

Hockering Parish Council

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| Chairman: J Blackwell Tel: 07808 927910 e-mail: jonty.b@btinternet.com | Parish Clerk Margaret Ridgwell Tel: 01603 871636 e-mail: hockeringparishcouncil@gmail.com |
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MINUTES of the **Parish Council Meeting** held on Tuesday 8th April 2025 at the Village Hall, Hockering.

Cllrs Present at the Meeting: J Blackwell, P Cocker, G Bembridge, P McIntee, R Neave and B Higgins

Also Present: Parish Clerk and 2 residents

1. **To receive apologies for absence** – there were no absences.
2. **To receive any declarations of interest** – there were no declarations of interest.
3. **To approve the minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Tuesday 11th March 2025** – having previously been circulated to all councillors, Cllr Neave proposed, and Cllr Cocker seconded that they be approved and signed. All agreed.
4. **To receive County/District Councillor reports** – Cllr Bambridge spoke about the proposed Devolution Plans and said that there probably won't be a District Council if Local Government Re-organisation progresses as planned. In view of this the District Council will not proceed with its proposal to charge for car parking in its towns and will continue to lease most of the car parks or sell to each of its five towns. He confirmed that the District Council is responsible for maintaining the car parks using council tax income. At the moment Breckland is one of the cheapest councils in the country, certainly in Norfolk, and changes to the council organisation will undoubtedly mean an increase in council tax, by up to 50%. He confirmed that there will be no elections this year, there may be an election next year for a Mayor for Norfolk & Suffolk, and possibly elections for a unitary council(s) the following year. He confirmed that the Local Plan has put out a call for further sites for house building in the future.
5. **To receive updates from:**
 - a) **Village Hall** – This has been redecorated with the help of the Community Payback Scheme and is ready for use, however the lights need replacing and additional sockets are required.
 - b) **Village Church** – Cllr Neave reported that advertising for the post of vicar in the parish will go out on the 26th of April. There are now only three members of the PCC and they do not have a Treasurer or Secretary. Finances are precarious and even if the church closed, there would still be expenses to be paid. The Coffee Mornings are popular and will continue to provide much needed funds with the next one arranged for the 15th May.
 - c) **Primary School** – There was no report from the School. Cllrs Cocker and McIntee have agreed to join the Friends of Hockering School and will be attending their AGM in June. Cllr Neave confirmed that the Poor & Townlands Charity Trust would be happy to help the PTA financially if they were approached
6. **Open Forum for Public Participation – maximum of 3 minutes per person** – A resident

raised the issue of the flooding on the corner of Stone Road, opposite the junction of Heath Road. This has been reported to the Highways Department but County Cllr Bill Borrett will be asked to help pass on concerns.

7. To receive updates on the following Working Parties:

- a) **Neighbourhood Plan** – The Chairman said that he hopes to progress this matter in the next few months and will link in with neighbouring councils to work together on the Local Plan.
- b) **Play Area and Youth Club** – Cllr Cocker said that she will help the PTA to liaise with the organisers of the Play Area and to find out who is responsible for such things as submitting accounts to the Charity Commission.

8. To discuss the following:

- a) **Renovation of brick bus shelter** – The Chairman reported that the interior of the bus shelter had been cleaned and painted with help from the Community Payback Scheme. Cllr Higgins confirmed that he will repair and renew the barge boards in the near future. The matter of replacing the noticeboard is also being considered.
- b) Cllr Higgins has also started cutting the grass verges and open areas in the village and it was agreed that a Village Clean-Up would be arranged for sometime in the summer holidays. This will be discussed at the next meeting.

9. Correspondence for circulation – all relevant correspondence had been circulated to councillors and dealt with – Cllr Blackwell said that he had received a map of Hockering, provided by Galliford Try, which could be displayed at various sites around the village. The map showed the up-to-date footpaths in the village, but did not have the names of the residential roads. He will try to obtain a map with this information on it.

10. Planning Matters –

- a) No applications have been received since the last meeting.
- b) The Planning Department at Breckland Council had been contacted to clarify the position concerning the application for 6 houses on Heath Road, - Application 3PL/2025/1113/F. The Planning Department confirmed that the developer had demonstrated that the development was commenced within the conditioned time frame and all pre-commencement conditions had been satisfied.

11. Finance & Governance Matters

- a) **To approve the following payments and note Bank Balance** – The payments for March had been circulated and were approved by all following a proposal by Cllr Cocker, seconded by Cllr Neave.

| PAYMENTS FOR APPROVAL IN MARCH: <i>THE CO-OPERATIVE BANK COMMUNITY ACCOUNT</i> | | | | |
|---|--------------|---------------------|----------------------|------------|
| BALANCE AS AT 31/03/25 | | | £20,287.22 | |
| PAY TYPE | PAYEE | DESCRIPTION | ACTUAL AMOUNT | VAT |
| BACS | M Ridgwell | Mar Salary & Exps | 301.10 | |
| BACS | HMRC | PAYE to Period 11 | 71.20 | |
| BACS | Norfolk PTS | Annual Subscription | 100.00 | |
| | | Less | 472.30 | |
| | | | £19,814.92 | |
| | | | | |
| BALANCE C/FWD 08.04.25 | | | £19,814.92 | |

- b) **To receive end-of-year accounts** – the end of the financial year figures had been

circulated to all councillors and they agreed that these should be forwarded to the Internal Auditor.

- c) **To approve and sign the AGAR Certificate of Exemption** - Councillors noted the annual gross income for the year as being £10,000 and the annual gross expenditure for the year as being £7,549. As both these figures are under £25,000, the AGAR (Annual Governance & Accountability Return) Certificate of Exemption was signed and will be forwarded to PKF Littlejohn, the government appointed external auditor.

12. To receive any new items for the next agenda – To progress and receive updates on matters raised above.

13. To note the next meeting of the Parish Council – This will be the Annual Parish Meeting on the 13th May, commencing at **7.00pm**, followed by the Annual Parish Council Meeting.

The meeting closed at 8.55pm

Signed