

**Minutes of the meeting of the
PARKS, OPEN SPACES, CONSERVATION & FOOTPATHS COMMITTEE
held on Monday 13th April 2026 at 7:22pm at the
Hockley & Hawkwell Day Centre, Southend Road, Library Car Park, Hockley**

Cllrs present: Chair A MacPherson, J Dunkley, T Hargrave, Mrs L Massey, C Morris, Miss M Ward & Mrs M Weir.

P 26/69 Apologies for non-attendance at meeting:

Apologies were received from Cllr S May.

P 26/70 Declarations of any:

a) Disclosable Pecuniary Interest;

b) Other Registrable Interest; or

on any matter on the agenda for 13th April 2026:

Cllr Mrs L Massey declared an interest by virtue that her spouse was Council's regular grounds contractor.

P 26/71 Public Forum:

One member of the public was present. P1 enquired why Elizabeth Close Playground had been shut at approximately 10.30am-11am on Bank Holiday Monday 6th April 2026. Members did not know the reason but informed P1 members of the public opened and closed the play space.

P 26/72 To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 9th February 2026 and to approve the destruction of the notes in respect of that meeting:

The Minutes of the meeting held on the 9th February 2026 were **approved** as a correct record, and Members approved the destruction of the notes in respect of that meeting.

P 26/73 Financial Report – March 2026:

The Clerk reported the budget was 104% spent before the year-end adjustments. There were no questions and Members **accepted** the Financial Report.

P 26/74 Action List Update – April 2026:

26/74.1 Members were referred to Agenda item 8 (Minute P26/76).

26/74.2 The Clerk had written confirmation from the Rochford District Council (RDC) contractor that if further issues arose with the property in Lincoln Road regarding unpermitted water discharge into the Nature Reserve, Council would be able to contact them again for support and advice.

26/74.3 The 3-year tree survey works had been completed.

26/74.4 The additional tree survey and any necessary works would happen in 2026-27.

26/74.5 Members were referred to Agenda item 9 (Minute P26/77).

26/74.6 Members were referred to Agenda item 9 (Minute P26/77).

26/74.7 Members still had not presented any research for the Spencers Park sign and were referred to the Councillor Actions required report at Agenda item 7 (Minute P26/75).

26/74.8 The bench concrete pads for Spencers Park, Glencroft and Magnolia Park had been laid.

26/74.9 Members were referred to Agenda item 9 (Minute P26/77).

26/74.10 Members were referred to Agenda item 9 (Minute P26/77).

26/74.11 Members were to organise a site visit to go through the annual play inspection low risk items; Members had agreed to undertake a visit in the Spring. Chair A MacPherson requested to attend the CouncilWise playground inspection course training.

It was **resolved** that Members noted and accepted the Action Update List and **agreed** to the removal of the closed items.

P26/75 Councillor Actions required.

Members were to arrange a site visit for the annual play inspection low risk items via WhatsApp and let the Clerk know. The Clerk requested a meeting after Mid-May and not to be on a Friday. Cllr J Dunkley had no information from the local Horticultural Group but had obtained information from the RSPB about local birds. He would pass this to the office for Cllr T Hargrave and Miss M Ward to collect. Cllr Miss M Ward had not been able to do any research on the Spencers sign, neither had Cllr T Hargrave.

A member of the public left the Chambers at 7:30pm.

The Clerk recommended those Members involved in the Spencers sign concentrate on identifying species local to Spencers Park.

P26/76 Church Strip update:

The Clerk's report was noted. The contractor would be able to commence works once in receipt of the gates; these were due to be delivered imminently.

Cllr J Dunkley would be conducting the visual inspections once the fence was erected. Cllr Mrs L Massey would assist, when necessary. It was **agreed** inspections would be conducted every two weeks, initially, with a review of frequency to take place in the future.

A member of the public returned to Chambers at 7:37pm.

A Member enquired if the Clerk was intending to put out notices about the fence work before it went ahead and suggested the contractors be given some literature so this could be passed to any members of the public who raised questions or had concerns about the works. The Clerk informed Members notices would be put on the fences and these had been produced already. It was **agreed** Council inform the church of the fencing works and Adverse Possession claim. Members **agreed** it would be prudent to publicise Council's actions using the noticeboards, website and Facebook pages. The reasoning would be concise.

Members revisited the point that the land could still be used by Council but that the public, from the time the fencing and gates were erected, were not permitted. It was noted the fact the land had to remain enclosed for 12 years may provoke some unrest among the community.

It was **agreed** to remove the two benches on the land as a matter of priority. It was **agreed** these be removed and kept in the Magnolia compound, before deciding and assessing their state for re-siting at Spencers Park to replace damaged benches.

Members **approved** Council use the services of a solicitor to lodge Caution at First Registration (CFR). The Clerk would contact the solicitor used for initial advice about Council's second attempt at Adverse Possession. The Clerk informed Members this work would be conducted once the fence had been erected.

Members enquired if someone else could lodge a CFR, but it was believed that was not possible if one had already been lodged.

P26/77 Update on recent parks works:

The Clerk informed Members that Council's regular contractor had erected some fencing to block access to the old bridlepath, following Magnolia Nature Reserve's bridlepath diversion works. That fencing had suffered vandalism and was unable to be repaired. Furthermore, the road plate protecting the badger sett had been removed and the badger sett hole was now exposed. The Clerk would contact the Essex County Council Public Rights of Way Officer (ECC PRoW) for advice about how to proceed.

Members noted the Magnolia playground linings had been well-received by the public.

Members noted that the Spencers Park footpath works had not been conducted to the specification supplied. A site visit had been conducted and the consensus was that the works

were acceptable. It was noted a bin and seat had been damaged and the Clerk had approached the contractor about this. A response was awaited.

P26/78 Correspondence from resident backing onto Glencroft Open Space:

It was **agreed** a site visit would need to be conducted with the Clerk and Members along with the resident and resident's contractor to discuss the proposed wall works. Members **agreed** certain conditions would need to be met, given the need to both protect Glencroft Open Space and the public who frequented it.

P1 raised concerns about the ground should it rain; Glencroft was known to suffer from poor surface water drainage.

P26/79 Correspondence from residents:

- a) **Resident 1 regarding Magnolia Park:** Members noted the area that had been proposed to be resurfaced to allow for roller skating was where the sink hole was. Members had reported this was getting bigger. The Clerk suggested this be added to the site visit for looking at the low level playground safety items.
- b) **Resident 2 regarding Magnolia Nature Reserve:** Members noted the resident's request to graze pigs and other animals in a section of Magnolia Nature Reserve. It was **agreed** permission would not be granted given the impracticalities and other issues relating to keeping animals. It was also noted the Byelaws which protected the Nature Reserve were likely to prohibit such activity.

P 26/80 Summary of Decisions:

- Cllrs to attend site visit in spring to address low level safety items in the play spaces and adult gym. Site visit to include assessment of the sink hole in Magnolia Park. Members to organise meeting between themselves on WhatsApp and to advise Clerk. Clerk requested meetings not to be on a Friday and to occur from Mid-May.
- Cllr A MacPherson to attend the playground inspection training course.
- Cllr J Dunkley to pass on RSPB information to office for Cllrs T Hargrave and Miss M Ward to collect for the research required for the Spencers Nature Board.
- Cllrs J Dunkley and Mrs L Massey to be responsible for the Church Strip fencing checks. Checks to be conducted fortnightly until comes the time to review the checking frequency.
- Clerk to inform church about Adverse Possession claim and resulting fencing enclosure.
- Notification of Church Strip fencing to be made on Facebook, Council's website and on parish noticeboards.
- Literature about Council's aim for its Adverse Possession claim to be given to fencing contractors. This to be distributed to public making enquires on site, if required.
- Two benches in Church Strip to be removed and stored at compound. To be assessed if suitable to be re-sited in Spencers Park to replace damaged benches.
- Council to appoint solicitor for CFR.
- Clerk to contact ECC PRoW for advice about exposed badger hole and vandalised fencing.
- Site visit to be conducted at Glencroft Open Space with resident, resident's contractor, Members and the Clerk to agree terms and conditions of access for wall work.
- Resident's request to graze pigs/other animals in Magnolia Nature Reserve not permitted.

The Chair declared the meeting closed at 8:07pm.

Chair