

**Minutes of the Meeting of
HAWKWELL PARISH COUNCIL
held on Monday 13th January 2025 at 7:30pm
in the Rochford Day Centre, 33a Back Lane, Rochford**

Councillors present: Chair S May, L Fane, R Gardner, A MacPherson, Mrs L Massey & Mrs M Weir.

Also present: Essex County Councillor (ECC) Mrs L Shaw.

FC 25/72 To receive apologies for non-attendance at meeting:

Members received apologies from Cllr R Gardner and District Cllr Mrs D Squires-Coleman.

FC 25/73 Declarations of any of the following interests on any matter on the agenda for 13th January 2025:

a) Disclosable Pecuniary Interest;

b) Other registrable interests

None were declared.

FC 25/74 Public Forum & Information Reports from District Cllrs for Hawkwell Parish:

a) Public Forum: There was one members of the public present.

b) Information Reports from District and County Councillors:

ECC Cllr Mrs L Shaw informed Members that the ECC Locality Fund had closed and shared her difficulties in trying to allocate funds to eligible groups; she reported that a lot of potential recipients appeared to not want the grant money. The Clerk thanked ECC Cllr Mrs L Shaw for her assistance in obtaining further grant funding for Council's bleed kits.

ECC Cllr Mrs L Shaw also informed Members ECC had met at an extraordinary meeting in relation to the government's Priority Programme for Devolution. She confirmed that ECC, along with Thurrock Council and Southend on Sea Council, would formally put in a request to the Minister for Local Government to be part of the programme. It was noted this moved included a commitment to Local Government reorganisation. Once more information had been received, this would be relayed to Members.

Members were also referred to Agenda item 12 (Minutes FC 25/87.2) for updates and correspondence from ECC Cllr Mrs L Shaw.

FC 25/75 To approve as a correct record the minutes of the Hawkwell Parish Council meeting held on 9th September 2024 and to destroy the notes in respect of the meeting:

It was **resolved** that the minutes from the Full Council meeting held on 9th September 2024 were approved as a correct record and Members agreed to the destruction of the notes in respect of that meeting.

FC 25/76 Financial Report (December 2024):

The Clerk explained the budget report showed expenditure was at 77%, but that included monies which would be vired from General Reserves for the purchase of the solar panels at Magnolia Store. This therefore meant the budget was 74% spent and on track. The Finance budget was 79% spent, the Parks budget 76% spent and the General Purposes budget was 64% was underspent.

There were no questions and it was **resolved** that Members accepted the Financial Report.

FC 25/77 Action List Update (January 2025):

- 25/77.1** The Eco-Audit update report had been received. Members were referred to Agenda item 12 (Minute FC 25/83).
- 25/77.2** Members were referred to Agenda item 8 (Minute FC 25/79).
- 25/77.3** Members were referred to Agenda item 15 (Minute FC 25/86).
- 25/77.4** Cllr L Fane would assist with the defibrillator checks while Cllr R Gardner was unable to do so. Cllr S May would show Cllr L Fane how to conduct the checks and it was expected this would be conducted in the coming week. Cllr Mrs L Massey also reminded Members she was happy to assist but only had weekend availability to be shown the process.
- 25/77.5** The financial check for Q1 2024-25 and Q2 2024-25 had been conducted and reported to the Finance Committee. The Q3 2024-25 checks were expected to be conducted in early February.
- 25/77.6** Council had not won the Council Star Awards. Thanks were relayed to Cllr R Gardner for his entry submittance. It was agreed to close the item.
It was **resolved** that Members accepted the Action List update and agreed to the removal of closed items.

FC 25/78 Resignation of Cllr Mrs L Dalby:

Members noted the resignation of Cllr Mrs L Dalby. It was noted the Chair had emailed Cllr Mrs L Dalby and thanked her for her contribution. It was **agreed** the Clerk also send a letter of thanks to Cllr Mrs L Dalby on behalf of Council.

FC 25/79 Councillor vacancies:

It was noted that Council had many vacancies and that presented cause for concern. The Clerk explained the issues with the dwindling numbers and the problems when Council was not quorate, pointing out the last two Full Council meetings had been cancelled for that reason. It was noted she had contacted RDC's electoral division to gain advice should Council fall below the required quorum of six Members. She had also made an enquiry to the Electoral Boundary Commission about how to go about reducing the number of seats for Hawkwell Parish Council, noting the full 17 seats had never been filled in over 10 years. Members felt that the impressions of becoming a Councillor were off-putting and felt the political landscape did not assist, despite the non-political stance of the parish council. Some Members also felt the previous adverts for becoming a Cllr were too overloaded with information and hence were off-putting. Another Member also felt that Council did not do enough to generate enough interest from residents.

The Clerk reported that usually the most interest in becoming a Cllr was generated from the newsletter publications. It was noted a newsletter was due in February. It was **agreed** a feature for a new Cllr should take the entire front page. Members felt it would be useful to humanise what it meant to be a Cllr. Cllr L Fane volunteered to write an article about his experiences of being a Cllr.

ECC Cllr Mrs L Shaw suggested Members attend the WI Hall on a Tuesday to meet the local community and try to encourage people to join Council.

A Member suggested approaching an advertising agency to see if expertise could be gained about how and when to advertise for the Cllr positions.

It was **agreed** Cllr L Fane would also draw up an action plan of what Council participated in and what was needed to recruit new Members. It was noted this would need to be done quickly to make the deadline for the newsletter articles; it was therefore **agreed** this would be produced in time for the next Full Council meeting and be sent to all Members.

FC 25/80 2025-26 Precept:

a) Recommendation from the Finance Committee - setting the Precept for 2025-26:

It was **resolved** that Members **approve** the recommendation from the Finance Committee that the total budget for 2025-26 be set at £209,680 and that the average Band D figure be increased to £43.60. Following receipt of the final tax base figure from RDC, this yielded a precept of £209,637.52. The resulting shortfall of income over planned expenditure would be £42.48 and this could be vired from the General Reserve, if required. The increase in precept represented an increase of 4.8%.

b) Adoption of the precept and approval to notify Rochford District Council:

It was **resolved** that Council approve a Precept of £209,637.52 for the year 2025-26, with a resulting average Band D figure of £43.60. Council also instructed the Clerk to advise RDC of the approved Precept.

ECC Cllr Mrs L Shaw left Chambers at 8:05pm

Cllr T Hargrave left the Chambers at 8:06pm

FC 25/81 Councillor allowances – Cllr A MacPherson:

a) Report of the Independent Remuneration for Parish & Town Councils:

Members noted the report from RDC regarding remuneration for parish and town councils.

Cllr T Hargrave returned to the Chambers at 8:08pm

Members were unsure if the option of remunerating Members would incentivise people to join. It was noted that co-opted Members would not be eligible for the payment. The Clerk also pointed out the potential cost involved and asked Members consider how such costs would be covered, i.e. would monies be sourced via the Precept or Council's General Reserves. The Clerk also pointed out that no person who had applied to be a HPC Cllr had ever enquired about potential remuneration to date. One Member felt that those with childcare needs would benefit from a form of remuneration and potentially having no allowance for that could mean that demographic was deterred from joining Council. It was **agreed** that more information was required pertaining to other parish councils before any decision could be made. Members requested the Clerk discover what the other neighbouring parish councils did in regard to remunerating their Members.

FC 25/82 Winter newsletter: items for inclusion:

Members **approved** the following articles:

Article	Author
Councillor vacancies: call for more Members	Cllr L Fane
Publicise Eco-Audit actions	<i>Office (To omit if no room)</i>
Remembrance Garden at Hawkwell Common	Cllr Mrs L Massey
New Flower planters at Whitehart Shopping Parade	<i>No author allocated</i>
Parks update: a) Spencers Brook update: b) Magnolia Park dog patrols:	Cllr T Hargrave <i>No author allocated</i>
Bleed kits – funding from ECC Locality Fund and PFCC Safer Streets Fund	Cllr S May
Christmas parcels for the elderly project	Cllr Mrs L Massey / Cllr L Fane
Freight House – current situation	Cllr Mrs M Weir
List of Councillors	Office
Third party contact details	Office

Members further **approved** the timetable as set out in the Clerk's recommendation report.

FC 25/83 Receive Eco-Audit update report:

Members received the Eco-Audit update report. The Clerk briefly ran through some of the points raised in the report and informed Members the Eco-Audit Consultant was pleased with Council's efforts.

It was noted the Chair of the Climate Change Working Group (CCWG) had now left Council so it was **agreed** to refer the report to the General Purposes Committee for review.

FC 25/84 Email from Essex County Schools Athletics Association (ECSAA) regarding obtaining permission to use Spencers Park in a cross-county event on 18th January 2025:

Members raised concerns about the impact the run would have on the surfacing of Spencers Park. Advice was sought from Council's main contractor who advised the level of damage would be weather dependent. He suggested they allow the event to go ahead to support the community but add a proviso that should extensive damage occur, the group assist in repairing the damage. It was **resolved** Council allow the ECSAA to use Spencers Park in a cross-country event with the condition that should extensive damage occur the ECSAA assist in repairing the ground.

FC 25/85 Private Security Patrols – Q3 2024-25 reports:

a) **Patrol Summary report:** Members noted the report.

b) **Incident Analysis Report:** Members noted the report. The Clerk reported there had been a favourable report on S-Type Security in the newspaper.

The member of the public left the Chambers at 8:40pm

FC 25/86 Review of switch to emailed correspondence:

Members felt the switch to emailed correspondence was working well. One Member preferred a hard copy as they liked to keep the papers.

The member of the public returned to the Chambers at 8:42pm

FC 25/87 Correspondence:

25/87.1 Essex Association of Local Councils (EALC):

a) **Email and Training Calendar 2025:** The information was noted.

b) **News Bulletin – December:** The information was noted.

c) **News Bulletin – January:** The information was noted.

d) **Police, Fire & Crime Bulletin December 2024:** The information was noted.

25/87.2 Emails from Essex County Councillor (ECC) Cllr Mrs L Shaw:

a) **Launch of Climate Action Report for Essex:** The information was noted.

b) **Information on sustainable travel:** The information was noted.

c) **Future of Essex – notice of an Extraordinary Meeting:** The information was noted.

25/87.3 National Association of Local Councils (NALC):

a) **Bulletin (inc. info on the Government's 'English Devolution White Paper.')** The information was noted.

b) **Open letter to Parish and Town Councils:** The information was noted.

25/87.4 Rochford District Council (RDC):

a) **Launch of Rochford Winter Fuel Support Fund:** The information was noted.

b) **Official launch of RDC reception in Rochford Library:** The information was noted.

c) **New leisure facilities operator for Clements Hall:** The information was noted.

25/87.5 Southend User Bus Group (SABUG) – Changes to bus fares from 1st January 2025:

The information was noted.

25/87.6 Essex & Herts Air Ambulance – Donation thank you letter: The information was noted.

FC 25/88 Representatives Reports:

Rochford Old Peoples Welfare Committee – There was no update.

RHALC – There would be a meeting on Thursday 16th January. Cllr L Fane would attend the meeting along with Cllr S May, with the view to becoming an additional Representative.

Ashingdon & East Hawkwell Memorial Hall – No representatives.

Hawkwell Village Hall – Both representatives did not attend the last meeting.

Public Transport Liaison Group – No representative.

Robert Sudbury Trust – The Chair explained the brief history of the trust for the benefit of the more recent Members. There were no updates.

Information Reports:

Community Meetings – There were no updates.

A Member enquired how the groups were decided for the local area. The Clerk explained they had been set up historically.

FC 25/89 Receive Committee/Working Party Reports since last meeting:

Finance Committee: It was **resolved** that Members accepted the minutes of the meeting held on 9th September 2024 & 2nd December 2024.

Parks Committee: It was **resolved** that Members accepted the minutes of the meeting held on 16th September 2024, 14th October 2024 & 11th November 2024.

General Purposes Committee: It was resolved that Members accepted the minutes of the meeting held on 16th September 2024, 14th October 2024 & 11th November 2024.

Planning Committee: It was **resolved** that Members accepted the minutes of the meeting held on the 4th November 2024.

Personnel Committee: It was **resolved** that Members accepted the minutes of the meeting held on the 11th November 2024.

FC 25/90 Payment of accounts:

There were no questions and it was **resolved** that the payment of accounts paid since the last meeting (September to December payments) were approved together with agreement to pay any accounts due before the next meeting. Chair to sign under new regulations.

FC 25/91 Summary of decisions taken:

- Cllr S May to show Cllr L Fane how to conduct the defibrillator checks. Cllr Mrs L Massey also to be shown over a weekend.
- Resignation of Cllr Mrs L Dalby accepted; Clerk to write a letter of thanks.
- Cllr L Fane to draw up an action plan relating to encouraging new Members; plan to be ready in time for next Full Council meeting.
- Precept for 2025-26 agreed; Clerk to notify RDC.
- Clerk to conduct research on neighbouring Parish Council's remuneration policies.
- Winter newsletter articles agreed along with timetable.
- Eco-Audit referred to General Purposes Committee for review.
- Permission granted to ECSAA to use Spencers Park; any significant damage to be dealt with by the ECSAA.
- Cllr L Fane to attend RHALC meeting with Cllr S May with view to becoming additional Representative.

The Chair declared the meeting closed at 8:55pm

Chair