Minutes of the Meeting of

HAWKWELL PARISH COUNCIL

held remotely on Monday 25th January 2021 at 7:30pm using the online Zoom meeting platform

Councillors present: Chairman R Patient, Mrs E Gadsdon, R Gardner, S May, Mrs N Shaw, T Manyika, M Strubel & Mrs M Weir.

Also present: District Cllr Mrs J Gooding & District Cllr P Shaw and Mrs L Shaw (in part for Minute 46b), along with one/two members of the public.

44. To receive apologies for non-attendance at meeting:
Members received no apologies; all Members were present.

45. Declarations of any:
a) Disclosable Pecuniary Interest;
b) Other Pecuniary Interest; or
c) Non-Pecuniary Interest on any matter on the agenda for 25th January 2021:
There were no disclosures.

46. Public Forum & Information Reports from District Cllrs for Hawkwell Parish:
a) Public Forum
Chairman R Patient asked in which capacity two people were attending the meeting as they were also District Cllrs; confirmation was given that their presence was as residents and not in their capacity as District Cllrs. *(With exception; Minute 46b notes where one resident responded in her capacity as District Cllr.)*
b) Information reports from District Councillors
The Clerk had responded that day to District Cllr Mrs J Gooding's email which had raised questions about a decision to engage a security company. District Cllr Mrs J Gooding noted the response but reiterated her questioning of Hawkwell Parish Council's (HPC) governance in its decision, stating she had looked at previous minutes and had seen no recorded delegated responsibilities for Committees. Chairman R Patient asked for no debate on the matter and informed District Cllr Mrs J Gooding that he had spoken to the Clerk and was satisfied by the response. He noted the decision had been agreed by the Finance Committee and that further discussion would take place between Members at the appropriate agenda item. District Cllr Mrs J Gooding asked Chairman R Patient if the matter would not occur again. Cllr R Patient gave his view that it had not been normal practice. District Cllr Mrs J Gooding moved on to update Members with a list of activities she had been involved with. This included assisting Hackspace who had refurbished over 100 laptops and had distributed them through schools and head teachers; organising NHS care packages; reporting flooding at the Rectory Road bridge; assisting Hawkwell Baptist Church with their foodbank and arts and crafts project; litter picking, specifically noting there had been a large quantity of waste left following an illegal gathering at Gusted Hall; assisting with the stewarding at the Puzey Practice in Rochford during the vaccination rollout; fly-tipping reporting and assisting with a Christmas parcels initiative for vulnerable families.

Members were also reminded of the current grants available.
Chairman R Patient gave praise for the work carried out and asked District Cllrs to assist with a flooding issue he had personally experienced in Rochford. District Cllr Mrs J Gooding asked District Cllr Mrs L Shaw, who was attending as a resident, to make comment in her capacity as District Cllr. District Cllr Mrs L Shaw reported that the matter had been passed to Essex County Council Highways who would be dealing with the landowner.
Chairman R Patient congratulated RDC on their daily bulletins, noting grant information was contained within them. He further congratulated those who were involved in the vaccination programme roll-out, relaying his own positive experiences.
District Cllr P Shaw updated Members that the waste service was operating understaffed as many were having to isolate due to Covid. People with missed collections were being asked to leave their bins out so the teams could pick them up in the following day(s). District Cllr P Shaw also told Members to contact him should any Local Highways Panel (LHP) matters arise so he could assist.

47. To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the Hawkwell Parish Council meeting held on 3rd December 2020 and to destroy the notes in respect of that meeting:
In respect of Minute 37, Cllr Mrs E Gadson stated she had counted two attempted votes during the vote confusion. In respect of her accusing the Clerk of emotional blackmail, she reiterated what had been recorded in the minutes, reminding Members some had offered to chaperone the Clerk to and from the office. She further restated her insistence to have meetings at no other time than 7:30pm was due to concern about Members not being able to attend and was nothing to do with not caring about the Clerk.
The Minutes of the Meeting held on 3rd December 2020 were **approved** as a correct record and Members **agreed** to the destruction of the notes in respect of that meeting.

48. Financial Report (December 2020):
The Clerk reported that at month nine overall expenditure was underspent under 60%, against an expected level of 75% with further expenditure due over the coming months. There were no questions and Members **accepted** the Financial Report.

49. Action List Update (November 2020):
49.1 The Defibrillator community event had been put on hold due to the Coronavirus pandemic. Cllr S May was assisting Cllr R Gardener with the defibrillator checks and it was confirmed all units were working.
49.2 Members had been tasked with finding ideas to improve the recruitment drive for Community Specials in Hawkwell. No candidates had come forward and Members agreed to close the item, but to reinstate it should any interest materialise.
49.3 The Finance Committee had reviewed Ashingdon Parish Council's (APC) application for a donation for King George's Playing Fields toilets at its meeting on the 14th January 2021. A donation had been approved conditional on receipt of the necessary paperwork and costings so decision on an amount could be decided. The paperwork had not yet been received.
49.4 Cllr R Gardner, as the Parish Council Representative for the Ashingdon & East Hawkwell Memorial Hall (AEHMH), reported the hall was doing well, with a few future events planned which included a drive-thru flower display. Cllr R Gardner also informed Members that AEHMH were in the process of taking a power

company to court over energy costs and that they were also resolving issues with a water company in relation to excessive costs.

49.5 The Social Media Working Group (SMWG) had amended their Terms of Reference (ToR). The office was awaiting the collage of photographs for the Facebook page. Cllr T Manyika informed Members the collage had not been done but that it was cosmetic factor and that the page could be launched without it. Cllr T Manyika moved that the Facebook page be set up and that the collage be added at a later date, to which Members unanimously **agreed**.

Members **accepted** the Action List update and **agreed** to the removal of closed items.

50. Setting the Precept for 2021-22:

a) Recommendation from Finance Committee regarding setting the Precept for 2021-22:

Members noted the Clerk's report. Cllr Mrs N Shaw, in her capacity as Chair of the Finance Committee, moved that Council approve a decrease of 1% on the Band D equivalent at £39.04 giving a total precept of £186,474.56 for the tax year 2021-22. This was seconded by Cllr R Gardner and **agreed** by majority.

b) Adoption of the Precept and approval to notify Rochford District Council (RDC):

Members **agreed** by majority to adopt the Precept and for the Clerk to notify RDC.

51. Approach from Essex County Council (ECC) Youth Service to provide youth work sessions:

Members noted the Clerks' report. There was a brief discussion about the initiative and Members felt that it was a good idea as Council had not done anything for the youth for several years. Cllr T Manyika suggested the sessions be publicised on Council's Facebook page, once live, as he felt younger audiences were likely to use that medium more. Cllr Mrs E Gadsdon suggested the information be given to District Cllrs so they could promote it on their own Facebook pages.

Members unanimously **agreed** to engage the ECC Youth Service to provide 20 detached youth worker sessions with Hawkwell Parish, commencing when possible to do so.

52. Engagement of Private Security Company on a three-month trial to patrol the Parish:

Members noted the Clerk's report which provided information for those who were not on the Finance Committee. Members further noted the security company would be under trial for three-months and Members would then need to decide whether to engage them under a year's contract.

Cllr Mrs E Gadsdon sought clarification over whether the company had already been given authority to start their three-month trial. Chairman R Patient confirmed that was the case. Cllr Mrs E Gadson requested confirmation that certain actions were correct: if the matter had not gone through Full Council for ratification; and if money had already been given to the company. Chairman R Patient explained that the endorsement occurred that evening when the Finance Minutes would be received. Cllr Mrs E Gadson referred to the earlier Agenda item 3 (Minute 46b) where District Cllr Mrs J Gooding had mentioned Council's ratification process. Chairman R Patient explained the process sounded unusual but reiterated his point that he had spoken to the Clerk and was satisfied by the outcome of that conversation. Cllr Mrs E Gadson expressed her aggrievance that no conversation about the ratification and or vote would take place, feeling that Chairman R Patient had given the

impression this agenda item would allow that. Chairman R Patient pointed out that the Finance Committee had discussed the matter at their meeting; Cllr Mrs E Gadsdon reported she had not joined the Finance Committee when the item had been discussed. Cllr R Gardner felt that suggestions of improper procedure were incorrect and stated that Council could discharge powers to any Committee by law and therefore it was not necessary for Full Council to ratify the decision. Chairman R Patient gave his opinion a mistake had been made but it had been in good faith; he had spoken to the Clerk who he said understood and that it would not happen again. Cllr Mrs N Shaw pointed out that if Full Council ratified every decision made by the Committees that this would not be in any way efficient or timely. It was noted that no other action had required this level of ratification in the past from Full Council; Cllr Mrs N Shaw was unsure why only this particular action had been called into question so much.
Chairman R Patient assured Members the initiative's aim was to make the Parish safer and that it appeared the bone of contention was that the implementation of the Finance Committee's decision before Full Council ratification. It was noted the Clerk had delegated powers and an example of those powers were given in respect of the Planning Committee. Cllr Mrs E Gadsdon acknowledged there were occasions of delegated responsibility. She further claimed Chairman R Patient was unaware of the £7k expenditure allocated for the security initiative in the Finance Committee budget.
Cllr T Manyika felt that there should be a consistent approach to Council's procedures, be it set either legally or by precedent. He explained that if certain things were to be put to Full Council for ratification then it should be the same case for all. He also expressed his view that it would be important to engage with the community over the initiative, so residents were well-informed.
Cllr Mrs M Weir relayed her embarrassment to have been challenged by a District Cllr on the phone about the security patrols as she had been unaware they had started.
Cllr M Strubel was supportive of the initiative, reporting that he had witnessed first-hand acts of vandalism and arson in Magnolia. He suggested erecting signs to make park users aware of the patrols and researching vandalism/ABS expense to Council.
Cllr Mrs E Gadson further voiced her opinion that consultation should have taken place as she felt decisions should be based on what residents want and that a serious decision should not be made by just one Committee. In respect of a matter relating to a security guard who had asked a resident to put their dog on a lead in the Nature Reserve, she further enquired what damage had been done to wildlife with dogs off leads and suggested Council was implementing new byelaws which included putting dogs on leads.
Chairman R Patient pointed out Council did not have to consult with District Cllrs and he felt that residents would be keen to see dogs controlled especially when it came to dog fouling. Cllr Mrs N Shaw reminded Members that there were signs up at Magnolia Nature Reserve which informed users of the Reserve to have their dogs on leads and they had been there for some time. She expressed her view that should she be challenged to put a dog on a lead she would abide and could see no problem with that. Cllr S May also pointed out that the Reserve had substantial badger setts with some of the sett openings being large and deep which could pose a danger. Cllr R Gardner informed Members that it wasn't a byelaw but Government had amended the law a few years ago in relation to dogs and that all dogs must be able to be controlled. He further pointed out that the Clerk, in her capacity as Proper Officer, could legally issue fines to offenders. Cllr Mr Strubel also noted the laws relating to dog control and read them out for Members.

Chairman R Patient informed Members that no official complaints from residents had been received and that the only complaints had come from District Councillors.
Cllr Mrs N Shaw agreed that consultation with residents would be important going forward; she informed Members that discussions on the ‘Caring for Rochford’ page on Facebook had raised concerns about dog walkers with dogs off lead in Magnolia, with the pandemic causing an issue when it came to trying to maintain social distancing.
Chairman R Patient reminded Members that the patrols were not just for dog walkers but to also help combat acts of vandalism and that the security patrol would be staggering their hours accordingly.
The Clerk informed Members that there was a current budget for the trial period and that following Full Council’s decision whether to appoint the company or not, any budgetary costs for full appointment would therefore be approved at the relevant Full Council meeting. She further noted that there would be opportunity to engage with residents and get the required feedback. The Clerk endorsed Cllr T Manyika’s comment regarding consistency of procedure and agreed there needed to be a consistent approach. She further noted that each Full Council agenda included a payment delegation and that she believed as each Committee had their own budget and remit there was no requirement for ratification by Full Council. As Full Council only received the minutes of those Committees, the delegation was already in place. She understood that Full Council had its own specific set remit including items such as setting the Precept and signing off the Annual Accounts & Return.
Cllr Mrs E Gadson informed Members she would be seeking further information from NALC. She also gave her opinion that Cllr R Gardner should desist from giving legal examples and information as she felt there was not the opportunity to look at his information and that the Clerk was paid to provide that service.
Chairman R Patient noted that Standing Orders had not been adhered to and he had allowed Cllr Mrs E Gadsdon to contribute more than was permitted. It was agreed between Chairman R Patient and Cllr Mrs E Gadson that it be recorded that Cllr Mrs E Gadson opposed Council’s decision to engage the security company as she felt not enough consideration had been given by Members and that there had been no public consultation.

53. Correspondence:

1. **Southend Area Bus User Group (SABUG) – Information on Services:** Members noted the information.
2. **Hockley & Hawkwell Old People’s Welfare – Minutes of the AGM held on the 7th December 2020:** Members noted the Minutes.
3. **Voyage Partnership – Website link and information on RDC’s Asset Strategy:** Members noted the information**.** Cllr Mrs M Weir gave her view that RDC appeared to lack regard for the District’s heritage, noting she felt some buildings were unique and full of history. Chairman R Patient thought the plans would change by the time the final document was published. Cllr R Gardner felt there was a lack of regard of residents’ views and wondered why residents had not been consulted. Cllr Mrs E Gadsdon felt the buildings were not fit for purpose and listed several reasons relating to size and technical set-up; she felt it was important to move with the times and capitalise on assets. Cllr R Gardner raised concerns that RDC had lost money on buildings.
   The Clerk reminded Members the item was for information not debate. Members continued to discuss the matter and District Cllr Mrs J Gooding corrected Cllr R Gardner on points brought up about her past work experiences and profits of the related

business. Chairman R Patient closed the item by relaying some personal experiences pertaining to local authority asset strategies.

4. **Essex Association of Local Councils (EALC) – Training Calendar:** Members noted the information. Cllr Mrs N Shaw requested to attend the Cllr Training Days 1 and 2; the Clerk would make the necessary arrangements.

54. Receive Committee/Working Party Reports since last meeting:

Finance Committee: Cllr Mrs N Shaw moved the Minutes of the Finance Committee meeting held on the 14th December 2020 which were **accepted.**

Parks Committee: Cllr S May moved the Minutes of the Parks Committee meeting held on the 14th January 2021 which were **accepted.**

Planning Committee: Cllr Mrs M Weir moved the Planning Responses to Rochford District Council from 9th December 2020 to 11th January 2021 which were **accepted.**

55. Payment of Accounts:

There were no questions and the payment of accounts paid since the last meeting (December 2020) were **approved together with agreement to pay any accounts due** before the next meeting.

Cllr Mrs E Gadsdon suggested a representative from RDC be invited to a meeting to discuss the RDC Asset Strategy. Chairman R Patient hoped Members would be back in physical meetings by May/June and that the Leader of the District Council could attend. The Clerk reported there would be further consultation with the Voyage Partnership in February and they were keen for the Parish Councils to get the information out. Once the Council's Facebook page had launched it was suggested that would be a good medium to help share the information.

56. Summary of Decisions Taken:

- Launch of Council Facebook page approved.
- Precept of £186,474.56 for the tax year 2021-22 approved; Clerk to notify RDC.
- Council to engage the ECC Youth Service to provide 20 detached youth worker sessions within Hawkwell Parish, commencing when possible to do so.
- Council to review Security Company trial for three-months before deciding whether to engage them under a year's contract.
- Cllr Mrs N Shaw to attend Cllr Training Days 1 and 2; Clerk to organise.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8:58pm

Chairman