

**Minutes of the meeting of the
PARKS, OPEN SPACES, CONSERVATION & FOOTPATHS COMMITTEE
held on Monday 9th February 2026 at 7:00pm at the
Hockley & Hawkwell Day Centre, Southend Road, Library Car Park, Hockley**

Cllrs present: Vice-Chair T Hargrave, J Dunkley, L Fane, S May, C Morris and Miss M Ward.

P 26/57 Apologies for non-attendance at meeting:

Apologies were received from Chair A MacPherson, Cllr Mrs L Massey, Cllr Mrs A Petrescu, Cllr Mrs M Weir.

P 26/58 Declarations of any:

a) Disclosable Pecuniary Interest;

b) Other Registrable Interest; or

on any matter on the agenda for 9th February 2026:

Cllr Miss Ward made a declaration of other registrable interest by virtue that she had recommended a contractor which had been proposed for works in Agenda items 7 and 9 (Minutes P26/63 & P26/65).

P 26/59 Public Forum:

No members of the public were present.

P 26/60 To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 10th November 2025 and to approve the destruction of the notes in respect of that meeting:

The Minutes of the meeting held on the 10th November 2026 were **approved** as a correct record, and Members approved the destruction of the notes in respect of that meeting.

P 26/61 Financial Report – January 2026:

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

P 26/62 Action List Update – February 2026:

26/62.1 Members were referred to Agenda item 7 (Minute P26/63).

26/62.2 A contractor employed by Rochford District Council (RDC) had assessed the water leak issue along Lincoln Road and had deemed the matter to be closed, with the property no longer discharging wastewater into the Nature Reserve. The Clerk informed Members that the matter would be kept under review and would be brought back to RDC, if required. Members felt it would be prudent to have the confirmation from RDC's contractor in writing, given that the issue had gone on for an extensive amount of time and concerns were raised that should the matter rearise, there would be no action and support once again.

26/62.3 Members were referred to Agenda item 8 (Minute P26/64).

26/62.4 The additional tree survey and any necessary works would happen in 2026-27.

26/62.5 Members were referred to Agenda item 9a (Minute P26/65a).

26/62.6 Essex County Council Public Rights of Way (ECC PRoW) had agreed to fund the works for the new Magnolia Nature Reserve bridlepath diversion. The PRoW Officer had met with Council's regular contractor twice to discuss works. It was noted that both Council's regular contractor and a team of volunteers would also assist with some of the clearance works. The Clerk explained that Council would work with ECC from a logistical management perspective. Members raised concerns that the field may be damaged during works but the Clerk explained that the

contractor would mitigate that. Members felt it would be beneficial to add appropriate signage and communicate well to alert the public when required.

26/62.7 Members had yet to present any research for the Spencers Park sign. A discussion ensued about what to include on the signage; some Members suggested adding an appreciation to those who gifted Spencers Park while others felt information on the natural habitat would be a good idea. The Clerk informed Members there were photographs in the office which Members were welcome to go through. Cllr T Hargrave volunteered to carry out a survey of the local species. Cllr J Dunkley would make enquires with a local horticultural group. Cllr S May volunteered to design the board once in receipt of wording.

26/62.8 The concrete pads for the benches in Spencers Park, Glencroft and Magnolia Park would be carried out once the weather improved.

26/62.9 The playground lining games in Magnolia playground would be drawn once the weather improved.

26/62.10 Members were referred to Agenda item 9b (Minute P26/65b).

26/62.11 The Clerk had provided two bin options for Magnolia Park playground. Members discussed the need to have the bin fully enclosed but it was noted a slight opening encouraged more people to use the bins. Members **agreed** to purchase a Glasdon Chieftain 90L green metal bin. It was noted the bin would be moved near to the railings on the right-hand side of the entrance way. It was **resolved** that Members noted and accepted the Action Update List and **agreed** to the removal of the closed items.

P 26/63 Church Strip – Clerk’s report:

The Clerk reported that she had come across an article in the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) which advised Councils working on land not under their jurisdiction to seek advice from their insurance companies. The Clerk had therefore contacted Council’s insurer and sought advice from a solicitor and it was noted that cover would be provided if certain conditions and processes were met. The Clerk would need to organise these accordingly. It was further noted the insurance would only cover the area which had been historically maintained. It was therefore agreed fencing would be erected in the inner perimeter of the Church Strip.

The Clerk requested it be recorded that she had concerns about the fencing and Council’s decision, feeling the area was not at risk of development, was not on the Call for Sites allocation list, and that the removal of the space from the public’s use could cause unrest. Members were insistent the claim for Adverse Possession would be in the best interests of the public in the long term. It was noted there was no decision for the end use of the land, but it was hoped it would be something for the community. Members felt it would be important to be proactive in alerting the public of Council’s actions and it was **agreed** this should be done at the earliest opportunity. A Member noted Council’s claim for Adverse Possession would be more successful if there was proof the land would be used for a purpose; it was **agreed** Members address this at a later stage, with priority focuses on erecting a suitable fence.

Vice -Chair T Hargrave left the Chambers at 7:46pm.

Members discussed the quotes provided and felt that the aesthetics were important, noting the security fencing was green and more in keeping with the natural habitat.

Vice-Chair T Hargrave returned to the Chambers at 7:48pm.

Members **agreed** to engage BF Ground Maintenance to erect 1.2m security fencing around the Church Strip perimeter to include two double mesh gates.

It was also **agreed** to officially name the land, as it had been referred to historically, as ‘Church Strip’.

P26/64 Magnolia Nature Reserve: Tree survey works required:

It was **agreed** to engage Essex Tree Services for the outstanding tree works in Magnolia Nature Reserve.

P26/65 Spencers Park:

a) Footpath improvement quotes:

It was **agreed** to engage BF Ground Maintenance for the Spencer Park footpath improvement works. The works would be carried out before 31st March 2026.

b) Email from resident regarding overhanging branches:

Members were reminded about the potential insurance claim regarding trees in Spencers Park. It was noted the Clerk had obtained advice from the insurance company about how to respond to the email regarding overhanging branches and that works would go ahead. It was **agreed** Essex Trees be contacted to carry out the works.

P26/66 Receive annual playground inspection reports – low risk:

The Clerk explained the difference and reasons for annual and weekly playground inspections. It was **agreed** a site visit would be carried out in the Spring so Members could decide what works needed to go ahead. Members also noted the bins in Spencers Park were becoming full of water due to the bad weather.

P26/67 Magnolia Store condensation problems:

Members noted the video of the dripping condensation and acknowledged the issue was due to poor/lack of insulation. Members felt vents would not be a suitable option given the problem of hot air from the tearoom would still be present. Members suggested the tearoom be insulated and the door to that area be closed when possible. Members also suggested a form of internal guttering may divert the water away from the machinery. It was **agreed** advice from Council's regular contractor be sought, given he was the main user of the area.

P 26/68 Summary of Decisions:

- Clerk to obtain written confirmation that the water leak issue from the Lincoln Road property has ceased and that if further issues arise RDC will be available to support that.
- Spencers Park sign work ongoing; Cllr S May to draw up design. Cllr J Dunkley to contact local horticultural group. Cllr T Hargrave to carry out a survey of local habitat/wildlife. Information to be brought back to next meeting.
- Glasdon Chieftain 90L bin approved for installation in Magnolia playground.
- BR35 diversion works to go ahead; ECC PRoW to carry out works with assistance from Council's regular contractor for certain clearance works. Public to be suitably informed once works commence.
- Fencing specification and contractor for Church Strip agreed.
- Church Strip to be officially named as 'Church Strip'.
- Essex Tree Services to carry out remainder tree survey works in Magnolia NR.
- Essex Tree Services to be contacted to cut back overhanging branches in Spencers.
- BF Ground Maintenance to carry out Spencers Park footpath improvement works.
- BF Ground Maintenance to carry out fencing work at Church Strip.
- Members to meet in Spring to go through low risk works from annual playground inspections.

The Chair declared the meeting closed at 8:18pm.

Chair