

**Minutes of the meeting of the
PARKS, OPEN SPACES, CONSERVATION & FOOTPATHS COMMITTEE
held on Monday 11th November 2024 at 7:05pm
in the Rochford Day Centre, 33a Back Lane, Rochford**

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

P 24/42 Apologies for non-attendance at meeting:

Apologies were received from Cllrs Mrs L Dalby & R Gardner.

P 24/43 Declarations of any:

a) Disclosable Pecuniary Interest;

b) Other Registrable Interest; or

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

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

P 24/44 Public Forum:

One member of the public was present.

P 24/45 To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 14th October 2024 and to approve the destruction of the notes in respect of that meeting:

The Minutes of the meeting held on the 14th October 2024 were **approved** as a correct record and Members approved the destruction of the notes in respect of that meeting.

P 24/46 Financial Report – October 2024:

The Clerk reported that the budget for Parks was 58.8% spent but that included £7k which would be vired from the General Reserves at year end; therefore, the budget was 52% spent. There were no questions and Members **accepted** the Financial Report.

P 24/47 Action List Update – November 2024:

24/47.1 Chippings were being sourced for the surfacing improvements of the bridlepath adjacent to Church Strip. The Clerk was due to hear from the Essex County Council (ECC) Public Rights of Way (PRoW) Officer to see if they would be able to provide the chippings.

24/47.2 The Clerk had complained to Rochford District Council (RDC) about further issues regarding the water leak issue in Lincoln Road. RDC had conducted a site visit and believed the leak was coming from a septic tank from a private residence. The Clerk had been in communication with RDC and had been advised to call the Environment Agency (EA) emergency line, which she had done. The Clerk had received complaints about the water discharge and particular concern had been raised regarding the Great Crested Newts, with the possibility the water was now flowing into Council's pond. It was noted the residency would need to have a special permit to discharge foul water in the way they currently were. The Clerk was expecting further contact from EA the following day.

24/47.3 The Clerk was awaiting further quotes for using eco-concrete for the Magnolia compound surfacing project. A Member reported that eco-concrete used recycled aggregate but the fundamentals were the same as standard concrete. The Clerk advised the use of eco-concrete as it was more environmentally friendly.

- 24/47.4 Works had been completed to install a barrier along the weir at Spencers Park. The Clerk reported the pennywort had started to re-grow and Council's regular contractor had conducted some weed removal works.
- 24/47.5 The Eco-Audit visit had occurred and the report had been received. The report would be reviewed by the Climate Change Working Group (CCWG) in January.
- 24/47.6 The Clerk was continuing to source estimates for the Lincoln Road replacement fencing. The Clerk had re-visited the area to assess the need for fencing. She advised Members there was a large stretch of natural vegetation which functioned as a barrier and she estimated only 60-80m was now required, opposed to the 120m first thought. No quotes had been received. It was further noted that more of Council's fencing was rotten too; the Clerk reported some fencing had also fallen on the bridlepath leading up to Rectory Avenue.
- 24/47.7 Partnership working with Hullbridge Parish Council (HBPC) had been agreed. The cost per cut for Glencroft Open Space would be £250. This would provide a test area for wildflower growth as per the advice given in the Eco-Audit.
- 24/47.8 The Clerk had received two estimates for the Elizabeth Close roundabout surfacing but felt that they both were too expensive. The third quote had been from a company Council had used before and the Clerk approved they carried out the works. It was noted the works had been conducted but the standard of repair had been unacceptable. A complaint had been made to the company and they had acknowledged the issues and would aim to rectify them. Members requested the Clerk report back when resolved.
- 24/47.9 Further consideration for the planting of the donated trees was required. The Clerk recommended the spindle tree be planted in an area within the Magnolia field, by the roses on the way to the bridlepath entrance which was **accepted**. It was **agreed** the chestnut tree would be planted in Glencroft Open Space.
- 24/47.10 Weed flaming equipment had been purchased and had been used in parts of all parks and open spaces. It was proving to be successful. Regular treatment in the Spring and Summer would keep the weeds at bay. It was noted that type of weed treatment would have to be ongoing. Members discussed other methods and the Clerk pointed out homemade suggestions would not be ideal for the large scale in which Council had to conduct weed removal.
- It was **resolved** that Members noted and accepted the Action Update List and agreed to the removal of the closed items.

P 24/48 Agree Parks budget 2025-26 (bid 1) for recommendation to the Finance Committee:

Members noted the budget prepared by the Clerk. Members noted the proposed £12k increase within the play areas equipment and maintenance budget would be for surfacing repairs and swings for Magnolia Park playground and surfacing works at Elizabeth Close.

Cllr T Hargrave left the Chambers at 7:27pm

A Member suggested the idea of totally refurbishing Magnolia Playground but the Clerk informed Members a total refurbishment was not required. She explained safety surfacing repairs were only required for the multi-play climbing frame, roundabout and nest swing. Members requested the works to be suitably organised so minimal disruption was caused to the playground users.

Cllr T Hargrave returned to Chambers at 7:29pm

Members **agreed** the Parks Committee budget of £70,825 for 2025-26 for recommendation to the Finance Committee.

Members noted the thank you card which had been displayed within Spencers Park and gave credit to Council for a good bin service. Members suggested the Clerk post the card on Facebook.

P 24/49 Summary of decisions:

- Eco-Audit follow up report to be reviewed by the Climate Change Working Group (CCWG).
- Partnership working with Hullbridge Parish Council agreed; cuts to be arranged for Glencroft Open Space in line with Eco-Audit recommendations.
- Clerk to report back regarding repair works in Elizabeth Close.
- Spindle tree to be planted in agreed location within Magnolia field. Chestnut tree to be planted in Glencroft Open Space.
- Parks budget approved for recommendation to Finance Committee.
- Clerk to post thank you card acknowledgment received regarding Spencers Park bins on Facebook.

The Chair declared the meeting closed at 7:31pm.

Chair