the destruction of the notes in respect of that meeting:

The Minutes of the meeting held on the 16th September 2024 were **approved** as a correct record and Members approved the destruction of the notes in respect of that meeting.

P 24/36 Financial Report – September 2024:

The Clerk reported that the budget for Parks showed as 50% spent on the report. However, that included £7k which would be vired from the Council's General Reserves at year-end to part fund the solar panels purchase; the budget was therefore 41% spent.

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

P 24/37 Action List Update – October 2024:

24/37.1 The re-siting of benches in Church Strip was to be explored if the area would be closed off to the public. The Clerk explained that she was trying to source chippings for the bridlepath surfacing improvements. The historic arrangement with Essex County Council (ECC) Highways where they would deliver chippings under Council's registered waste licence was no longer viable due to procedure and regulation changes at ECC. However, there was a possibility of obtaining road plainings from ECC but there would be costs and logistical challenges. The Clerk was due to hear more from her contacts at ECC. The Chair estimated 20 tonnes of surfacing would be required.

24/37.2 The wall mural in Magnolia Park had been completed. Members congratulated to Cllr S May for his artwork. Members agreed to close the item.

24/37.3 The Clerk had chased Rochford District Council (RDC) multiple times for a response regarding the water leak issue in Lincoln Road and had received no response. She would continue to chase.

24/37.4 Members were referred to Agenda item 7(Minute P24/38).

24/37.5 Works to install a barrier along the weir at Spencers Park were due to be carried out the following week.

24/37.6 The Eco-Audit visit had occurred; a report was awaited. It was noted one suggestion had been to add camomile seed to certain areas in Glencroft Open Space and Spencers Park. Members would need to explore when would be best to seed the camomile.

- 24/37.7** Advice from the Eco-Audit Consultant had been to plant a row of fruit trees adjacent to the scout hut railings in Magnolia Park. Members noted the need for suitable clearance for the contractor to be able to mow the area. Members also raised concerns about the fruit attracting wasps during the summer, noting the location was within proximity of the scout hut and day nursery. Members also felt the fruit, if not harvested, could create a mess. It was agreed that once the report had been received from the Eco-Audit Consultant, further consideration be given to the planting of fruit trees and their location.
- 24/37.8** The Clerk will start to cost the items agreed for inclusion in the 2025-26 budget.
Cllr T Hargrave left the Chambers at 7:36pm.
- 24/37.9** Chair A MacPherson had secured the loose concrete fence panel in Magnolia Park using angle iron. Members discussed painting the newly exposed panel to tie in with the mural wall. Cllr S May would paint the wall with the remaining paint in the shed.
Cllr T Hargrave returned to the Chambers at 7:38pm.
- 24/37.10** The Clerk was to source estimates for the Lincoln Road replacement fencing work. The Chair suggested carrying out the work in sections. It was anticipated that the area spanned 120m.
- 24/37.11** Partnership working with Hullbridge Parish Council (HBPC) for the Glencroft Open Spaces wildflower area was being explored; HBPC would be discussing the proposal at its Full Council meeting that evening.
- 24/37.12** A further quote for the Elizabeth Close playground area surfacing was due. The Clerk had received one estimate at £900 but felt that was too costly for the works required.
- 24/37.13** Two donated trees had been collected from a resident. Members discussed where to plant the trees but no decision was made; further consideration was required.
It was **resolved** that Members noted and accepted the Action Update List and agreed to the removal of the closed items.

P 24/38 Magnolia Park compound surfacing:

Members noted the Clerk's report which mentioned a suggestion from the Eco-Audit Consultant of using Hempcrete. Members noted the Clerk's research on this product and agreed it was an unsuitable product, particularly because it was not structurally strong enough for a hardstanding surface. Members felt they had explored all surfacing options and had tried to find the most eco-friendly product in line with Council's mission to be carbon neutral.

Members agreed to have a contractor lay concrete as hardstanding for the Magnolia compound. It was agreed to engage A&G Plant, noting their estimate for works. The Clerk would need to revert to A&B to see if the quote of £3,420 was still valid. It was further agreed surface levelling would need to allow for suitable water run off to prevent pooling/flooding in the car park or children's playground.

It was anticipated works would be conducted, when practicable, but that was heavily dependent on A&B and the weather.

P 24/39 Email from Essex County Council Public Rights of Way (ECC PRoW) regarding information consultation – diversion proposal footpath 4 Hawkwell:

Members raised no objections to the proposal.

P 24/40 Weeds on footpaths – Spencers Parks and Glencroft Open Spaces – consider options for management/removal:

Members noted the pictures provided by the Clerk and agreed the matter needed to be resolved. Members discussed the issues around using chemical products to kill weeds and agreed any option would need to be bio-friendly and not cause any harm to animals. The Clerk suggested using a weed flaming options. Cllr T Hargrave would ask his contacts at Potash Garden Centre for any suitable eco-friendly weed removal products.

P 24/41 Summary of decisions:

- Members to explore when to seed camomile seeds.
- Members to further consider where to plant fruit trees.
- Cllr S May to paint remaining section of Magnolia Park wall using paint left over from initial project.
- Members to further consider where to plant gifted trees.
- Concrete hardstanding for Magnolia compound area agreed; A&B Plant to conduct works. Clerk to check if quote is still valid. Works to start as soon as possible.
- No objections raised regarding the information consultation for diversion proposal footpath 4 Hawkwell.
- Footpath weeds to be removed using appropriate method; Clerk to find appropriate method. Cllr T Hargrave to ask contacts at Potash about any suitable eco-friendly weed removal products.

The Chair declared the meeting closed at 8:05pm.

Chair