

**Minutes of the meeting of the  
PARKS, OPEN SPACES, CONSERVATION & FOOTPATHS COMMITTEE  
held on Monday, 20<sup>th</sup> April 2009  
at the Freight House, Bradley Way, Rochford, Essex**

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

**Also Present:** Cllrs Mrs T Bateman, Mrs H Glynn and R Mitchell.

**1) Apologies for non-attendance at the meeting:**

Cllr K Holmes (holiday). Members noted and accepted the apologies tendered.

**2) Declarations of Interest:**

There were no declarations of interest.

**3) Approval of the Minutes of the meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2009 and to approve the destruction of the manuscript notes in respect of that meeting:**

Cllr James queried whether the Clerk had included a note with the minutes of the 16<sup>th</sup> February 2009 as previously agreed, as the note had not been posted on the web site. The Clerk confirmed he had included the note with the minutes which had been circulated and he would look into it and include the note on the website. Members approved the Minutes of the Meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2009 as a true record and agreed to the destruction of the manuscript notes.

**4) Adult Gym – Lisa Jeffries of Rochford District Council:**

Lisa Jeffries gave a detailed presentation.

- She had looked at 3 examples of adult gyms at the Cornelius Moyden School, Canvey Island, Lodge Farm, Romford and Highlands Park, Hornchurch.
- For outdoor gym equipment it was not required to adhere to the same health and safety legislation as play space equipment which was regulated under standard EN1176. She felt this should be considered but she said for good practice companies were looking at keeping this standard.
- The suppliers she researched were Park Leisure who were fully compliant under standard EN1176 and the Great Outdoor Gym Company and Wickstead who were self compliant.
- Members needed to be clear on what type of exercise regime they wished to install.
- There were 3 main elements of gym equipment, cardiovascular, strength building and tai chi, hand to eye coordination.
- Noticeboards could be used in place of cardiovascular equipment. For strength building and tai chi, instructional plates would be needed for some equipment to be used safely and to good effect.
- She provided brochures for Members to have a look at and invited Members to put forward any questions.
- Cllr Mrs Weir asked why the trim trail equipment was taken out at Clements Hall. Lisa Jeffries answered that the equipment was taken out before Virgin

took over and she thought there was damage to some equipment and issues of safety but she would email the Clerk to be more specific.

- Cllr Leach asked given that HPC maintained parkland next to Virgin Leisure and given that Council were looking at a massive capital outlay did she feel it would be practicable for HPC to work together with RDC and Virgin to take it forward that way. She replied she could not answer for Virgin Leisure but she would suspect it would not be something they would be interested in. RDC would be happy to support HPC in terms of funding but on going, with regard to repairs and maintenance, that would have to be looked at and negotiated. If it was away from an RDC park it could not look at ongoing maintenance.
- Cllr Mrs Heath asked what type of flooring was used and she replied concrete pad, grass-crete or rubberised matting, the latter being the most expensive option.
- Cllr Mrs Glynn asked what equipment the Cornelius Moyden School had and she informed leg press, cycle, eclipse walker, seated lat, pull up bar and a twister.
- Cllr Mrs Glynn asked were the regulations the same as play equipment and Lisa Jeffries clarified play equipment was regulated under standard EN1176, outdoor gym companies were not required to adhere to the same legislation but for good practice they were looking to maintain the same standard.
- Cllr Mrs Glynn expressed she was particularly interested in a ski item for older people and asked Lisa Jeffries if she could look at finding 2 to 3 items that would be suitable for HPC to have in Rochford. She agreed to put some ideas together.
- Cllr Dickson asked within the authorities that she knew of that had these facilities what level of public liability did they have. Lisa Jeffries thought it was 10million but she was happy to find out.
- Cllr Mrs Dorrell asked if the equipment could be leased and she replied that she had found that companies were not willing to lease it.
- Cllr Mrs Weir asked about prices and Lisa Jeffries indicated for strength based equipment she had sought pricing packages ranging from £15K - £25K and one would be looking at £2.5K to £4.5K per item.
- Cllr Mrs Chippette asked would that include the base as well and she confirmed it would.
- Cllr Mrs Bateman asked if she knew what the usage was and she said the equipment in Hornchurch was very well used but they didn't monitor usage.
- Cllr Mrs Bateman asked had they had any incidents and she replied she did not know of any, Canvey had equipment for 18 months and they had not had any significant vandalism.
- Cllr Mitchell said he would have a look at the equipment in Hornchurch when he visits next week.
- Lisa Jeffries went on to say that the Great Outdoor Gym Company equipment seemed to be bigger and it was made in China so that should be considered for sourcing parts. Wicksted equipment seemed to have smaller bars but they were UK based.
- Cllr Mrs Heath asked how often did they have to maintain the equipment and she replied they maintained it to their own programmes.

- Cllr Mrs Glynn thanked Lisa Jeffries very much for the information she had provided and found it very interesting and pleasing to hear there were lots of the facilities in Essex.
- Cllr Mrs Heath thanked Lisa Jeffries for her presentation and she left the meeting.
- Cllr Patient asked where did the committee want to go with the information.
- Cllr Chippette said Lisa Jeffries was going to get back to committee with her recommendations.
- Cllr Leach summarised HPC needed to get in touch with the officer at Highlands Park, Hornchurch where the equipment was in place and get quality information so the committee could properly assess the crucial ongoing costs, to find out from Lisa Jeffries what funding was available and the Clerk to get in touch with the insurance company to find out the cost of doubling HPC's public liability.
- Cllr Patient agreed that HPC should look into it to offer keep fit equipment but it was vital to find out all the liabilities.

Cllr Mrs Heath asked Members if they were happy with that and they were.

#### 5) **Parks – Action List Update:**

The Clerk went through the action list.

- **Litter/dog bins collections:** Due to the issue on going Cllr Leach asked that one of the District Councillors speak to Geoff Dawson as it seemed he was avoiding contact with the Clerk. Cllr Mitchell reported at Spencers Park the dog bins were piled high around the base of the bin due to them being full. The Clerk reported the laminated signage had been put up on wooden stakes but had been removed after one day. A lengthy debate ensued on the usage of the parks 24 hours a day and how to change the attitude of irresponsible dog owners.
- **Glencroft Woodland:** The Clerk to send a copy of the note added to the minutes of 16<sup>th</sup> February 2009 to Cllr James and to ensure it is posted on the web site.

#### 6) **Financial Report:**

The Clerk went through the Financial Report. He drew Members attention to £16K overspend, £11K of which was for the tractor and £3K for wages to clear the bund in the churchyard. He felt by the time the CIF money and VAT came in, overall Council would be £10K-£15K under spent. There were no questions and Members accepted the Financial Report.

#### 7) **Tree Report from Essex Arb – Tree in Spencers Park:**

The Clerk informed that the Thorpe Close address was incorrect and he would send it off to the insurance company after this had been corrected. He explained the need for the committee to decide on which of the options provided Members favoured and went onto say that in his opinion Option 1 was the preferred option. Members discussed the potential backlash of public opinion in thinning the trees. The Clerk confirmed it was always an assumption that the trees would need to be thinned in terms of woodland management. He said Andrew Day, Consultant Arborist would come down and work with HPC to identify specific trees for removal. He confirmed HPC did not have any black poplars but it was likely that some common poplars would be taken out as they were thirsty trees. Cllr Leach said it would be to the benefit of the trees to avoid root cramping and to ensure longevity of trees, it would be explained with lots of publicity as to why HPC were thinning trees as part of the

management plan for the park. Cllr Weir referred to the complaint and felt very strongly that the trees in the complainant's garden may cause more potential damage than the nearest tree in the woodland 12 metres away but the report had said nothing about the householder's trees. He felt very strongly that Council should write to them. The Clerk explained the background that advice had been sought 5 years ago and it had been recommended that Council have another look in 5 years which is what Council were doing now and Council were enabled to state to its insurance company that it had properly managed the woodland and could avoid litigation. Cllr James queried the root of the problem and the Clerk clarified it was the totality of water extraction by the trees. Cllr James asked if Council would be required to employ someone to chop down the trees or could the trees be thinned in-house and the Clerk confirmed HPC could probably manage most of them. Cllr Mrs Glynn announced she had the photographs at home of the original plan of the trees if anyone wished to look at them. Cllr Leach stated Council were about to advise the insurance company that there was still an ongoing risk with the trees in the complainant's property. Cllr Weir requested assurance that Members would be informed of what trees would be taken down. Cllr Mrs Heath confirmed the trees would be identified with a red cross and Members could go and have a look at them. **Cllr Mrs Dorrell proposed that committee choose Option 1 at the right time of year. Cllr James seconded, Members voted and the motion was carried.**

**8) Roundabout repair quotes:**

The Clerk had managed to get a second company to quote to reduce the gap between the roundabout and the floor level. A discussion ensued as to the state of the other pieces of equipment and some Members expressed they would like the repair work done all at once with the possibility of achieving a discount from the contractor. The Clerk explained lifting the floor under the roundabout would wipe out the years budget and Council were obligated to carry out the work on the roundabout but were not obliged to make repairs to the other equipment immediately although it would need doing in the future. Cllr Leach recalled when the issue was debated because of poor access to the site the Clerk advised Council to carry out the works in one hit but Members felt it should be stepped. It had been approved by Council that it was done in steps. Cllr Mrs Heath stated that was because of the costs involved. Cllr Mrs Weir asked if committee could make sure that it budgeted for the works this year, next year and the year after. Cllr Mitchell queried possible access via the use of the dead end piece of road. The Clerk replied that he had walked around there with the contractor who took the view it would be better to gain access via Belchamps Way and temporarily close the footpath for the day. Cllr James said the footpath was very widely used and HPC must ensure plenty of notice is given prior to the footpath being closed. Cllr Mrs Heath asked Members to make a decision on which quote to opt for and **Cllr James proposed that Council select Associated Surfaces & Materials Ltd quoting £2794.89 plus vat. Cllr Mrs Weir seconded, Members voted and the motion was carried.**

**9) Donation of Whips & Holly Trees from RDC:**

The Clerk notified he had approx 2000 whips and was hoping to use the payback team to plant them but it was their busiest period. It was intended to put them in Magnolia along the bridle path and he was looking for approval for a start tomorrow so he could employ someone either as an employee or on a contractor basis to plant 2000 whips as David was very busy cutting grass. Cllr Mrs Heath asked if Members were happy with that and Members agreed for work to go ahead.

Cllr Mitchell asked if they could be used in Spencers and Cllr Mrs Weir asked if they could be put along the bridleway. The Clerk felt that was nicely blocked off now in terms of rubbish that was to be taken away later, he felt a couple of hundred would do but that could be looked at later when the works are done. Cllr Mrs Glynn suggested putting holly at the top of footpath 26 where the youth had been building their illegal bike track and the Clerk noted.

**10) Movement of Great Crested Newts:**

Cllr Mrs Weir said she couldn't see any reason why the newts couldn't be put in HPC's ponds. Cllr Leach said the repairs to the railway line were going to have to go ahead and he would suggest that the committee asks the Clerk to respond making it quite clear they are more than welcome to use HPC's existing ponds and waterways otherwise they will have to make other arrangements. Cllr Patient agreed. Cllr Mrs Glynn suggested they put them in the stream water ponds and that there was plenty of room beyond HPC's land where they could go. Cllr Mrs Heath summarised the above and asked if Members were happy for the Clerk to respond and Members agreed.

**11) Parish Seats (referred from GP Committee):**

The Clerk asked Members if they wished to have the seats put back in place and Members agreed they did.

**12) ECC Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981. Application to add bridleway from Gusted Hall Lane to Main Road Hawkwell via Mount Bovers Lane. Appeal by British Horse Society – Granted:**

Members noted.

**13) Summary of decisions:**

- The Clerk to make contact with the Officer at Hornchurch District Council regarding Gym equipment.
- The Clerk to find out from Lisa Jeffries what funding is available for Gym equipment.
- The Clerk to research the cost of doubling public liability insurance.
- The Clerk to forward a copy of the note attached to the Minutes of 16<sup>th</sup> February to Cllr James.
- Cllr James to add the note to the minutes on the website.
- Members approved Associated Surfaces & Materials Ltd quoting £2794.89 plus vat to lift the flooring under the roundabout.
- Agreed to employ someone to plant 2000 whips along the bridle path in Magnolia and some at the top of footpath 26.
- Council agreed Hyder Consulting could deposit newts in the nature reserve, the Clerk to respond.
- Agreed to put Parish Seats back in place.

Chairman