

**Minutes of the meeting of the
PARKS, OPEN SPACES, CONSERVATION & FOOTPATHS COMMITTEE
held on Monday 10th November 2025 at 6:45pm
in the Rochford Day Centre, 33a Back Lane, Rochford**

Cllrs present: Chair A MacPherson, J Dunkley, L Fane, T Hargrave, Mrs L Massey, S May, C Morris, Mrs A Petrescu (from 6:57pm) and Miss M Ward.

Also present: One member of the public.

The Chair reminded Members to put their hands up when they would like to speak during the meeting.

P 25/46 Apologies for non-attendance at meeting:

Apologies were received from Cllr Mrs M Weir.

P 25/47 Declarations of any:

a) Disclosable Pecuniary Interest;

b) Other Registrable Interest; or

on any matter on the agenda for 10th November 2025:

Cllr Mrs L Massey declared an interest by virtue that her spouse was a regular contractor for Council.

Members **accepted** the declarations made.

P 25/48 Public Forum:

One member of the public was present. No questions were raised.

P 25/49 To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 13th October 2025 and to approve the destruction of the notes in respect of that meeting:

The Minutes of the meeting held on the 13th October 2025 were **approved** as a correct record, and Members approved the destruction of the notes in respect of that meeting.

P 25/50 Financial Report – October 2025:

There were no questions and Members **accepted** the Financial Report.

P 25/51 Action List Update – November 2025:

25/51.1 Members had attended a site visit to Church Strip. Members were referred to Agenda item 8 (Minute P25/53b).

25/51.2 The Clerk still had not had time to follow up the issue regarding the water leak into Magnolia Nature Reserve. A few Members had visited the site and had reported the area was boggy again. The Clerk reminded Members the area near the pond had historically been boggy. The Clerk had obtained a quote for works to improve the surfacing which included laying cockle shells for around £2k. Members **approved** the works go ahead with that contractor.

25/51.3 The tree survey works were being conducted. Some works would require a specialised climbing tree contractor as Councils regular contractor was unable to carry out the works at height; quotes were awaited.

25/51.4 The Clerk had contacted the company who undertook the recent tree survey for Council for a full survey quote for Magnolia Nature Reserve and Park. Members noted the quote of £650 for the 2026-27 budget.

- 25/51.5** A site visit to Spencers Park had been conducted with two contractors to look at the path resurfacing works. Two quotes had been received but they were not like-for-like; the Clerk was awaiting a revised quote and would bring this back to the January meeting. It was anticipated works would be carried out in the current financial year.
- 25/51.6** Members were referred to Agenda item 7 (Minute P25/52).
- 25/51.7** Members had been tasked to carry out research for a Spencers Park sign. Cllr Mrs L Massey had requested to join a group on Facebook to see if there was any historic information on Spencers Park. The Clerk informed Members she had allocated funds in the 2026-27 budget for the sign. Photos of Spencers Park were available in the office for Members to go through. A Members suggested research be carried out looking through Echo news stories about the park.
- 25/51.8** A quote for concrete pads for Spencers Park benches had been received for five pads in Spencers Park, one in Glencroft Open Space and one in Magnolia Park field for c£2k.
Cllr Mrs A Petrescu entered the meeting at 6:57pm.
Members **agreed** that works go ahead as per the estimate received.
- 25/51.9** The playground lining games works would be carried out imminently. Members discussed moving a rubbish bin in line with the works. The Clerk had not been informed of the matter and would need to find out if this would be possible and how much that would cost.
- 25/51.10** The Clerk had contacted Council's insurance broker regarding the letter received about the alleged tree damage to a property neighbouring Spencers Park. The insurance company had instructed the Clerk a letter be sent to the claimant advising them to contact their home insurer. The burden of proof would lie with the claimant. The Clerk had drafted a letter which was currently being reviewed by the insurance company.
It was **resolved** that Members noted and accepted the Action Update List and **agreed** to the removal of the closed items.

P 25/52 Magnolia Nature Reserve – badger issues:

The Clerk distributed an update regarding the badger issues on BR35 and potential diversion. The ECC Public Rights of Way (ECC PRoW) Officer had confirmed ECC would fund the surface works for a new bridlepath, but funding would only be available in the new financial year (2026-27). The Diversion Order (DO) would need to be carried out by the landowners/managers. The Clerk had enquired with RDC if they would be willing to pay for the DO and make the necessary application, given they were the landowners. It was estimated the initial application cost would be around £500 with further legal fees due later. It was expected the official DO legal work could take up to two years due to a back log and the number of housing developments which were pushing resources. The ECC PRoW had advised that the diversion start in April 2026 but in the meantime works to clear the area for the new diversion could start to allow pedestrian access. A Member enquired if ECC could change the decision if works were being carried out by HPC; the Clerk confirmed this would not occur. A Member enquired if the new diversion route could potentially have badger setts/activity and if a survey would be advisable. The Clerk confirmed there was no badger activity along the section of the diversion route. It was noted Council's regular contractor was already carrying out preliminary works for the new diversion. A Member enquired if the new route needed to be fenced; the Chair confirmed that would not be necessary. Members were pleased that three Councils were successfully working together to find a solution.

P 25/53 Church Strip:

- a) Consider having a separate budget cost centre:** Members **agreed** to create a new budget cost centre.
- b) Update following site visit:** Members had carried out a site visit to discuss and agree the best options for fencing off Church Strip. Members had decided to fence the bridlepath north boundary with 6ft high security fencing. The Clerk had contacted the ECC PRoW Officer to

check the fencing would be suitable; they had given approval in principle if the fencing allowed a three-metre bridlepath width and that the security fencing would not have any spikes or dangers and would be visible to horses. Members **agreed** to installing a 6ft high green security fencing with a flat edge top. Two 10ft access gates would be included in the perimeter along with stock fencing on the Church side strip, with post and rail fencing doubled along the stock fencing where there were access points/voids in the church hedge fencing. The Clerk would go ahead to obtain necessary quotes.

P 25/54 RDC confirm new Park Byelaws – notification that these are now in force for Council’s parks and open spaces:

Members noted a miscommunication and that the Byelaws were still to be approved by the Secretary of State, so were currently not in force. If approved, the Byelaws would apply to Magnolia Park and Nature Reserve, Glencroft Open Space and Spencers Park.

P 25/55 Agree Parks budget for 2026-27 (bid 1) for recommendation to Finance Committee:

Members reviewed the Clerk’s budget proposal. A Member enquired why Council had funds allocated for the churchyard; the Clerk explained Council paid for fuel for the machinery that the church used to maintain the graveyard and that it had been a historic arrangement.

Members **agreed** to pay for the Church Strip fencing from General Reserves in 2025-26. A Member pointed out legal costs for the Adverse Possession would be required. The Clerk had been advised no legal assistance would be required at the time of fencing. It was however noted that ‘Caution at First Registration’ would possibly need to be applied for; the Clerk would make further enquires with the solicitor and advised Members any costs for that could be taken from the General Reserves.

Members **agreed** the Parks budget for 2026-27 of £68,750k for 2026-27 for recommendation to the Finance Committee.

P 25/56 Summary of Decisions:

- Magnolia Park Nature Reserve cockleshell surfacing works by pond to go ahead.
- Bench concrete pad work to go ahead in Spencers Park, Glencroft Open Space and Magnolia Park.
- Spencers Park sign work ongoing; Members to research news articles in the Echo about history of Spencers, to go through photos in office and Cllr Mrs L Massey to review Facebook group once joined.
- Clerk to investigate costs/logistics of moving bin in Magnolia playground.
- BR35 diversion works to go ahead; ECC PRoW to carry out surfacing works in next financial year. HPC to clear area for diversion and encourage pedestrian access. Clerk to consult with RDC about DO and who will incur costs.
- New cost centre for Church Strip agreed; this to be activated in 2026-27.
- Fencing specification for Church Strip agreed; Clerk to obtain quotes.
- Church Strip fencing to be funded from General Reserves.
- Finance budget for 2026-27 of £68,750k approved for recommendation to Finance Committee
- Clerk to investigate ‘Caution at First Registration’ process and any incurred costs for the Adverse Possession claim for Church Strip.

The Chair declared the meeting closed at 7:18pm.

Chair