

Clerk/RFO Briefing Note: Stewardship of Pin Brook Park (Minerva Park)**Date:** 21 October 2025**Prepared by:** Angie Hurren, Clerk / Responsible Finance Officer**Purpose:** To support informed decision-making in relation to Cllr Fernley's motion on the future stewardship of Pin Brook Park.**1. Context**

A motion has been submitted proposing the exclusion of the Pin Brook Park (also known as Minerva Park) from private Management Company arrangements at Redhayes.

In the motion paper, there is suggestion that stewardship is adopted by either Broadclyst Parish Council or East Devon District Council.

For Broadclyst Parish Council stewardship of Pin Brook Park (Minerva Park), the motion suggests that the costs could be funded either through a precept increase &/or the creation of a capital endowment from the Council's Neighbourhood CIL (NCIL) reserves.

This briefing note provides additional information to support Members in evaluating the financial, operational, and governance implications for Broadclyst Parish Council of the proposal should it take on the stewardship. The note concludes with recommendations.

2. Stewardship options**2.1. Option A: Broadclyst Parish Council Takes Stewardship**

Pros	Cons / Risks
Local control: closer alignment with local priorities and residents	Limited capacity. BPC is a small organisation with limited in-house expertise or staff
Responsive decision-making: faster adjustments to community needs	Operational burden: contracts, health & safety, insurance, inspections, public liability
Democratic accountability: via elected parish councillors	Lack of technical specialism. EDDC Countryside Team is far better equipped for ecological mgmt
Can leverage NCIL directly to fund improvements	Risk of inconsistent quality, especially without dedicated site ranger or countryside officer
Enables long-term community ownership	Financial exposure through long-term liabilities (e.g. play equipment, tree works, drainage)
Avoids Man Co; supports transparent public model	Reputation risk: failure to maintain to expected standard reflects poorly on BPC

2.2. Option B: EDDC Countryside Team Takes Stewardship

Pros	Cons / Risks
Specialist expertise in biodiversity, habitat mgmt, and engagement	Less direct community input; decisions may be made at district level
Established systems with staff, equipment, contracts already in place	Slower responsiveness meaning potential delays in service or issue resolution
Strategic alignment as part of district-wide green infrastructure	Possibly less visible local presence unless staffed on-site
Better equipped for risk management, safety inspections, insurance	Council priorities may shift; the long-term commitment not guaranteed if budgets tighten

3. Cost of Maintenance – Verified Estimate

The original motion estimates an annual maintenance cost of £14,500 plus bin servicing. However, based on key components in the *Redhayes Strategic Landscape Management Plan* and *Country Park Specification*, a more comprehensive cost estimate has been prepared.

3.1. Key Maintenance Components:

1. Wildflower meadows & conservation grasslands

- Two annual cuts (March & September)
- Ecological monitoring
- Scrub control, rotational management

2. Woodland & native trees

- Annual arboricultural inspections to BS5837 & BS3998
- Coppicing, deadwood habitat creation
- TPO compliance

3. Swales, watercourses, wetlands

- Invasive species control
- Sediment management
- Specialist ecological oversight

4. Amenity grassland & paths

- Regular mowing (weekly–fortnightly in growing season)
- Edging, strimming, path surfacing

5. Natural play elements

- RoSPA-compliant inspections
- Surface repairs, structural checks
- Willow structures maintenance

6. Interpretation boards, bins, signage

- Cleaning, repair, replacement on rolling basis

7. Ecological & species-specific considerations

- Protection of nesting birds (March–August)
- No herbicides near water
- Bat/hedgehog corridor retention

3.2. Full Stewardship Cost Estimate – Parish Council Delivery

Task/Area	Estimate (£)
Amenity grass mowing (April–Oct, fortnightly)	4,500
Conservation grassland mowing (2x/year)	1,200
Dog & litter bin emptying (3 bins, 3x/week)	1,900
Arboricultural inspections (annually)	1,200
Routine & reactive tree works	2,000
Ecological oversight & compliance	2,500
Wetland / invasive species management	1,200
Play inspections (internal & external resource)	1,000

Task/Area	Estimate (£)
Play equipment maintenance & renewal	1,500
Path & surface repairs	2,500
Signage & interpretation board upkeep	500
General site consumables	1,000
Insurance, H&S compliance	1,000
Contingency (10%)	2,200
Total Annual Cost (estimated)	Circa. £24,000

This estimate closely aligns with EDDC Countryside's informal cost model of £22,700/year and reflects the ecological, compliance, and public safety obligations outlined in the management plan.

4. Operational Capacity & Staff time

Parish Council Stewardship would require ongoing contract and site management, resident liaison, budgeting, and compliance:

- Based on current workload, the officer team does not have capacity to absorb this work.
- Delivery would require additional human resources, either through reallocation, temporary appointment, or contracted support, and this must be reflected in the council's staffing budget and risk register.
- Total estimated staff time cost to manage an external contractor doing the work is circa £3,000 based on 25/26 rates of pay and on costs.

5. Annual cost

Item	Cost (£)
Site maintenance (incl. contingency)	£24,000
Officer time (operational and strategic)	£3,000
Total annual liability	£27,000

6. Parish Precept Impact (2025/26)

Item	Value
Tax base (Band D equiv.)	2,937
Required budget	£27,000
Band D increase	£9.19/year

7. Endowment Model – Using NCIL to Offset Revenue

7.1. The motion proposes using part of the Council's NCIL reserves as an endowment to generate investment income to support the long-term maintenance and administration of Pin Brook Park.

7.2. The level of capital required will depend on whether the endowment is expected to cover:

7.2.1. Fixed costs only, based on current prices, or

7.2.2. Inflation-adjusted costs, allowing service levels to be maintained over time

7.3. A flat endowment of £600,000 would provide a stable £27,000 per year, based on an assumed average yield of 4.5%. However, the real value of that income would diminish annually in real terms due to inflation, reducing the effective level of service deliverable in future years.

7.4. To maintain equivalent service levels over a 30-year horizon, assuming an average inflation rate of 3%, a capital sum in the region of £750,000–£775,000 would be required. This would allow the income to grow annually in line with rising costs.

7.5. Council may wish to consider a blended model, combining endowment income with a modest precept contribution, to provide both flexibility and long-term financial resilience without overcommitting NCIL capital.

Estimated Yield from PSDF Investment (~4.5%)

Capital Invested	Annual Yield (approx.)
£100,000	£4,500
£150,000	£6,750
£200,000	£9,000
£400,000	£18,000
£600,000	£27,000

8. Capital Replacement & Long-Term Planning

The verified estimate in Section 2 does not include major capital renewals (e.g. resurfacing, equipment replacement). However, if the parish becomes the steward, these would be planned for through annual contributions to earmarked reserves, based on asset lifespan and replacement cost forecasts.

This ensures financial resilience over the life of the asset, in line with sound governance and audit expectations.

9. Governance Context – Equity and Community Use

While residents at Tithebarn purchased homes with estate charges in place, and the current s106 reflects that model, the proposed change reflects evolving policy at East Devon District Council to discourage private management companies.

If 600 homes alone bear the cost of a widely-used public asset, there is a legitimate argument around horizontal equity. Conversely, if costs are absorbed by the wider precept, this may raise concerns about vertical equity, with legacy residents subsidising growth they didn't generate.

The Parish Council must balance historical arrangements with its responsibilities to promote fairness, cohesion, and good stewardship across the whole community.

10. Responses to Member Questions (10 Oct 2025)

10.1. Financial queries

Q. Has EDDC confirmed the £22,700 figure?

► Provided informally by EDDC Countryside based on comparable service delivery. Parish estimate confirms similar costs.

Q. Is funding sustainable if precept changes do not materialise?

► Yes, if phased alongside tax base growth and/or supported by NCIL top-ups or grant applications.

Q. What is the current NCIL position?

►

Annual Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Report 2025-26		
Reporting Year 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026		
A	Total CIL Income Carried Forward from 2024-25	£676,229.27
B	Total CIL Income Received during 2025-26 (to date)	£43,107.37
C	Total CIL Spent (Expenditure)	£0.00
D	Total CIL Repaid Following Repayment Notice	£0.00
E	Total CIL Retained at Year-End (A+B-C-D)	£719,336.64

Q. Has investment advice been taken on the endowment model?

► Not yet. Any investment of public funds would require policy review and compliance with statutory guidance.

Q. Will the 150 Persimmon homes complete in time to affect precept?

► New homes do not increase the precept income directly as that is set by Council each year. However, once homes are completed and added to the Valuation List, they increase the tax base, which spreads the cost of the precept across more households.

If the additional 150 Persimmon homes are completed and occupied in time, they would reduce the Band D impact of any precept increase, but they will not change the overall budget unless the Council chooses to raise it.

10.2. Operational questions

Q. Who operates the site if EDDC declines?

► The Parish Council would be fully responsible via external contracts or internal arrangements.

Q. How much officer time is involved?

► Estimated at 1–2 hrs/week (spring/summer), but requires additional staff capacity due to current officer workload exceeding operational bandwidth.

Q. Who coordinates volunteers?

► EDDC if they manage the site. Parish would take on that function if adopted.

Q. Does £22,700 include all site costs? (NB £27,000)

► Includes maintenance and inspection, but not major renewals or extraordinary ecological works. These would need future funding.

10.3. Governance concerns**Q. What if the parish cannot fund it later?**

► Risk remains with the parish. EDDC (or whichever local gov structure is in place at the time) may not re-adopt. A sinking fund/endowment is advised.

Q. Would s106 need variation?

► Yes. This would need to be handled legally, and costs likely fall to the landowner unless otherwise agreed.

Q. Will this set a precedent?

► Yes, it may influence future decisions on the Pavilion or other Tithebarn assets. Council should consider a policy framework for future adoptions.

10.4. Community support / engagement**Q. Has the wider parish been consulted?**

► Not yet. If the motion proceeds, officers recommend short engagement via survey or drop-in.

Q. How will performance be tracked?

- Through an annual outcomes report including:
- Budget vs actual spend
 - Site inspections and H&S compliance
 - Volunteer data
 - Resident feedback

11. Summary & Next Steps

The motion reflects a legitimate and timely proposal. However, stewardship must be underpinned by accurate cost estimates, sustainable funding, and realistic capacity planning.

Recommendations:

Members are invited to:

- Assess whether Broadclyst Parish Council, EDDC, or a shared stewardship model offers the most resilient long-term solution.
- Consider recommending to EDDC, based on risk/benefit analysis in Section 2 of this report, that the preferred model of stewardship is for the Country Park to be adopted by East Devon District Council, and that the maintenance added to the EDDC Countryside Management Team's responsibilities.

Should Members resolve that the Parish-led model is most appropriate, then members are recommended to:

- Review the verified cost model (£27,000),
- Consider the viability and risk of an NCIL endowment,
- Provide direction on staffing, NCIL commitments, and community engagement.

This concludes my report to council.

Angie Hurren

Broadclyst Clerk & RFO.

13.10.25