

Hockering Parish Council

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MINUTES of the **Parish Council Meeting** held on Tuesday 9th July 2024 at the Village Hall, Hockering.

Cllrs Present at the Meeting: J Blackwell, P Cocker, L Parker and R Neave

Also Present: Parish Clerk, District Councillor Gordon Bambridge, and 2 members of the public.

- 1. Welcome and apologies for absence** – Apologies were received from Cllr B Higgins.
- 2. To receive any declarations of interest** – there were no declarations of interest.
- 3. To approve the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting and the Annual Parish Council Meeting held on Tuesday 14th May 2024** – having previously been circulated to all councillors, Cllr Parker proposed, and Cllr Neave seconded that they be approved and signed. All agreed.
- 4. To receive update on A47 Road Improvements** – Mr Jim Freeman, Stakeholder Manager for Galliford Try, Contractors, gave an update of the work on this project. He said that on the 29 May it was announced that the Supreme Court refused the application seeking permission to appeal the order made by the Court of Appeal on 22 February 2024 on the grounds that the application did not raise an arguable point of law. This meant that they were able to begin more preparatory construction activities so major construction can begin in January 2025. Work has continued with services diversions, archaeology and compound construction but with careful planning and environmental licences, some vegetation clearance can begin to enable other work to begin. They are also able to start to recruit a larger workforce and begin ordering and storing materials. This means there has been an increase in activity along the whole scheme corridor and this will continue over the coming months. He went on to say that locally Mattishall Lane will not be closed until next year and they are continuing their work with the local Football Club and schools to provide community help. It is expected that work will take approximately 28 months from January 2025. They will also be running information events in the National Highways engagement van on the following dates and at the locations listed below: 15th July from 12.00-19.00 at Tesco, Dereham, and 18th July, from 12.00-19.00 at Sainsburys, Longwater. Mr Freeman was thanked by the Chairman for attending the meeting.
- 5. To receive County/District Councillor reports** – Cllr Bambridge reported that there had not been much business undertaken recently due to the election. His full Election Report for the Upper Wensum Ward is appended to these minutes.
- 6. To receive updates from:**
 - a) **Hockering Life** – Cllr Cocker reported that she had not been contacted by anyone willing to help with the production of this magazine and the Parish Council will look at possible options going forward.

- b) **Village Hall** – Cllrs confirmed that the refurbishment of the kitchen is now complete, and the electrics in the main hall will be improved to include additional sockets once quotes have been received.
- c) **Village Church** – Cllr Neave said that now Mark has left and Tori is leaving in the summer, the Church will be left with a retired Vicar and Lay-readers to continue Church Services. Unfortunately, they cannot find a Treasurer so have had to employ an Accountant at additional expense. The Coffee Mornings are popular and will continue to take place to help raise much-needed funds to run the Church. County Cllr Bambridge remarked that the Coffee Mornings are an excellent way of raising funds for the Church and also provide an opportunity for residents to pass on their concerns to the Parish Council.
- d) **Primary School** – Cllr Parker reported that the children break up for the summer holidays next week and 3 children will be moving on to Senior School with one new pupil starting. However, the number on roll should increase the following year when siblings of current pupils start their education.
- e) **Verges and Hedges** – It was suggested that a Working Group be set up, with Cllr Higgins and Dean Clarke, to co-ordinate keeping the verges and hedges in the village tidy.
- f) **Comments from Residents** – Cllr Parker said that when she had attended the Coffee Mornings, local residents had asked for her help with regard to parking on the pavement on Heath Road and overgrown paths in the village. These matters are addressed below.

7. **Open Forum for Public Participation – maximum of 3 minutes per person** – A resident raised concerns about the flooding on the junction of Stone Road and Heath Road and also the poor visibility at either end of the village when joining the A47 due to high vegetation. The Chairman explained that National Highways are responsible for keeping vegetation cut and there is a website which is very easy to use where residents can pinpoint their concerns and ask for action to be taken. The link is: National Highways <https://nationalhighways.co.uk/help-centre/> Use option: Report an issue.

Other links for Breckland Council which residents might find helpful are:

General items - <https://www.breckland.gov.uk/residents>.

Planning - <https://www.breckland.gov.uk/planning>.

Reporting anything else: <https://www.breckland.gov.uk/reportit>.

8. **To consider updates on the following Working Parties:**

- a) **Neighbourhood Plan** – The Chairman said that he hopes to progress this matter later in the year.
- b) **Play Area and Youth Club** – Cllr Cocker reported that the Football Club is actively following up grant possibilities to fund improvements to the club house and other areas, particularly to improving parking on site to avoid visitors having to park on Heath Road. Unfortunately, the volunteers who had offered to help set up a Youth Club are not able to proceed at the moment.

If any residents are interested in helping any of these Working Parties, they would be warmly welcomed and should contact the Parish Council for more information.

9. **To discuss updates on the following:**

- a) **Speeding and Parking in the Village** – The issue of parking on Heath Road should be alleviated once new car parking is provided by the Football Club. However, any illegal parking should be reported to the Police. The Police had spoken to a few drivers parking illegally outside the School and this has now improved. The SAM2 machines which are used in rotation with other local parish councils, will be back in Hockering in September.
- b) **Grasscutting in Village Public Areas** – This matter was addressed above at item 6(e).
- c) **Renovation of brick bus shelter** – the Community Payback Scheme contacted the Parish Council to see if they could help with local projects and the Clerk will reply to them to ask if they can help with renovating the bus shelter.
- d) **Western Link Road** – This matter was discussed later in the meeting under Planning

matters.

10. To consider future Village Events – The Friends of Hockering School are advertising the Village Fete on the 18th August. They will be contacted to ask if the Parish Council could have a table to promote their work, and also the Church would like a table for the same reason.

11. Correspondence for circulation - All correspondence had been circulated and dealt with as required. Cllr Blackwell said an email had been received from Norfolk County Council Highways Dept concerning their Parish Partnership Scheme. This is designed to provide matched funding for Parish Councils who would like to provide improvements to the highways in their village. The matter will be discussed at the next meeting in August.

A letter was also received from Breckland District Council concerning their proposal to introduce parking charges in their market towns, including Dereham. Councillors felt that this would be a pity and could take away business from local shops. Details can be found on the website: www.breckland.gov.uk/car-parks/policychange. Cllr Bambridge agreed to pass on the views of the Parish Council at the next Breckland Council meeting.

12. Planning Matters –

a) **Applications for consideration had been received as follows:**

- Extending the formal consultation period until Monday 19th August 2024 on the Western Link Road (FUL/2024/0022). All councillors were in favour of this highways improvement scheme as it would benefit local residents and neighbouring areas.
- A request for screening opinion and scoping opinion for a new bark processing and storage facility east of Lyng Road (3SR/2024/0004/SCR). Although Parish Council comments are not requested at this time, the Parish Council agreed to look carefully at planning applications when they are received.

b) Any other applications received after the publication of the agenda are available on <http://planning.breckland.gov.uk/OcellaWeb/planningSearch>

c) To note any planning decisions/appeals – none

13. Finance & Governance Matters

a) **To approve the following payments and note Bank Balance** – Cllr Cocker proposed and Cllr Parker seconded that these payments be approved. All were in favour.

PAYMENTS FOR APPROVAL THIS MONTH: THE CO-OPERATIVE BANK COMMUNITY ACCOUNT				
BALANCE AS AT 14.05.24			£21,493.67	
PAY TYPE	PAYEE	DESCRIPTION	ACTUAL AMOUNT	VAT
BACS	M Ridgwell	May and June Salary & Exps	647.40	
BACS	HMRC	PAYE to Period 4	154.40	
BACS	Friends of Hockering School	Donation for Summer Fete	300.00	
BACS	Zurich Municipal	Annual Insurance Premium	621.29	
BACS	Playsafety Ltd	Annual RoSPA Inspection	98.40	
		Less	£1,821.49	
Receipts				
BALANCE C/FWD 09.07.24			£19,672.18	

b) **To re-consider the Asset register** – Councillors checked the current Asset Register and removed redundant items. It was decided that this list should be renamed Responsibilities Register as this more accurately reflects the items which the Parish Council are responsible for in terms of maintenance costs and insurance.

c)

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

To note the next meeting of the Parish Council – This will be held on Tuesday 10th September 2024 at 7.30pm in the Village Hall.

The meeting closed at 9.25pm

Signed

ELECTION REPORT - UPPER WENSUM WARD

Breckland District Councillor Gordon Bambridge

This election, I did not get very involved, the virus that has kept me from travelling far has prevented canvassing etc, but it has not kept me from keeping up with all events and indeed Breckland matters on the internet.

In Mid Norfolk Constituency George Freeman won again with a very reasonable majority so for the moment the paths I take in bringing matters up with Parliament remain the same. The paths such enquiries will take from that point will be markedly different.

With matters of the Internal Drainage Board there is a new DEFRA Secretary of State in Steve Reed who I have not met. The internet does not give us a name for the drainage and water minister just yet, I met and was impressed with Emma Hardy who was shadow in that position last year as I wrote in my report last November.

We will have to wait a bit to see just how the change of government nationally will affect how District Councils work. Up to now Breckland has been a financially successful district which has led within the local government community in many ways, we hope this can remain so, but all local government relies heavily on the Westminster policies and support. There are suggestions of increases in council tax, ours is still the lowest district tax. We are also bound by changes in national policy not yet announced.

Major challenges specific to this ward would come from any change of policy including/regarding two key matters we have often spoken of in parish meetings:-

1/ House building, which has been flagged, and the proposed new town for within our ward. This had been turned down by Breckland, but now matters may be taken from our hands?

2/ Roads matters - the ward is directly affected by both the -

Dualling of the A47 from Easton to North Tuddenham which is hopefully so far advanced it cannot be withheld from going ahead...

The Western Link which will relieve not only Norwich from rat running, but also most of the villages in our ward and of course saving millions of hours travelling time and millions of pounds in travel costs for individuals and business not to say protecting our communities.....

The new MP for South-West Norfolk has campaigned against both these roads, although they are not in or affecting his now constituency which has benefited from similar road improvements. I have spoken to him many times on this matter and will continue if needed.

More general matters including changes to taxation systems, will be affecting the whole population and of course follow the voting wishes of the people. I am happy to discuss.

It has always been my policy to be a-political within my activities except at district election times, but I am a conservative elected member.

I do however recognise that from the general population and in particular from the parish councils there are people from every shade of political stance, and I also represent you. During the election period I have dealt with dozens of enquiries including political ones from residents of Upper Wensum, and will continue to do so. I am also aware that it is many years since our Conservative-led district has had to work with a Labour-led government so I am happy to listen to your views as we go forward.

Gordon Bambridge
9/7/2024