

**Minutes of the meeting of the
PARKS, OPEN SPACES, CONSERVATION & FOOTPATHS COMMITTEE
held on Monday, 23rd November 2009
at the Freight House, Bradley Way, Rochford, Essex**

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

Also Present: Mrs H Glynn (in part).

1) Apologies for non-attendance at the meeting:

Cllrs Mrs A Heath (another meeting), Cllr Mrs Fern and A James (holiday).
Members accepted the apologies tendered.

2) Declarations of Interest:

None.

3) Approval of the Minutes of the meeting held on 12th October 2009 and to approve the destruction of the manuscript notes in respect of that meeting:

Members approved the Minutes of the Meeting held on 12th October 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.

- **Arrange for clearance of ponds on a timely basis:** The Clerk advised he was working with BTCV to get a working party to clear pond by end of December. Cllr Mrs Weir asked if that included Spencers as well and the Clerk replied that it did not. The Chairman advised the payback team cleared it before and he asked the Clerk to make contact and find out if the payback team had time to do it again. The Clerk added that the Groundsman had attended a pond management course and was informed there that if chemicals could not be used to clear weed, it would have to be endured as it could not successfully be cleared any other way.
- **Footpath signs:** Ongoing – Clerk to speak to Cllr Mrs Heath.
- **Research provision of allotments:** The Clerk wrote to RDC on 30th October 2009. The Chairman asked how much time did Members want to give RDC before chasing up a reply and Members agreed to a review at the next meeting.
- **Work Programme for ROSPA:** The Clerk to contact Rep from Abacus to meet Groundsman and obtain quote for repair to small holes in soft matting in Magnolia and Elizabeth Close playgrounds - ongoing.
- **Tree Thinning in Spencers Park:** The Clerk advised the work seemed to be going well and he had not had too many adverse comments from parishioners. The Chairman added that the Groundsman had successfully cut down trees identified in Essex Arb's survey and he **proposed that the Committee employ Essex Arb as professional consultants to identify the trees to be thinned in Spencers for the ongoing management programme.** Cllr Leach followed that trees were over planted, this was harmful because it was arid beneath a dense canopy and there was a need to identify the trees

sooner rather than later and the approach was right to take them out over a period of years. A debate ensued, Members queried the amount of trees being cut down and wished to refer to the 300 trees mentioned in the Clerk's report relating to item 7; clarification was sought from the Chairman as it was thought that Essex Arb had already completed a survey. The Chairman confirmed a survey had been done for insurance purposes but the proposal he had made referred to the ongoing management programme. **Members agreed to employ Essex Arb to identify trees for thinning in Spencers for the ongoing management programme.** Members asked if another parks management plan was due in the future and the Chairman replied that Parks were already working to the original plan. Cllr Weir asked if there was an idea of cost for the survey and the Chairman indicated it was likely to be £100 per day for a couple of days.

- **Spencer's bridle path:** Ongoing.
- **Litter/dog bins collections:** The Clerk advised there were 9 bins to replace and the cost of bins that had to be replaced was £2250. It was suggested to have a programme of 1-2 replaced per year due to the cost. Members discussed whether this would be feasible regarding delivery charges, identifying bins more heavily used to be replaced first; there had been few complaints lately with the bins being emptied - could afford to hold off replacement for a while. Members agreed to purchase 3 bins at a time spreading the cost over 2 years.
- **Adult Gym:** Ongoing.
- **Disabled access, Spencers:** Cllr Patient voiced that disabled access was a legal requirement and this should get underway. The Chairman confirmed disabled people could still gain access to the park, it was a capital project and the Clerk would be dealing with it - ongoing.
- **Log seats to be replaced with new benches in Spencers:** The Chairman advised the Groundsman would install the benches when he was free.
- **Complaint about surface of Magnolia Bridle path:** The Clerk updated this had been taken up with ECC and there were no new complaints. Members agreed to close the item.
- **Financial Planning:** See item 6.
- **Cllr Mrs Glynn requested Parks Minutes in future:** Item to be closed.
- **Clerk to look at bollards at Lincoln Road bridleway to assess access to HPC land:** The Clerk advised access could be gained but the matter did need resolving and he would look into it – ongoing.

5) **Financial Report:**

The Clerk advised he was updating the accounts at the moment as the post office strike had affected the office, however, between now and the end of the year Parks would be below or on budget. Members debated the need to disaggregate expenditure in respect of codes 4037 grounds maintenance and 4040 equipment and maintenance and they agreed to consider that during the budgeting process. Members accepted the Financial Report.

6) **Set Budget for 2010/2011:**

Cllr Leach as Chair of Council summarised the overall approach and reminded the standing committee to decide what it wanted for parks & open spaces for the community, to look at the budget and agree what must be spent and let it be scrutinized by Finance.

Members considered the each cost centre by account code one by one and the budget was set as per the attached.

Members agreed for the Clerk to take account code 4036 property maintenance out of Cost centre 301 Magnolia and leave 4036 property maintenance in 308 works department.

Members were content with the new budget and agreed that it be proposed to Finance.

7) **Cost/Benefit analysis – Stump Grinder:**

The Chairman referred to the Clerk's recommendation for purchase of a stump grinder. Cllr Weir asked that this decision be put aside until it was known how many trees would need to be cut down once the results of the survey the committee were about to instruct Essex Arb to undertake, were known. Cllr Patient commended the Clerk on his report, he referred to item 7 'a reasonable estimate of the work to be completed in Spencers would be about 100 trees each year, each needing stump grinding for the next two of three years whilst we undertake the thinning programme. After completion of that project there will be a great deal of other woodland management work where the equipment will improve efficiency and reduce costs. We have many more trees and lots of scrub areas in Glencroft and Magnolia where stump grinding would be beneficial'. Cllr Patient felt it was money that was coming out of capital projects anyway and **he moved that the committee adopt the Clerk's recommendation for purchase of a stump grinder.** Cllr Mrs Dorrell seconded. Cllr Mrs Weir asked if the cost included the Groundsman's time and the Clerk confirmed it did not. The Chairman asked Members to vote for the proposal moved by Cllr Patient, there was a show of hands and the motion was carried. The Chairman summarised the motion to purchase a stump grinder would be put to the Finance Committee.

8) **Summary of decisions:**

- The Clerk to ask the Payback team to clear the pond at Spencers.
- The Clerk to speak to Cllr Mrs Heath for update on artwork for footpath signs.
- Awaiting response from RDC re allotments – review at next meeting.
- The Clerk to contact Rep from Abacus to meet Groundsman and obtain quote for repair to small holes in soft matting in Magnolia and Elizabeth Close playgrounds.
- Members agreed to employ Essex Arb to conduct a survey to identify trees for thinning in Spencers for the ongoing management programme.
- Members agreed to purchase 3 dog bins at a time spreading the cost over 2 years – 9 to replace.
- Members set the new budget for 2010/11 to put through to the Finance Committee for consideration.
- The Clerk to remove account code 4036 property maintenance from cost centre 301 Magnolia and leave 4036 property maintenance in 308 works department.
- Members approved the Clerk's recommendation to purchase stump grinder, to be put to the Finance Committee for approval.

Chairman