

**Minutes of the Meeting of
HAWKWELL PARISH COUNCIL
held on Monday 2nd March 2026 at 7:30pm at
the Hockley and Hawkwell Day Centre, Southend Road,
Library Car Park, Hockley SS5 4PZ**

Councillors present: Chair S May, J Dunkley, T Hargrave, A MacPherson, Mrs L Massey, Mrs A Petrescu, C Morris, Miss M Ward

Also present: Five members of the public and Rochford District Council (RDC) Leader Cllr Mrs D Belton

FC 26/150 To receive apologies for non-attendance at meeting:

Apologies were received from Cllrs L Fane and Mrs M Weir along with District Cllrs Mrs J Gooding and I Wilson.

FC 26/151 Declarations of any of the following interests on any matter on the agenda for 2nd March 2026:

a) Disclosable Pecuniary Interest;

b) Other registrable interests

None were declared.

FC 26/152 Public Forum & Information Reports from District Cllrs for Hawkwell Parish:

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

b) Information Reports from District and County Councillors: Essex County Councillor (ECC) Mrs L Shaw updated Members that the ECC budget had been agreed. £6m had been allocated to Highways. Work was underway on the highways, with the repairs being conducted under the winter programme. It was noted most repairs would be temporary in the first instance, to prioritise safety. The issue of erecting traffic lights under a permit was raised; it was noted work was underway to ensure lights would be moved when the works were complete. Additionally, if no works were going ahead during the weekends, the lights would be removed from the highway, if safe to do so; ECC Cllr Mrs L Shaw requested details of locations of any issues using What3Words and, if possible, to have two photographs sent. Members were also referred to Agenda item 11 (Minute FC 26/155).

FC 26/153 To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the Hawkwell Parish Council meeting held on 2nd February 2026 and to destroy the notes in respect of the meeting:

It was **resolved** that the minutes from the Full Council meeting held on 2nd February 2026 were approved as a correct record and Members **agreed** to the destruction of the notes in respect of that meeting.

FC 26/154 Leader of RDC, Cllr Mrs Danielle Belton – receive updates on RDC initiatives & discuss opportunities to work collaboratively for the benefit of residents:

RDC Cllr Mrs D Belton reported RDC had agreed a 1.95% precept rise, which was the lowest rise in 10 years. Budgeting had been very productive with no opposition, and RDC's reserves had been smoothed out and reinvested into the community. £7m had been invested into assets for 2026-27; the Freight House, Mill Hall and the Civic suite were all set for improvement works and £4.4m would also be invested in the district's leisure centres. It was noted there would be a return on investment from the leisure centres.

The Neighbourhood Team would be acting as a rapid response, dealing with verges, litter,

graffiti etc. RDC Cllr Mrs D Belton informed Members that should Council need to contact the team, the route in would be to email the parish's District Councillor(s) and the works would be added to the list.

There had been a lot of growth in new staff at RDC in the following departments: Planning and Enforcement, Culture and Tourism and Communications

Cllr Mrs D Belton noted HPC's request under the Community Governance Review (CGR) to reduce its Cllr numbers; a report would be out in the following week. It was noted the government were aiming to align elections across the country to remove confusion and to try and unify things. Phase two of the CGR consultation would be bringing RDC decisions back to the public for review.

The Strategy, Policy and Finance Committee meeting would be held on the 17th March. HPC's Expression of Interest (EOI) submissions would be discussed at that meeting. Cllr Mrs D Belton noted there were certain assets Parish Councils were able to manage effectively and RDC were keen to devolve some, if practical. A third party charity, Locality, would be available to offer support to Parish Councils who were looking to take on additional assets. The charity would be able to offer advice about revenue streams etc; more information would be made available at the Parish Council meeting on Local Government Reform (LGR) and Devolution in April.

It was hoped there would be news on the LGR model in the coming weeks. The Best4Essex unitary proposal was the business case most supported by residents. If no news would be received by the 17th March, it would be expected the decision would come after elections.

Cllr Mrs L Massey gave apologies and left the Chambers at 7:44pm

A Member asked what Cllr Mrs D Belton's views were on the Neighbourhood Plan (NP) and Local Plan (LP) in terms of timelines and alignment. It was noted there were three weeks left of the LP consultation. Cllr Mrs D Belton's view was the NPs should continue and it did not matter if the LP was before or after the NPs. Cllr Mrs D Belton advised that the LP should be used as a 'soft launch' into NPs.

A Member enquired what the long term plans for the Freight House were. Cllr Mrs D Belton reported there had been four EOIs with different operating models. Locality had been commissioned to look at the business models with a possible view that the groups could work together. The intention was to have someone running the Freight House by September.

The Clerk enquired when the Local Plan end date would be. Cllr Mrs D Belton reported there would be no time for slippage and that RDC was on track, with Regulation 19 on track to be ready by Autumn. It was noted the moment the LP was submitted, it would carry weight.

ECC Cllr Mrs L Shaw left the Chambers at 7:52pm.

FC 26/155 Financial Report (February 2026):

The Clerk reported the overall budget was 91.8% spent against a benchmark of 91.6%.

The Clerk informed Members there would be lots of expenditure in March before the fiscal year end.

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

FC 26/156 Action List Update (February 2026):

26/156.1 Council's current website provider was still making amendments to the website and the new website would be launched by the end of March. The contractor would include all that was required to meet the Assertion 10 regulations.

26/156.2 Members were referred to Agenda item 9 (Minute FC 26/158).

26/156.3 There were no further updates on the RDC Community Governance Review.

26/156.4 Council had submitted an EOI to RDC regarding the Hawkwell Common and land adjacent to the playing fields, west of Reynolds Gardens. The EOI had mistakenly been missed from RDC's Strategy, Finance and Policy Committee. The Clerk had been assured this would be added to the next appropriate meeting.

26/156.5 Members were to inform the office of any CouncilWise training courses by the end of March. Council would then decide in April whether to join a subscription service. The Clerk would re-circulate the list of courses. It was noted the recent Essex Association of Local Councils (EALC) Cllr training had been viewed as disappointing by those Members who had attended. The Planning training, however, had been well received by a Member. It was **resolved** that Members accepted the Action List update and agreed to the removal of closed items.

FC 26/157 Councillor Actions update:

A new report had been created to assist Members with remembering and organising the actions they were required to fulfil. The report was noted; no actions were addressed.

FC 26/158 Neighbourhood Plan Feasibility Working Group (NPFWG):

a) Elect NPFWG members to roles: The Clerk explained there had been an informal get together and the roles had been discussed at that meeting.

Cllr T Hargrave left the Chambers at 7:59pm.

It was **agreed** Mr D Jenkins take on the role as Chair of the NPFWG.

It was **agreed** Mr K Buchanan take on the role as Vice Chair of the NPFWG.

It was **agreed** Mrs F Miller take on the role as Administrator of the NPFWG.

Cllr T Hargrave returned to the Chambers at 8:01pm.

b) Consider purchase of laptop, audio recording equipment and hard drive storage:

Cllr J Dunkley proposed to use his own laptop which would need upgrading for a cost of around £200. No decision was made, but it was noted Council would need to own any asset used by the NPFWG.

A member of the public asked Council for permission to use Microsoft SharePoint to allow document sharing capabilities for the work of the NPFWG. The Clerk would need to talk to Council's IT contractor for advice. A member of the NPFWG was due to email the Clerk about the details of SharePoint.

The NPFWG mailbox access would be shared with the appointed Administrator.

FC 26/159 Private Security Patrols – February 2026:

There had been no reports.

FC 26/160 Correspondence:

26/160.1 Emails from Essex County Councillor (ECC) Cllr Mrs L Shaw:

a) Essex Council Highways Bulletin: The information was noted.

b) ECC will not be calling for a postponement of elections: The information was noted.

c) ECC reveals 2026-27 spending plans: The information was noted.

26/160.2 RDC:

a) Council to invest £4.4m to improve leisure centres: The information was noted.

b) No cuts to services and investment across the district – RDC's proposed budget headlines: The information was noted.

c) RDC Commonwealth Day Flag Raising Ceremony invitation: The information was noted.

26/160.3 National Association of Local Councils (NALC):

a) New online resource showcasing practical case studies on Devolution: The information was noted.

26/160.4 City of Southend Area Bus User Group (SABUG):

a) Arriva fair changes for 1st February 2026: The information was noted.

b) ECC Bus survey for elderly and those with disabilities: The information was noted.

c) SABUG AGM 2026: The information was noted.

FC 26/161 Representatives Reports:

Rochford Old Peoples Welfare Committee: There would be an Extraordinary meeting on Tuesday 10th March 2026.

Rochford Hundred Association of Local Councils (RHALC) – A meeting was expected in April.

Hawkwell Village Hall (HVH) – Cllr Miss M Ward reported that there would be a Chair change in April. Cllr Miss M Ward raised concerns about the election as the proposed candidate was not a Trustee. It was noted the HVH had considerable monies in its Reserves. It was further noted there had been discussions about removing bins at the HVH and concerns were noted over the fact businesses, by law, were not permitted to take rubbish home. The question of where Council would dispose of its rubbish was raised and it was noted the HVH had not approached Council to date; the Clerk was expecting a contract from the HVH. A Member noted that one of the windows in the parish office needed replacing.

Ashingdon & East Hawkwell Memorial Hall (AEHMH) – Cllr J Dunkley re-explained the issues with the charitable status at the AEHMH and that meant it was not viable to be a Trustee at the current time.

Public Transport Liaison Group – There were no updates.

Robert Sudbury Trust – There was nothing to report.

Information Reports:

Community Meetings – There was nothing to report.

FC 26/162 Receive Committee/Working Party Reports since last meeting:

Planning Committee: It was **resolved** that Members accept the minutes of the meeting held on the 2nd February 2026.

Parks Committee: It was **resolved** that Members accept the minutes of the meeting held on the 9th February 2026.

General Purposes Committee: It was **resolved** that Members accept the minutes of the meeting held on the 9th February 2026.

FC 26/163 Payment of accounts:

A Member enquired how many bus shelters Council was responsible for.

It was **resolved** that the payment of accounts paid since the last meeting (February) were approved together with agreement to pay any accounts due before the next meeting.

FC 26/164 Summary of decisions taken:

- Clerk to re-circulate list of training courses for Members to consider.
- No actions addressed re Council Actions.
- Roles appointed for NPFWG.
- Clerk to consult with Council's IT contractor about SharePoint.
- Email for NPFWG to be shared with the NPFWG Administrator.

The Chair declared the meeting closed at 8:18pm

Chair