

Parks Committee Meeting Minutes

18th May 2026 at 7:00pm

at Hockley & Hawkwell Day Centre,
Southend Road Library Car Park, Hockley SS5 4PZ

Present Cllrs: Cllr J Dunkley, Cllr T Hargrave, Cllr A MacPherson, Cllr Mrs L Massey, Cllr S May, Cllr C Morris, Cllr Miss M Ward and Cllr Mrs M Weir.

Also present: One member of the public.

P 26/1 Election of Chair for the Civic Year 2026-27:

Cllr Mrs L Massey nominated Cllr A MacPherson which was seconded by Cllr J Dunkley. There were no further nominations and Cllr A MacPherson was elected Chair of the Parks Committee for 2026-27.

P 26/2 Election of Vice-Chair for the Civic Year 2026-27:

Cllr A MacPherson nominated Cllr T Hargrave which was seconded by Cllr Mrs L Massey. There were no further nominations and Cllr T Hargrave was elected Vice-Chair of the Parks Committee for 2026-27.

P 26/3 To receive apologies for non-attendance at meeting:

No apologies were received.

P 26/4 Declarations of any:

a) Disclosable Pecuniary interests;

b) Other Registerable interests.

Cllr Mrs L Massey declared an interest by virtue of her spouse being Council's regular contractor.

P 26/5 Public participation session:

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

P 26/6 To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meetings held on 13th April 2026 and 7th May 2026 and to destroy the notes in respect of that meeting:

The minutes of the meetings held on 13th April 2026 and 7th May 2026 were approved.

P 26/7 Financial Report (April 2026)

The financial report was approved, with no questions raised.

P 26/8 Action update list (May 2026)

26/8.1 Members were referred to agenda item 10 (Minute P26/10).

26/8.2 The additional tree survey for Magnolia Park and Nature Reserve, which had been agreed, would be carried out in 2026-27.

26/8.3 Members were referred to agenda item 9 (Minute P26/9).

26/8.4 Members had agreed to meet to run through the low-risk annual playground inspection items on the 18th May 2026 at 1:00pm. They had met with a contractor who had given advice and who would provide an estimate of works for some of the low-risk items. Some Members had offered to carry out some painting. The contractor would provide information to Council about the types of paint available. It was expected the quote for works would be available at the next meeting. The planned site visit to Elizabeth Close would be carried out as soon as it would become accessible.

26/8.5 Cllr A MacPherson had been booked on the playground inspection course which would be held on the 10th June 2026.

26/8.6 A site visit had been carried out at Glencroft Open Space with a resident's contractor to agree the terms and conditions of the replacement wall work. Council was waiting for confirmation of a start date for those works.

26/8.7 The Clerk had advised the Essex County Council Public Rights of Way (PRoW) Officer about the exposed badger hole and damaged fencing along the old bridlepath through Magnolia Nature Reserve. No response had been received to date.

26/8.8 Cllr J Dunkley had passed on information from the RSPB to the office for Cllrs T Hargrave and Miss M Ward to collect to enable them to build their research for the Spencers Park nature board project.

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

P 26/9 Councillor action update list:

26/9.1 Members had arranged a date for the low-risk playground items. A date for Elizabeth Close playground would be arranged as soon as possible.

26/9.2 No Members of the Spencers Park nature board group had carried out any agreed actions relating to the project.

26/9.3 Members were referred to agenda item 10 (Minute P26/10).

P 26/10 Church Strip – Clerk's update report:

Members noted the Clerk's written report. The contractors had taken four days to erect the fencing around Church Strip. It was noted that the ground towards the southern end of the strip would require raising; the gates were unable to be secured by the ground pins due to the uneven land surface. Cllr A MacPherson would be securing the signs the following day, weather permitting.

Responses had been positive via social media. It was noted a local charity had enquired if they would be able to rent the land from Council. After discussion, it was agreed it would not be suitable to rent the land at the current time. Council had agreed to

maintain the land as a wildlife haven to protect the land from development and harm. Members agreed it would be prudent to revisit the land use in the next one to two years. It was further agreed advice be sought from the solicitor handling the Adverse Possession claim about any future rental of the land.

A Member enquired if the benches that had been removed could be placed in the churchyard. The Clerk pointed out that the land was owned by the church and permissions would need to be granted; it was agreed by resolution that the Clerk would ask the church if they would like one of the benches. If not, the two benches would be reused in Spencers Park.

It was noted Cllrs J Dunkley and Mrs L Massey would be carrying out the fortnightly inspections; the Clerk would provide Cllr Mrs L Massey with a copy of the risk assessments and check sheets. The two Members would alternate checks across the months.

The maintenance of the land would be guided by the Clerk and Council's regular contractor. Mowing and strimming would be carried out in accordance with best practice when it came to maintaining a wildlife haven. It was noted the accounts now had a separate cost centre to account for all costs incurred when maintaining the land.

P 26/11

Refurbish parish Jubilee posts in Hawkwell – Cllr Miss Ward:

Members noted the pictures provided which showed one of the Jubilee posts which required wood treatment.

Members agreed to treat the three Jubilee posts situated in Spencers Park, Hawkwell Common and Magnolia Park. The Clerk would make the necessary investigations to ascertain the best product to treat the wood which would include contacting Rochford District Council's (RDC) Woodland Team to ask who had treated the carvings in Hockley woods. It was agreed Cllr J Dunkley would carry out the treatment works once a suitable product had been sourced.

P 26/12

Spencers Park ideas:

a) Restore memorial plaque for Mr Scott Spencer:

It was noted the said memorial plaque had been mounted on one of the Jubilee posts already discussed. It was therefore agreed that plaque be suitably treated in line with the agreed works for the Jubilee posts (Minute P26/11).

b) Consider extending path surfacing to include other paths – Cllr Miss M Ward:

It was agreed that a site visit need to be carried out to ascertain the exact path plans proposed by Miss M Ward. Members agreed to meet on 28th May 2026 at 3:30pm; Cllrs A MacPherson, Miss M Ward, J Dunkley, Mrs L Massey, S May and Mrs M Weir agreed to attend the site visit. The Clerk recommended Council's regular contractor attend the meeting to offer advice about the management of the open space. The Clerk reminded

Members that any large capital project would need to be costed and considered properly at the time of budgeting.

c) Consider wild flower areas in Spencers to control Ragwort – Cllr Miss M Ward:

A discussion ensued about the advantages and disadvantages of adding wild flowers, along with the historic issues of attempting a wild flower area in Spencers. It was agreed this matter would be better assessed following a site visit. This would therefore be looked at on the 28th May 2026.

P 26/13

Summary of decisions

- Cllr A MacPherson elected Chair for 2026-27.
- Cllr T Hargrave elected Vice Chair for 2026-27.
- Strategic Plan to be divided into Committees; Committees to review at their next
- Members to run through low-risk annual playground inspection items at Elizabeth Close once able to access the space.
- Cllr A MacPherson to attend playground inspection course on 10th June 2026.
- Cllr A MacPherson to fix signs to Church Strip gates.
- Request to rent Church Strip declined. Clerk to contact solicitor to ascertain if future requests could allow rental agreements.
- Members to review usage of Church Strip after approximately one to two years.
- Clerk to contact St Mary's church to ascertain if they would like one bench. If declined, both benches removed from Church Strip to be used in Spencers Park.
- Clerk to provide copies of the risk assessment and check lists to Cllr Mrs L Massey to enable them to carry out fortnightly checks; weeks of checks to be alternated with Cllr J Dunkley.
- Maintenance of Church Strip to be guided by Clerk and Council's regular contractor to ensure it serves as a wildlife haven.
- New cost code set up for Church Strip for accounting purposes.
- Jubilee posts in parish to be treated with appropriate wood stain; Clerk to obtain information about best product. Cllr J Dunkley to carry out works.
- Memorial plaque for Mr Spencer to be treated in stain alongside Jubilee posts.
- Cllrs A MacPherson, Miss M Ward, J Dunkley, Mrs L Massey, S May and Mrs M Weir to carry out a site visit along with Council's regular contractor to discuss wild flower options for Spencers and possible further footpath improvements.

Meeting closed: 7:47pm