

**Minutes of the Meeting of
HAWKWELL PARISH COUNCIL
held on Monday 3rd March 2025 at 7:32pm
at the Rochford Day Centre, 33a Back Lane, Rochford**

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

Also present: Essex County Councillor (ECC) Mrs L Shaw and two members of the public (one present for a co-option interview.)

The Chair welcomed the return of Cllr R Gardner. The Chair also reminded Members to speak up and to raise their hands when they wanted to speak to ensure a smooth running of the meeting.

FC 25/110 To receive apologies for non-attendance at meeting:
Members received apologies from District Cllr I Wilson.

FC 25/111 Declarations of any of the following interests on any matter on the agenda for 3rd March 2025:
a) Disclosable Pecuniary Interest;
b) Other registrable interests
None were declared.

FC 25/112 Public Forum & Information Reports from District Cllrs for Hawkwell Parish:
a) Public Forum: There were two members of the public present.
b) Information Reports from District and County Councillors:
ECC Cllr Mrs L Shaw reported the Essex County Council budget had been agreed with the Locality Fund being made available again, set at £5k. She was unsure at the current stage of the minimum spend but expected to be able to split the fund between the five parishes within her Rochford North division. Mention was also made of a local community fund which would be made available for community projects, but only for non-profits. When the fund was up and running details would be sent to all Parish Council Clerks. A Member enquired if the fund would be made available to schools and it was expected it would be, with certain conditions applied. Members were also referred to Agenda item 13 (Minutes FC 25/122.2) for further correspondence from ECC Cllr Mrs L Shaw.
ECC Cllr Mrs L Shaw also gave an update on RDC Cllr I Wilson's behalf; RDC had set their budget but it was to be noted that no funds had been allocated to the Freight House and that when a vote had come to the table, the majority of District Councillors voted against adding monies to that budget despite proposals to allocate £500k to it. It was further noted there was a feasibility study ongoing for the Freight House and those results would be made known to Council in March 2025. However, no funds were available for any improvements. The Clerk enquired if the approx. £90k that had been estimated to be needed to open the main hall in the interim was still available and ECC Cllr Mrs L Shaw reported that there were no funds at all for works. It was also reported that the question about HPC's investment in the Freight House had been asked to RDC and it was noted that the agreement to hold meetings there was no longer valid. The Clerk would confirm more once the official minutes from RDC had been published.

FC 25/113 To approve as a correct record the minutes of the Hawkwell Parish Council meeting held on 10th February 2025 and to destroy the notes in respect of the meeting:

It was resolved that the minutes from the Full Council meeting held on 10th February 2025 were approved as a correct record and Members agreed to the destruction of the notes in respect of that meeting.

FC 25/114 Co-option interview.

A candidate underwent a Q&A session. Following the interview, the candidate remained for the rest of the meeting.

FC 25/115 Financial Report (February 2025):

The Clerk reported expenditure was at 88.2% at month 11. The Finance budget was 91% spent, the Parks budget 84% was spent, considering monies which would be vired from the General Reserves at the fiscal year end, and the General Purposes budget was 85% spent. The Clerk informed Members that the accounting firm would be carrying out the financial year end closedown in April and the final set of accounts would be available soon after that. There were no questions and it was resolved that Members accepted the Financial Report.

FC 25/116 Action List Update (March 2025):

25/116.1 The Eco-Audit update report had been received and referred to the General Purposes Committee (GP). It was agreed to close the item as GP would pursue matters.

25/116.2 Cllr S May had shown Cllr L Fane how to carry out the defibrillator checks and was awaiting access to the WebNos system so he would be able to carry out the reporting. Cllr S May had shown Cllr Mrs L Massey how to carry out the checks too. Cllr L Fane would chase Community Heartbeat Trust too to get added to the WebNos system.

25/116.3 Members were referred to Agenda item 9 (Minute FC 25/118).

25/116.4 The newsletter was due to be distributed that week.

25/116.5 The Clerk had informed the Rochford Hundred Association of Local Councils (RHALC) that Cllr L Fane would join Cllr S May as Council's representative. Members agreed to close the item.

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

ECC Cllr Mrs L Shaw left the Chambers at 7:57pm.

FC 25/117 Non-Attendance by a Councillor for six months.

This item was cancelled.

FC 25/118 Consider paying Councillor Allowances – Clerk's report:

Members re-discussed the possibility of paying allowances and re-confirmed that only elected Members would be eligible, noting the next elections were in 2027. Members also enquired if allowances would be taxable. The Clerk confirmed they would be and that payments would go via Council's payroll company and informed Members it would be the responsibility of the individual to manage their own financial matters.

It was further noted that Council currently paid expenses and this would be additional to any allowances. Concerns were also raised about the financial implications on Council if allowances were paid.

It was **resolved** that Members would now receive an allowance should they choose to claim it. It was **agreed** the Clerk compile a draft policy which would include the level of payment, timing of payments and any conditions required; Members would review this at a future meeting before any implementation.

Cllr T Hargraves left the Chambers at 8:11pm.

FC 25/119 Freight House – updates from RDC:

a) News Release – seeking Expressions of Interest for interim operation of the Freight House: Members noted RDC had been asked the question about HPC's historic investment in the Freight House and indications were there would be no further obligation to allow HPC to have a meeting space. A Member requested that the Clerk fight Council's case in this respect. The Clerk noted that the last official correspondence from RDC regarding this matter was that HPC would be assured of a space. The Clerk reminded Members that it would be prudent to wait for the official minutes from RDC before pursuing the matter.

Cllr T Hargraves returned to Chambers at 8:15pm.

Cllr Mrs M Massey left the Chambers at 8:15pm.

A Member gave their extensive recollection of historic events relating to HPC's investment.

Cllr Mrs L Massey returned to Chambers at 8:17pm.

Cllr R Gardner left the Chambers at 8:18pm.

b) Budget 2025/26 – references of the Freight House and the long-term Capital Programme: Members felt the RDC press release regarding the investment available for the Freight House was extremely misleading, noting the information received that night there had been no budget allocated for the Freight House.

Cllr R Gardner returned to Chambers at 8:20pm.

FC 25/120 English Devolution White Paper:

a) RDC Full Council paper February 2025 – Devolution and Local Government re-organisation: Members raised concerns over the deficits of Councils in the current mix but agreed it was not possible to comment further given the lack of information.

b) RDC Extraordinary meeting (11th February 2025) – Motion on Notice:
“This Council commits to write to the Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution, to confirm it does not support Labour’s English Devolution White Paper issued on 16th December 2024”

It was noted that the Motion was carried with 16 for and 15 against, with 4 abstentions. Members noted concerns there had been no consultation on Devolution before the decision made by ECC.

FC 25/121 Private Security Patrols – February reports:

The information was noted.

FC 25/122 Correspondence:

25/122.1 Essex Association of Local Councils (EALC):

a) Police, Fire & Crime E-bulletin w/c 10-02-25: The information was noted.

b) Police, Fire & Crime E-bulletin w/c 17-02-25: The information was noted.

c) Weekly News E-Bulletin: The information was noted.

25/122.2 Emails from Essex County Councillor (ECC) Cllr Mrs L Shaw:

a) New funding to improve walking & cycling: The information was noted.

b) £12.3m boost for Essex roads and foster carer rise: The information was noted.

c) Highways Highlights Bulletin – January 2025: The information was noted.

d) Arts and Cultural fund supports 12 projects across Essex: The information was noted.

e) Violence & Vulnerability newsletter: The information was noted.

25/122.3 RDC - Council sets its budget for 2025-26: The information was noted.

25/122.4 Keep Britain Tidy – Great British Spring Clean 21st March – 6th April 2025: The information was noted.

25/122.5 National Association of Local Councils (NALC) -Chief Executive Bulletin: The information was noted.

25/122.6 Information on impending major roadworks along Aldermans Hill and Southend Road: The information was noted.

FC 25/123 Representatives Reports:

Rochford Old Peoples Welfare Committee – A meeting was due.

RHALC – There would be a meeting in April.

Ashingdon & East Hawkwell Memorial Hall – No representatives.

Hawkwell Village Hall – There would be an AGM on the 10th April 2025.

Public Transport Liaison Group – No representative.

Robert Sudbury Trust – There was no update.

Information Reports:

Community Meetings – There were no updates.

FC 25/124 Receive Committee/Working Party Reports since last meeting:

Planning Committee: It was **resolved** that Members accepted the minutes of the meeting held on the 10th February 2025.

Parks Committee: It was **resolved** that Members accepted the minutes of the meeting held on the 10th February 2025.

Finance Committee: It was **resolved** that Members accepted the minutes of the meeting held on the 10th February 2025.

FC 25/125 Payment of accounts:

It was **resolved** that the payment of accounts paid since the last meeting (February payments) were approved together with agreement to pay any accounts due before the next meeting. The Chair signed the payments in line with new Financial Regulations.

FC 25/126 Resolution within Standing Order 3d "that in view of the confidential and special nature of the business about to be transacted, it is advisable in the public interest that the public be temporarily excluded and they are instructed to withdraw". Standing Order 11 and 19f also apply.

One member of the public left the Chambers.

FC 25/127 Post Interview Co-option discussion and decision.

Members discussed the candidate and it was unanimously **agreed** to co-opt the candidate. The candidate was invited back to Chambers and informed of Council's decision. The candidate accepted the position.

FC 25/128 Summary of decisions taken:

- Clerk to share RDC minutes with Members regarding the meeting held on the 18th February 2025, when available.
- Cllr L Fane to also chase CHBT regarding accessing WebNos for the defibrillators.
- Payment of allowances to Cllrs approved; Clerk to draft a suitable policy for review and decision before payments are made.
- Members agreed to co-opt the candidate interviewed.

The Chair declared the meeting closed at 8:31pm

Chair