

**Minutes of the Meeting of
HAWKWELL PARISH COUNCIL
held on Monday 7th April 2025 at 7:30pm
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, Miss M Ward & Mrs M Weir.

Also present: Essex County Councillor (ECC) Mrs L Shaw (until 7:48pm) & District Cllr M Webb.

FC 25/129 To receive apologies for non-attendance at meeting:

No apologies were received.

FC 25/130 Declarations of any of the following interests on any matter on the agenda for 7th April 2025:

a) Disclosable Pecuniary Interest;

b) Other registrable interests

None were declared.

FC 25/131 Public Forum & Information Reports from District Cllrs for Hawkwell Parish:

a) Public Forum: No members of the public were present.

b) Information Reports from District and County Councillors:

ECC Cllr Mrs L Shaw had received confirmation for £5k Locality Fund; £1k would be made available to each of the parishes. A Community Fund of £5k was also to be made available in May 2025. The minimum spend was currently unconfirmed but she expected it to be £300. A Member enquired if a community garden initiative would be eligible for funding. ECC Cllr Mrs L Shaw advised someone from that initiative contact her via email to enquire. District Cllr M Webb reported that the Freight House would be re-opened in the interim for a 6-month period; the Great Eastern room would be the only room opened for that time and £100k was available for works to get the space re-opened. Expressions of Interest (EOI) were underway and there were four interested parties. Cllr M Webb would email Members with information on the interested parties. A Task and Finish Group were liaising with external consultants. The consultants were to provide ideas on how to have the Freight House open and suitably funded. It was noted information on their advice had been misconstrued and this had been posted on social media channels. Assessment of their work could not be made until it had been completed. ECC Cllr Mrs L Shaw informed Members that the Freight House had no funding for a new heating system and would therefore be opened for 6-months without heating; it was expected grant funding would be sought to pay for the heating.

District Cllr M Webb reported there was general unease at Rochford District Council (RDC) regarding Devolution and gave his view that RDC would cease to be within three years. He further noted that the chance to vote had been removed due to the suspension of elections and that it was currently unclear which other councils RDC would align with, and this would be ultimately decided by central government.

The Clerk informed District Cllr M Webb and ECC Cllr Mrs L Shaw that the Parish Councils had been invited to a meeting with the leader of RDC on the 22nd April 2025.

Members were also referred to Agenda item 14 (Minute FC 25/142.5) for correspondence from ECC Cllr Mrs L Shaw.

ECC Cllr Mrs L Shaw left the chambers at 7:48pm

FC 25/132 To approve as a correct record the minutes of the Hawkwell Parish Council meeting held on 3rd March 2025 and to destroy the notes in respect of the meeting:

It was **resolved** that the minutes from the Full Council meeting held on 3rd March 2025 were approved as a correct record and Members agreed to the destruction of the notes in respect of that meeting.

FC 25/133 Financial Report (March 2025):

The Clerk reported expenditure was at 97.4% at month 12 and was on target. The Finance budget was 99.6% spent, the Parks budget 95% was spent and the General Purposes budget was 92.7% spent. The Clerk informed Members that the accounting firm would be conducting the financial year end closedown imminently and therefore the financial report for March would be slightly adjusted to include payments for year-end 2024-25.

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

FC 25/134 Action List Update (April 2025):

25/134.1 Cllr S May had shown Cllr L Fane how to conduct the defibrillator checks and believed he had access to WebNos system but had yet to check. Cllr R Gardner was due to carry out an annual check on the defibrillators.

25/134.2 Members were referred to Agenda item 7 (Minute FC 25/135).

25/134.3 The newsletter had been distributed. There had been one enquiry about becoming a Cllr but the Clerk had heard no more from that resident after sending the relevant information.

25/134.4 Members were referred to Agenda item 8 (Minute FC 25/136).

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

FC 25/135 Consider draft Councillor Allowances Policy:

Members had no questions on the policy set out by the Clerk.

It was **resolved** that Members approve and adopt the draft policy as set out with an allowance of £1,164 per annum, with payments made quarterly. It was noted Members who did not want to claim the allowance would need to write to the Clerk. The Clerk would be in touch with the eligible Members to obtain their necessary banking information.

FC 25/136 Freight House – updates:

a) RDC Budget 2025-26; Minutes of the meeting held on 18-02-25: The information was noted.

b) Update – Plans to temporarily open the Freight House: The information was noted.

c) Consideration to have the Freight House as an item at the Annual Parishioners' meeting in May 2025: It was **agreed** that the Freight House be included as an item for the Annual Parishioners' meeting.

Cllr T Hargraves left the Chambers at 8:03pm

FC 25/137 English Devolution White Paper:

a) Letter from Leader of RDC and an invitation to attend District/Parish in-person meeting on 22-04-25: Cllrs S May and Mrs M Weir would be attending, along with the Clerk.

Cllr T Hargrave returned to the Chambers at 8:05pm

FC 25/138 80th Anniversary of VE & VJ Day:

The Clerk reminded Members there was no budget for VE Day or VJ Day. It was noted Council were unable to give grants for street parties due to there being an absence of a constituted group/charity and that money could not be given to individuals.

The information was noted.

FC 25/139 Consideration for a new project: Cllr T Hargrave:

Members noted the proposal to take ownership of an old disused phone box from a private resident with the view to have it restored and used as a community asset of some form.

It was agreed further research would need to be conducted, to include costings, to see if the project was practical. Cllr Mrs M Weir would obtain costings via Rochford Parish Council, noting they had done a similar thing with a disused phone box.

The Clerk would approach the resident to find out more about the box and if they were selling it or gifting it to Council. It was noted Council had been offered a phone box in the past for a nominal fee but had declined the offer.

It was **agreed** in principle that Council pursue the project with the disused phone box, dependent on both practicality and costings.

FC 25/140 Website rebuild – referred from the Finance Committee:

It was noted no progress had been made regarding a website build. Cllr L Fane was still to provide information on potential website providers. Cllr R Garnder would provide details on a provider he felt was suitable. It was further noted the website would need to meet Accessibility Regulations to ensure Council would be compliant and would not cause issues with any audits going forward. A Member suggested the Clerk contact other Parish Councils to see who they used for their websites.

FC 25/141 Private Security Patrols:

a) March report: A Member requested the Clerk contact S-Type Security to ask for better pictures of the scooter Anti-Social Behaviour (ABS) incidents in case these could be passed to the police.

A Member enquired about the security company's progress regarding powers of arrest; the Clerk confirmed there had been no updates.

b) Consideration to have a verbal briefing from S-Type Security at the Annual Parishioners' Meeting in May 2025. Members **agreed** to invite S-Type to the Annual Parishioners' Meeting in May 2025. Members requested an annual summary be provided at the meeting.

FC 25/142 Correspondence:

25/142.1 National Association of Local Councils (NALC):

a) Chief Executive's Bulletin 27th February 2025: The information was noted.

b) Chief Executive's Bulletin 13th March 2025: The information was noted.

c) Chief Executive's Bulletin 27th March 2025: The information was noted.

25/142.2 RDC:

a) Council secures £70k in funding for Green Belt review: The information was noted.

b) Invitation to VE Day Beacon Lighting on 9th May 2025: The information was noted.

c) Marketing for former Council offices: The information was noted.

d) Joint expression of interest regarding a cross-boundary development: The information was noted.

e) Business news; The information was noted.

f) Winter fuel support increase: The information was noted.

25/142.3 Letter from Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution regarding needed engagement with Parish Councils: The information was noted.

25/142.4 Old People's Welfare for Rochford & District Day Centre Committee:

a) Minutes of the meeting held on the 12th December 2024: The information was noted.

b) Minutes of the meeting held on the 13th February 2025: The information was noted.

c) Minutes of the meeting held on the 13th March 2025: The information was noted.

25/142.5 Emails from Essex County Councillor (ECC) Cllr Mrs L Shaw:

a) **Essex Climate Action:** The information was noted.

25/142.6 Essex Association of Local Councils:

a) **Devolution newsletter:** The information was noted.

b) **News bulletin w/c 17-03-25:** The information was noted.

c) **Greater Essex Devolution Event 31st March 2025:** The information was noted.

d) **Training Calendar April 2025:** The information was noted.

25/142.7 Essex Police – Rochford District Newsletter March 2025: The information was noted.

25/142.8 Essex Highways – Network Rail Crossing Reduction Order: The information was noted.

FC 25/143 Representatives Reports:

Rochford Old Peoples Welfare Committee – A meeting was due.

RHALC – There would be a meeting on 17th April 2025.

Ashingdon & East Hawkwell Memorial Hall – No representatives.

Hawkwell Village Hall – There would be an AGM on the 10th April 2025. Cllrs Mrs M Weir and T Hargrave confirmed their attendance.

Public Transport Liaison Group – No representative.

Robert Sudbury Trust – There was no update.

Information Reports:

Community Meetings – There were no updates.

FC 25/144 Receive Committee/Working Party Reports since last meeting:

Planning Committee: It was **resolved** that Members accepted the minutes of the meeting held on the 3rd March 2025.

General Purposes Committee: It was **resolved** that Members accepted the minutes of the meeting held on the 3rd March 2025.

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

FC 25/145 Payment of accounts:

It was **resolved** that the payment of accounts paid since the last meeting (March 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 25/146 Summary of decisions taken:

- Councillor Allowance policy approved; Members to receive an annual allowance unless they choose to opt out by writing to the Clerk. First payment to be made Q1 2025-26.
- The Freight House be included as an item for the Annual Parishioners' meeting.
- S-Type Security to be invited to speak at the Annual Parishioners' meeting; an annual summary to be provided.
- Project of restoring a disused phone box and making it a community asset agreed in principle - dependent on both practicality and costings.
- Cllr L Fane to provide information on website providers. Cllr R Gardner to pass on information on a provider. Clerk to contact other Parish Councils to find out who their website providers are.

The Chair declared the meeting closed at 8:26pm

Chair