

**Minutes of the meeting of the
PARKS, OPEN SPACES, CONSERVATION & FOOTPATHS COMMITTEE
held on Monday, 16th February 2009
at the Freight House, Bradley Way, Rochford, Essex**

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

Also Present: Cllrs Mrs H Glynn and R Mitchell.

1) Apologies for non-attendance at the meeting:

Cllrs D Weir and Mrs M Weir (unwell). Members noted and accepted the apologies tendered.

2) Declarations of Interest:

Cllrs Mrs A Heath and A James declared a personal interest in item 12.

Correspondence re Parks, Glencroft Woodland – Letter & Petition from Hockley Residents.

3) Approval of the Minutes of the meeting held on 19th January 2009 and to approve the destruction of the manuscript notes in respect of that meeting:

Cllr Mrs Cunningham asked the Clerk to amend item 1. ‘Apologies for non-attendance at meeting’ to include reason for absence as being unwell. Subject to one amendment Members approved the minutes of 19th January 2009 as a true record and agreed to the destruction of the manuscript notes.

4) Parks – Action List Update:

The Clerk went through the action list.

- **Ponds:** The Clerk to proceed with getting a quote for mechanical clearance of weed before strong growth in the spring. Cllr Mrs Glynn queried the work going ahead without permission from the Environment Agency. The Chairman confirmed the mechanical removal of weed was an approved method by the Agency and the Clerk confirmed he had spoken to them and they were content.
- **Footpath Signs:** The Clerk advised 3 signs had been ordered without the crest.
- **Allotments:** Awaiting information from RDC.
- **ROSPA:** See Agenda item 7.
- **P3:** The Clerk advised that the Payback team had worked hard along footpath 14 for a couple of days and the result was very good. The Chairman asked Members if they agreed for this item to be closed, Members agreed item to be removed from Action list. Cllr Mrs Glynn brought to Members attention that the Clerk had been overseeing the work on a Sunday to provide the payback team with necessary access to toilets and tea making facilities; she thanked the Clerk and commended the work. The Chairman supported her comment. Cllr James volunteered to oversee the payback team in place of the Clerk on the ‘odd’ Sunday. The Chairman queried why the work had to be on a Sunday and not during the week and the Clerk responded that the Sunday Payback team were more productive by far.
- **Open Space, Rectory Road:** The Chairman felt the confirmation letter from RDC was long over due, Members agreed, and he asked the Clerk to write to Graham Woodhouse to escalate this issue and to seek closure.

- **Memorial Plaques:** Members agreed to close this item and remove from Action list.
- **Tree Thinning in Spencers Park:** The Chairman asked the Clerk if confirmation could be sought to ascertain existence of black poplar and the Clerk confirmed he had already taken that on board.
- **Spencers Bridle path:** Keep on action list for review.
- **Find out from contractor which days the litter/dog bins are collected:** Members were discontent with the poor service received from Connaught and discussed at length what actions to take. The Clerk felt the best course of action would be for him to have an informal meeting with Geoff Dawson, Contract Manager at RDC. Members agreed to discuss further action if this was unsuccessful.
- **Adult Gym:** See Agenda item 8.
- **Correspondence from residents (Ditch alongside Footpath 14):** Cleared from one end to the other, residual work for David Abrams to clear rubbish. Good result and good feedback received. Members agreed to close and remove item from Action list.
- **Glencroft Woodland:** See Agenda item 12.

5) **Financial Report:**

The Clerk went through the Financial Report. He expected the budget to come in below prediction despite some areas of overspend. There were no questions and Members accepted the Financial Report.

6) **Tractor Hours/usage:**

The Chairman explained the Clerks report in detail. Cllr Patient felt the report was very well thought out and reflected good management. He proposed '**That Parks Committee accept the report and recommend that Council approves the purchase of a second tractor whilst retaining the current machine.**' Cllr Mrs Heath seconded. The Chairman asked Members to vote, 8 Members showed hands and the motion was carried. Cllr Dickson asked 'are we making a recommendation for Full Council or Finance Committee in line with correct procedure?' The Clerk said he would call an extraordinary meeting of the Finance Committee with one item on the Agenda prior to Full Council and if approved by Finance the item could be presented to Full Council for consideration on Monday 2nd March 2009.

7) **Playground repairs – ROSPA:**

The Clerk went through his report in detail. He emphasised the new EEC rules that had been applied after the ROSPA report. Members discussed the possibility of phasing the maintenance programme to enable budgeting for the expense for next year. The Clerk advised the EU regulation came into effect in January 2008. Members discussed the possibility of applying for a grant but that could take months. The Chairman highlighted the priority was the repair to the ground around the roundabout at Elizabeth Close. Members discussed at length the usage, possible closure, repair costs and budget. It was felt that Elizabeth Close was a popular play area; it was not possible to piecemeal repairs due to the need to rely on goodwill of neighbouring properties for access and skip usage. Cllr Mrs Heath proposed that a price be obtained for the repair to the ground around the roundabout in Elizabeth Close at this stage and look to work on other recommendations later. Members agreed. Clerk to gain estimate.

8) Adult Gym:

Cllr Leach asked Members to consider what budget year the equipment should be bought due to the considerable cost involved, in addition the equipment required a degree of advice on usage, approaching the CIF fund and RDC's Sports Officer to seek working together on use of equipment. Cllr Mrs Glynn reiterated that HPC had put £5K in next years budget for it and even if only 1 or 2 items were acquired she would like to ask that a small committee look at it. Cllr Mrs Heath queried location and the potential for accidents if children were to use equipment. Cllr Patient felt the Council should be very careful and suggested that the Clerk discuss the feasibility of the equipment with the Sports Officer at RDC. The Chairman stated other councils had provided the equipment therefore there must be ways of making it work. Cllr Mrs Heath asked if these councils could be contacted to ask about vandalism and usage. The Chairman proposed that the Clerk contact Kevin Reed, Sports Officer at RDC and invite him to attend a meeting. Members agreed.

9) RDC – Tree Preservation Order (Belchamps Scout Camp, Holyoak Lane):

Members noted.

10) Report on the ditch alongside Footpath 14:

The Clerk notified the ditch had been cleared and a good response had been received from residents.

11) Email from Scott Irvine re graffiti in Magnolia:

The Chairman said despite receiving the email sharing ideas he would still prefer to have Scott Irvine attend a meeting to discuss ideas with Members. Members agreed and the Chairman asked the Clerk to invite Scott Irvine to come back to Committee Meeting.

Cllr Mrs Chippette asked who was responsible for cleaning the new teen shelter at Clements Hall and had Council considered having a rubbish bin near by, she also reported the seats in the shelter were littered with glass. The Clerk responded that he had asked the company that clean the bus shelters to clean the youth shelter. Cllr Patient felt there should be some form of light on the shelter and asked for it to be put on the General Purposes agenda for next meeting. Cllr Mrs Heath reported that at the NAPs meeting the issue of a dustbin and lighting had been raised. Cllr James reported these issues were also raised at the CDRP meeting he had attended that morning. The Chairman asked the Clerk to note Members comments, he reminded that time was pressing and he steered Members back to the Agenda.

12) Correspondence re Parks:

- **Glencroft Woodland – Letter & Petition from Hockley residents:** Cllr Leach was not aware of any planning applications on the site. The Clerk had been formally advised there were no proposals to put a road or footpath through the site. Cllr Leach suggested he felt inclined to reply informing the residents to write back to whomever they had learned the information from. Cllr Mrs Glynn stated the site was in the ownership of RDC and there were no plans to her knowledge for anything to happen there. Cllr Mrs Heath recounted that she had thought the building company developing the surrounding area had wished to put a path through. The Chairman asked Members if they agreed that Parks Committee write back to the residents stating that they had no knowledge of development of the site, RDC were the owners of the land and if they had any questions, to forward them to RDC. Members agreed. The Clerk to respond.
- **Email from resident re danger of ice on winter ponds:** Cllr Mrs Glynn gave an account of the bog land. The Chairman commented that Council had dug out

the pond a couple of years ago and due to the cold spell it had iced over. The Clerk informed Members he had responded to the email and asked Members to note his response. The Chairman thanked the Clerk for putting together an excellent response.

- **Letter of complaint re dog mess:** Cllr Mrs Heath informed the Clerk she had some large laminated posters available that could be put up if Council wished. The Clerk expressed concern due to it being a nature reserve. The Chairman asked Members did they want to respond to the letter. Cllr Leach suggested 'Council write a courteous reply that it regretfully cannot be responsible for irresponsible dog owners'. Members agreed and the Chairman asked the Clerk to respond to the letter.

13) Summary of decisions:

- **Amendment to Minutes of Meeting held on 19th January 2009:** The Clerk to amend Minutes, item 1. 'Apologies for non-attendance at meeting' to include reason for absence as being unwell.
- **Ponds:** The Clerk to proceed with getting a quote for mechanical clearance of weed.
- **P3:** Item to be removed from Action list.
- **Open Space, Rectory Road:** The Clerk to write to Graham Woodhouse to escalate the issue and seek closure.
- **Memorial Plaques:** Item to be removed from Action list.
- **Find out from contractor which days the litter/dog bins are collected:** The Clerk to organise an informal meeting with Geoff Dawson, Contract Manager at RDC.
- **Correspondence from residents (Ditch alongside Footpath 14):** Item to be removed from Action list.
- **Tractor Hours/usage:** The Parks Committee accepted the report and recommend that Council approves the purchase of a second tractor whilst retaining the current machine. The Clerk to call an extraordinary meeting of the Finance Committee with one item on the Agenda prior to Full Council and if approved by Finance the item could be presented to Full Council for consideration on Monday 2nd March 2009.
- **Playground repairs – ROSPA:** A price to be obtained for the repair to the ground around the roundabout in Elizabeth Close at this stage and look to work on other recommendations later. Clerk to gain estimate.
- **Adult Gym:** The Clerk to contact Kevin Reed, Sports Officer at RDC and invite him to attend meeting.
- **Email from Scott Irvine re Graffiti in Magnolia:** The Clerk to invite Scott Irvine to come back to Committee Meeting.
- **Youth Shelter:** The Clerk to note Members comments.
- **Glencroft Woodland – Letter & Petition from Hockley residents:** The Clerk to respond that no-one at HPC had any knowledge of development of the site, RDC were the owners of the land and if they had any questions, to forward them to RDC.
- **Letter of complaint re dog mess:** The Clerk to write a courteous reply that HPC regretfully cannot be responsible for irresponsible dog owners.

Chairman