

**Minutes of the meeting of the
PARKS, OPEN SPACES, CONSERVATION & FOOTPATHS COMMITTEE
held on Monday, 8th June 2009
at the Freight House, Bradley Way, Rochford, Essex**

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

Also Present: Mrs H Glynn

1) Elect Chairman:

Cllr Mrs Chippette proposed Cllr Holmes continue as the Chairman on Parks. Cllr Mrs Dorrell seconded. Cllr Holmes asked Members if there were any further nominations, there were none. **Members voted and unanimously agreed for Cllr Holmes to remain Chairman of the Parks, Open Spaces, Conservation & Footpaths Committee.** The Chairman explained there was a typing error on the Agenda omitting the election of Vice Chairman but felt that should still go ahead and he asked for Members approval. Members agreed and Cllr Mrs Chippette proposed Cllr Mrs Heath remain Vice Chairman, Cllr Mrs Dorrell seconded. **Members voted and unanimously agreed for Cllr Mrs Heath to remain Vice Chairman of the Parks, Open Spaces, Conservation & Footpaths Committee.**

2) Apologies for non-attendance at the meeting:

Cllrs Mrs J Fern (holiday), J Dickson (another meeting). Members noted and accepted the apologies tendered.

3) Declarations of Interest:

Cllr Mrs Glynn declared an interest should any subject arise relating to Magnolia Park which was opposite her address. There were no further declarations of interest.

4) Approval of the Minutes of the meeting held on 20th April 2009 and to approve the destruction of the manuscript notes in respect of that meeting:

Members approved the Minutes of the Meeting held on 20th April 2009 as a true record and agreed to the destruction of the manuscript notes.

5) Parks – Action List Update:

The Clerk went through the action list.

- **Arrange for clearance of ponds on a timely basis:** The TCM representative visited Magnolia and Spencers and concluded the weed was not sufficiently large to use mechanical equipment. He recognised the growth was quite prevalent and there was a need to use chemicals, therefore he would need to get in touch with the Environment Agency due to the flow of the waterways in Spencers and take into consideration the existence of the Great Crested Newts in Magnolia but he believed there were chemicals that could be used in conjunction with the wildlife. He will be returning with a proposal as to how to tackle the issues. Cllr Mrs Glynn questioned the use of chemicals affecting wildlife especially Kingfishers, Grass Snakes and Adders and a discussion took place. Cllr Holmes reiterated the pond surface would be covered in weed in a few months time unless action was taken and English

Nature required HPC to clear the Pennyworth. The Clerk confirmed the chemicals used would be herbicides that would not affect live beings but he would ensure TCM were aware of the flora, fauna around the ponds.

- **Footpath signs:** Licence issued from RDC, mock suggestions to be brought to next meeting.
- **Research provision of allotments:** Cllr Mrs Glynn asked if the piece of land siding St Mary's Church, Windsor Gardens and Rectory Road could be researched for the potential use for allotments. Cllr Weir thought it had been agreed to put land searches on hold until housing development had been allocated. Cllr Holmes asked the Clerk to add to the comment on 'action taken' - still awaiting final decision from RDC on core Strategy 'on housing'. Cllr Mrs Chippette notified Members of a website advertised 'organisation channel 4/landsearch' which could be of use to look up on the internet. **Cllr Mrs Heath proposed Members wait for the results of the Core Strategy on housing before any further research was made.** Cllr Mrs Weir seconded. The Chairman asked for a show of hands and the motion was carried.
- **Work on programme for ROSPA:** A&B Surfaces repaired Roundabout in Elizabeth Close and the work was done well. Cllr James agreed but raised that the works had created a step which he felt should be graded better. Cllr Holmes queried if he felt it presented any danger and Cllr James agreed he did. The Clerk advised the step had been created as the land had to be brought up to the right level to enable the work to be done but he would ask the Groundsman to have a look at it to see if he could make the step into a slope. The Clerk reported the major works had been completed in the ROSPA report, there were still minor works outstanding and he recommended the report be updated due to it being 2 years old and there was a need to bear in mind that new regulations had come into effect since the report. **Cllr Holmes asked Members if they agreed to instruct the Clerk to invite ROSPA to return in September 2009 to update the report, budgets would be set aside at that time for the works and, until then, remove the item from the action list.** Members agreed.
- **Tree Thinning in Spencers:** Essex Arb visiting Friday of this week to walk through the wood with the Clerk and the Groundsman. Trees will be marked with a small red dot at the base of the tree and Members may go and have a look. The Clerk phoned Allianz/Cornhill and received an email today confirming they will be sending out the insurance cover as normal to enable action to thin the trees in the autumn. The Chairman announced a date would be agreed for a site visit after the next Committee meeting. Cllr Mrs Heath asked if an explanation of the management of the trees was to be published in the Newsletter as previously agreed. Cllr Leach answered because of the heavy content in the next Newsletter together with the fact the trees wouldn't be thinned until the Autumn, it would be appropriate to publish an explanation in the August Newsletter and immediate neighbouring properties to receive a note through their door.
- **Spencer's Bridle path:** No action now until autumn when some tree work necessary. New whips planted along Spencers side to improve hedgerow by Pay Back Team. Cllr Holmes asked if there was any update on the project there and works would be held back until the project was committed. The Clerk advised RDC had put a budget of £22K aside in the current financial year for the project.

- **Litter/dog bins collections:** The Clerk reported he had spoken to Geoff Dawson again to advise HPC were unsatisfied. He went on to say he had identified a problem that the bins were small and the volume of usage was very high and there was a need to obtain costings to buy larger bins. Cllr Mrs Glynn said she had spoken to the bin men and they informed her their vehicle was too high to go under the barrier in Magnolia and they walk the rubbish to their truck. A lengthy discussion ensued on the feasibility of providing them with a key taking into consideration, health & safety and security. **The Chairman suggested letting the authority come back to HPC, now they had been spoken to, to enforce whether the contract was being fulfilled and he asked Members if they agreed for the Clerk to get costings for bigger bins.** Members agreed.
- **Adult Gym:** Arranging visit to Hylands Park, date to be advised. Cllrs Mrs Barney, Mrs Chippette, Mrs Cunningham, Mrs Glynn and Mrs Weir volunteered to attend. Cllr Mrs Glynn suggested a minibus be hired and the Chairman noted her comment adding that the cost would come out of the budget. The Clerk informed Members that Allianz advised that to double the cost of public liability would be about £200-£250 per annum. Clerk to meet Lisa Jeffries regarding funding on 1st July 2009.
- **Letter of Complaint re. dog mess:** Members agreed to remove item from action list.
- **Planting of Whips in Parks:** Whips planted along bridle path in Magnolia and half way long park side of bridle path in Spencers. Many whips still available but too late to plant in view of dry weather, they had been placed in a trench and will be used for remaining part of Spencers and for POS near churchyard in the Autumn. Cllr Mrs Glynn wished to congratulate the Groundsman for his work.
- **Great Crested Newts:** Hyder advised of HPC decision, no further response received. Members noted.

6) **Financial Report:**

The Clerk went through the Financial Report, everything was according to plan. There were no questions and Members accepted the Financial Report.

7) **Review of Groundsman's Salary:**

Cllr Leach as Chair of Full Council made reference to Standing Orders 24 & 38: Resolution "that in view of the confidential and special nature of the business about to be transacted, it is advisable in the public interest that the public be temporarily excluded and they are instructed to withdraw". The Chairman, Cllr Holmes stated as Members were discussing a review of salary confidentiality must be maintained and he referred Members to the Clerk's report.

Cllr Patient commended the Groundsman for carrying out a splendid job, he strongly felt the review to move him from pay scale 3 to pay scale 4 should be supported and proposed he be moved onto to a higher point level of pay scale 4 and look at working it into the budget at the end of the financial year. A lengthy debate followed on the affects of the scale points 18 to 21 within pay scale 4 which may result in reducing flexibility in later years to enable pay rewards, the affect on the budget and keeping in line with RDC pay scales recommended to relevant job descriptions.

Members also discussed the Groundsman's job description and Cllr Leach felt it would be appropriate to make reference to Spencers in the responsibilities, the

Chairman felt it was a good point and reference needed to be made to 'all' Parks.
The Clerk noted.

Cllr James commented that the Clerk had put together an excellent report and **he put forward a motion that the proposal in the Clerk's report to review the Groundsman's salary to pay scale 4, scale point 19 be accepted.** Cllr Mrs Weir seconded. The Chairman asked for a show of hands and the motion was carried. The Chairman confirmed the Parks Committee had approved the recommendation and the proposal would be put forward to the Personnel Committee for their approval.

8) Addition to Magnolia Mural (verbal update):

The Clerk gave an update that Scott Irving and his team would be completing the murals on 4th July 2009. Members discussed the works and asked the Clerk to ensure the area would be coned off on the day and to write to the Hawkwell Baptist Church informing them that the area would be coned off on the 4th July 2009 to give notice to the football team. The Clerk noted.

9) Proposed Fun Run – use of Spencers Park (verbal report):

The Clerk advised that Spencers would be used in conjunction with Clements Hall fields for a fun run to be held in 2010 and Members noted.

10) Summary of decisions:

- Cllr Holmes was elected to continue as Chairman of Parks.
- Cllr Mrs Heath was elected to continue as Vice Chairman of Parks.
- Approved the Minutes of the Meeting of 20th April 2009.
- Members agreed to wait for the results of the Core Strategy on housing before any further search is made for land for use as allotments.
- The Clerk to ask the Groundsman to have a look at the 'step' formed as a result of works in Elizabeth Close.
- The Clerk to invite ROSPA to return in September 2009 to update the report.
- ROSPA to be removed from action list until September 2009.
- Publish article on tree management in the August Newsletter and immediate neighbouring properties to receive a note.
- The Clerk to obtain costings for larger litter/dog bins
- Cllrs Mrs Barney, Mrs Chippette, Mrs Cunningham, Mrs Glynn and Mrs Weir to visit Hylands Park to view Adult Gym areas. Date to be advised.
- Letter of Complaint re. dog mess to be removed from action list.
- The Groundsman's salary review was accepted by Parks and the proposal to be passed to the Personnel Committee for approval.
- Members agreed for the mural to be completed on 4th July 2009, the Clerk to ensure area is coned off and to write to the Hawkwell Baptist Church.

Chairman