

**Minutes of the meeting of the
PARKS, OPEN SPACES, CONSERVATION & FOOTPATHS COMMITTEE
held on Monday, 8th February 2010
at the Freight House, Bradley Way, Rochford, Essex**

Councillors present: Chairman K Holmes, Mrs J Barney, Mrs E Chippette, Mrs C Cunningham, Mrs M Dorrell, Mrs J Fern, Mrs A Heath, A James, V Leach, R Patient, D Weir and Mrs M Weir.

Also Present: R Mitchell.

1) Apologies for non-attendance at the meeting:

All Committee Members were present.

2) Declarations of Interest:

Cllr Mrs Heath declared an interest in knowing the artist relating to item 3 Action Update List – Footpath Signs.

3) Parks – Action List Update:

The Clerk went through the action list.

- **Arrange for clearance of ponds on a timely basis:** The Clerk advised in addition to his update that he had specifically told ERG they must not take any fish out of the pond.
- **Footpath signs:** Ongoing.
- **Research provision of allotments:** See Agenda Item 8.
- **Work Programme for ROSPA:** No date as yet - ongoing.
- **Tree Thinning in Spencers Park:** Cllr Weir referred to the letter from Groundworks South Essex - Agenda item 7, the Chairman thought it was unrelated to tree management, rather tree planting. Members questioned the amount of trees likely to be thinned and the Chairman advised Andy Day had marked them with a red spot. Members agreed they would like to meet with Andy Day; the Clerk advised there would be no charge for his time if Members met him whilst he was in the area but a charge would be likely if he was called to a specific meeting. Cllrs Mrs Chippette, Mrs Fern, Mrs Heath, Holmes, Weir and Mrs Weir put themselves forward to meet with Andy Day to discuss proposals for future woodland management. The Clerk to come back with dates.
- **Spencer's bridlepath:** Equestrian group to make a start to clear hedgerow before end of February in conjunction with Cllr Holmes and D Abrams on site.
- **Litter/dog bins collections:** Ongoing.
- **Adult Gym:** Ongoing.
- **Disabled access, Spencers:** Ongoing.
- **Log seats to be replaced with new benches in Spencers:** Ongoing.

4) Financial Report:

The Clerk advised with 2 months to go the budget was well under spent and was likely to remain so at the end of the financial year. Cllr Mrs Heath asked if more dog

bins could be purchased as the budget was under spent, the Clerk replied yes they could be but it was a balancing act, now that outturn had been predicted to increase the spend would draw from the balance of the reserve. Members agreed that was not viable and accepted the Financial Report.

5) Baptist Church – confirmation of public liability insurance:

Members noted the document and were content to move on.

6) ECC – Changes to Parish Paths Partnership Scheme (P3):

The Clerk informed Members he had received a letter that day withdrawing the letter presented with the papers. Members noted the withdrawal of the letter.

7) Letter from Groundwork Essex re. Tree Planting (Woodland Trust Partnership):

The Chairman referred to the letter and asked Members for their view of planting more trees and Cllr Mrs Weir suggested a small amount be planted in Glencroft. It was not known if there was a minimum amount required for free planting. The Chairman asked Members if they agreed for the Clerk to write to Groundwork Essex to ascertain if there was a minimum amount of planting involved and to invite them to Glencroft to see what they could propose with the project, Members agreed. It was discussed to plant bushy trees in front of the wall covered in graffiti, or look to clean the wall, the Clerk advised the wall was not the property of HPC and in the summer time with the return of growth it was covered with heavy vegetation.

8) Allotments (referred from January Full Council):

The Clerk gave out copies of a letter emailed from A Law, Solicitor – RDC. Members began a lengthy discussion.

- Cllr Leach asked what acreage Rochford had for their allotments; Cllr Mrs Weir thought it was 140 allotments.
- Cllr Weir thought HPC should now be finding out the acreage and what sort of ground would be required for HPC allotments.
- Cllr Mrs Heath raised the issue of paying for the land and the process, that Council should start thinking about the budget.
- The Chairman referred to paragraph 3 of the letter from RDC that committee would need to rethink the Christmas Tree Farm land as it was too valuable. He suggested finding an agent to get valuations.
- Cllr Weir thought it very difficult to get a valuation on land because of ‘hope value’.
- Cllr Mrs Heath brought to attention land for sale in Ironwell Lane.
- The Clerk offered to come back with cost of agricultural land but he needed to know the acreage.
- He raised the unfeasibility of doubling the precept for a year to pay for 50 people to have allotments.
- Cllr Mrs Weir suggested the possibility of a public works loan and the Clerk commented on the cost of the interest. Cllr Weir raised getting a mortgage.
- Cllr James thought Council had an obligation to provide allotments once a minimum of 6 requests had been made and queried who would provide allotments if there was no parish council? The Clerk clarified the Parish Council should ‘consider’ providing allotments.
- Cllr James asked if Council had made a decision to provide allotments and the Chairman replied Council had not yet made a decision, it was trying to gather

information and get together all the facts. He asked Members what they wanted to do to move forward.

- Cllr Leach made reference to the cost to fence Magnolia many years ago being £30K, the on costs of providing toilets and water would also need to be considered.
- Cllr Mrs Weir was interested in finding out how much the piece of land by Rectory Terrace, recently rejected as a building lot, would cost.
- Cllr Patient referred to paragraph 4 of the email from RDC and felt they surely had a legal person there to give advice. He felt Council was given the impression from the representative that visited that Council had a responsibility to act and before it proceeded any further HPC should find out from her what they could do to help.
- The Chairman pointed out Local Government Act 1972 sections 124 and 125 were to be referred to from paragraph 4 of the email.

Cllr Leach proposed the Clerk be instructed to see what acreage 100 allotments would require and what that would take to give the base cost of the land. Cllr Holmes seconded and the motion was carried.

9) Summary of decisions:

- The Clerk to find out dates when Andy Day would be in the area and set up a meeting with Cllrs Mrs Chippette, Mrs Fern, Mrs Heath, Holmes, Weir and Mrs Weir to discuss proposals for future woodland management.
- Arrange for the Equestrian group to make a start to clear the hedgerow in Spencer's bridlepath before end of February in conjunction with Cllr Holmes and D Abrams on site.
- The Clerk to write to Groundwork Essex to ascertain minimum amount of tree planting and invite them to Glencroft for their proposals.
- The Clerk to prepare a paper to see what acreage 100 allotments would require and what that would take to give the base cost of the land.

Chairman