Hockering Parish Council

Chairman:	**Parish Clerk**
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MINUTES of the **Parish Council Meeting** held on Tuesday 13th October 2026 at the Village Hall, Hockering.
Cllrs Present at the Meeting: J Blackwell, G Bambridge, B Higgins, P McIntee and R Neave.
Also Present: Parish Clerk, District Cllr Bill Borrett and 2 residents.

1. **Apologies for absence** – No apologies were received.

2. **To consider any Co-option Applications received** - No applications have been received.

3. **To receive any declarations of interest –** There were no declarations of interest.

4. **To approve the Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting on the 8th September –** having previously been circulated to all councillors, Cllr McIntee requested a minor change to item 6e, to replace the wording "a committee" with the word "Trustees". Cllr Neave proposed, and Cllr Higgins seconded that the Minutes be amended and signed. All agreed.

5. **To receive County/District Councillor reports –** No report or apologies had been received from County Councillor Paul Carr. Cllr Borrett, who shares responsibility for Upper Wensum Ward with Cllr Bambridge had sent a written report which is attached to these minutes but spoke about the consequences of the paused proposed Local Government Reorganisation, new rules concerning Planning, Community Grants, Food waste collection, Solar farms, and Devolution, including the proposal for a Mayor for Norfolk & Suffolk combined. Cllr Borrett said that he felt this would bring no advantage to the area and would be a costly additional layer of governance. Another matter which the Government has put forward is to impose a levy on overnight visitors which will affect hotels, AirBnBs, etc. Councillors were concerned that this is just another tax and the extra cost would discourage visitors to the area. Cllr Bambridge had also sent in a report which is attached but spoke about Breckland policies and the Breckland Local Plan, including proposed housing and the proposed Western Link Road. He said that the proposal to build 2,500 houses at East Tuddenham running adjacent to Wood Lane and 4,000 houses in Taverham, would have a large impact on traffic through Hockering and other villages. He confirmed that he would vote against the Breckland Local Plan if the Western Link Road proposal was for a single carriageway road. Cllr Blackwell added that at a recent meeting of 7 local parishes, they were also against the proposal for a single carriageway Western Link Road.

6. **Open Forum for Public Participation –** A resident raised the issue of the village sign, which is due to be repainted. She said that the wooden post was in poor condition and Cllrs Higgins and Blackwell will inspect this and bring their findings to the next meeting.

7. **To receive updates from:**
   a) **Village Hall** – Everything is going well with plenty of bookings and the electrical improvements are completed. The oil tank will need repainting soon.
   b) **Village Church** – The approval from the Diocese had been received concerning replacing the existing wooden gate, and Cllr Higgins has kindly offered to carry out this work. There is a Coffee Morning on the 17th October, but the Vicar is looking into the question of whether helpers who serve tea and cakes, and the bakers themselves, need to have a Health & Hygiene Certificate.
   c) **Playground** – Following the receipt of the RoSPA Report in June which highlighted the bad condition of the surface and some timber uprights, and the subsequent testing of the timbers, Cllr McIntee had

obtained quotes for replacement timber poles and for a new metal framework. The cost of new timbers would be £1,800 and a new metal frame would be £2,800, but the metal frame could be dismantled and used on another site if necessary. Cllr McIntee will also obtain a quote for new rubber surfacing. It was advised that it would be sensible to purchase two new cradle seats while the swings are being repaired. New legislation means that if bark is used for the ground surface, this has to be to a depth of 40cms which would be very costly and difficult to lay and maintain. A decision will be made at the next meeting once costings have been obtained, Cllr McIntee had also spoken to the organisers of the local Probation Service who might be able to help with clearing the site, laying the surface and cleaning other equipment in the Play Area. He will liaise with Cllr Blackwell and arrange a meeting on site to discuss the matter with the Probation Service organiser. Once the Play Area is reopened, it was suggested that weekly/monthly inspections be carried out by the Parish Council to ensure that equipment is safe.

d) **Playing Field** – Cllr McIntee reported that since the last meeting membership application forms had been delivered to householders with the latest Hockering Life Newsletter and a letter will be sent home to parents of children at Hockering Primary School. The names of people willing to be Trustees of Hockering Playing Field Association have been sent to the Charity Commission Revitalising team and once they are approved the new Hockering Playing Field Association can apply for a bank account, hold elections to install officers, set up a website and maintain proper accounting records to separate the financial transactions of the HPFA and the Hockering Football Club. The Chairman thanked Cllr McIntee for all his hard work in making sure that this valuable village asset is organized efficiently and correctly.

e) **Village Newsletter** – Two editions of the Newsletter have now been delivered and the next edition will be sent out at the end of November with the deadline for contributions being the 6th November. Councillors agreed that in order to avoid a delay in payment to the printers, email approval could be given in between Parish Council meetings.

f) **Community Speedwatch Group** –The new site near the playing field on Heath Road is proving beneficial in slowing down traffic and several reports of speeding had been passed to the Police. Unfortunately, two volunteers have had to leave the group so more volunteers would be most welcome.

(Cllr Borrett left the meeting.)

g) **Village Maintenance** – Cllr Higgins reported that there is still a problem with residents parking on verges, which is causing damage and making it difficult to maintain the grass areas in the village. Cllr Blackwell had spoken to a representative from NCC Highways who said that the verges belong to Norfolk CC and anyone damaging the surface could be charged with the cost of repair. Councillors agreed that they would need to be mindful of ensuring sufficient parking is provided if any new housing planning applications are received in future. It was suggested that a Village Clean-up Day be arranged to ask for volunteers to help with clearing verges and alongside the brook.

h) **Public Footpaths** – It was noted that the New Mattishall Lane is now open for pedestrians and will eventually open to traffic when the A47 work is completed. Councillors felt that as there is already a Mattishall Lane, the New Mattishall Lane should be renamed to avoid confusion. A suggestion was made that it be called Berney Lane. The District Council are responsible for road naming and will be contacted. FP8 needs to be cleared and will be reported to NCC Highways. Unfortunately, FP7 is now redundant.

8. Correspondence for circulation –

a) A letter had been received from the NCC Cabinet Member for Highways & Transport giving details of the Parish Partnership Scheme which invites Parishes to submit bids for projects to provide highway improvements. The PP Scheme offers to allocate a grant on a 50/50 basis for schemes including the purchase of SAM2 and SAM3 machines which flash up a driver's actual speed. A quote had been received from Westcotec, who supply such machines, and the cost for a SAM3 machine, including a solar battery and remote data collection facility, would cost in the region of £4,665 with additional costs for the purchase and erection of galvanized steel posts and brackets. Cllr Blackwell had met the local Highways Engineer on site to agree possible locations which could be used to fix this new machine in rotation as needed and an application for a grant will be sent to NCC shortly.

b) It was suggested that an article be placed in the next Hockering Life, asking residents if they would be interested in having a memorial bench in the village to commemorate a loved one. They will be invited to contact the Parish Council with a suggested site for such a bench. It was agreed that the matter will be discussed in January when ideas have been received.

c) A resident had raised concerns about trees overhanging her property and it had been established that Breckland Council are responsible. The homeowner has been informed.

9. Planning Matters –

a) No Planning Applications have been received since the last meeting.
b) No Planning Decisions have been received since the last meeting.

10. Finance & Governance Matters

a) Payments for September, listed below, were circulated to councillors by email and Cllr Bambridge proposed and Cllr Higgins seconded that these be approved. All were in favour.
b) The half-yearly position statement was forwarded to all councillors for their information.
c) To consider adding another councillor to the list of bank signatories. This will be considered again at the next meeting.
d) To consider and approve annual policies: Standing Orders, Code of Conduct, Freedom of Information Publication Scheme, Financial Regulations, Internet Banking, Internal Control, Risk Management. All policies had been checked against suggested model policies for local government organisations including the latest government legislation, and with minor changes, councillors agreed that they be approved.

PAYMENTS FOR APPROVAL IN OCTOBER: ***THE CO-OPERATIVE BANK COMMUNITY ACCOUNT***				
BALANCE AS AT 08.09.26			**£21,414.26**	
PAY TYPE	**PAYEE**	**DESCRIPTION**	**ACTUAL AMOUNT**	**VAT**
BACS	M Ridgwell	Sep Salary & Exps, incl back pay	379.40	
BACS	HMRC	PAYE to Period 05	90.40	
BACS	Norfolk PTS	Training for PM	67.20	11.20
BACS	Village Hall	Hire for Jul, Aug, Sep meetings	48.00	
BACS	Pd by B Higgins	Fuel for lawnmower	20.00	3.33
		Total	**605.00**	**14.53**
Receipts	Breckland Council	Precept	**+ £5,250.00**	
BALANCE C/FWD 13.10.26			**£26,059.26**	

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

12. To note date of the next Parish Council meeting – The next meeting will be on the 10th November 2026 at 7.30pm in the Village Hall.

The meeting closed at 9.30pm

Signed ……

WARD MEMBERS' REPORTS OCTOBER 2026

Cllr BILL BORRETT, Upper Wensum Ward

"BRECKLAND LIVES"

Thanks to the shambles in Westminster the Government has "paused" Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) for the time being.

Why is this something I would be interested in?

Well, it means that your Council Tax won't be going up by 30% next spring. Breckland is still the LOWEST District Council Tax in England, and we will not be taking on any debts from other Councils or sharing our reserves with them.

Why is the Council tax so low?

Breckland raises money by lending money to other Councils and uses the interest to keep Council Tax down, it also manages a portfolio of Commercial Property that provides nearly as much income as Council Tax raises. These didn't happen by accident but are the result of sensible decisions going back to 1999 when the Conservatives took over a very poor performing Breckland Council from Labour.

Why aren't all Councils run this way?

The simple answer is I don't know, it is up to the elected Members.

Planning

The Government's new "National Scheme of Delegation" comes into force on 31st October.
This will significantly reduce the role of Councillors in determining planning applications. It removes the ability of a Local Member to "call in" applications, removing Planning Committees ability to decide planning applications of 10 dwellings or less, requiring a Council Officer to give permission to the Planning Committee to sit on an application of more than 10 dwellings and giving Angela Rayner call in powers when applications of over 150 dwellings are refused.
This centralises decision making and removes the local democratic element that has been a cornerstone of Planning Policy since 1948.

Community Grants

There are TWO different opportunities for Parish Councils and Community Groups to apply for GRANTS from Breckland.
The first opportunity is only open until 15th October so please pass this on straight away: BRECKLAND COUNCIL INSPIRING COMMUNITIES GRANT
We are looking for projects that make a real difference in Local Communities by improving health and wellbeing, reducing loneliness and isolation, supporting vulnerable residents and encouraging community involvement.
Up to £5000.00 is available and it is no longer necessary to raise any match funding.
If you are interested please go to the Norfolk Community Foundation website and search for "Breckland Council Inspiring Communities Grant".
The other option is the "COMMUNITY SMALL GRANT FUND" which has grants of up to £250.00 for activities during the October and February half term holidays.
Parish Council's, schools and local community groups (including sports clubs) can apply for grants to put on activities to involve their local communities covering everything from family fun days to gardening!
The full details are available on the Breckland Council Web site under the heading "Community Small Grant Fund".

Food Waste Collections

This has now begun. It is a weekly collection that happens on the same day as your normal bin collection. I have had a few initial queries regarding bins etc. but I am very glad to report that most of them are now sorted, and the service is getting bedded in.

Solar Farms

Beckland's policy on Solar Farms remains consistent and I just wanted to remind everyone what it is should you get any applications in your area.
"Solar generation in the district should be directed towards existing buildings, rooftops, brownfield land rather than productive agricultural land".

Devolution

Despite the turmoil on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) there is news that the Government's plans on Devolution might be re-started by the Reform lead County Councils in Norfolk and Suffolk. If they both tell the Government that they want a joint Mayor for Norfolk and Suffolk, then there is likely to be an election for one in 2028. We will then start to get charged for the new Combined Authority, which the Mayor will run, soon afterwards.
I understand that there will be meetings in both Norfolk and Suffolk County Councils this October to decide. Watch this space!

Thank you for reading this, as always please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.
My email address is: bill.borrett@breckland.gov.uk
With my best wishes

Bill

GORDON BAMBRIDGE
Breckland Members' Report October 2026

The last few weeks have been somewhat hectic, and hopefully you are up to date with most of it,

but I will touch on matters and if you want me to comment on any matter please do ask.

LGR - This now seems to have been completely ditched for now at least. I have mixed feelings here, and certainly a look at local government organisation is overdue, but what was proposed was an expensive, ill thought through scene and best consigned to history.

Breckland policies - are coming back into line with a district council agenda.

Our planning department systems are, as you are aware, chaotic with the elimination by central government of the ability to comment on applications or call applications to chairman's panel or committee. This is a huge retrograde step for local plans. Not sure how this will pan out, but like some other councillors I am seeking a path through. In the meantime keep telling me what is wrong with applications and as much detail as you can on planning reasons for opposition to them. With 15 villages it is not always easy to keep up to date, and members are normally only told of applications the Wednesday after they are approved, so you often know before me, so do not assume I am aware.

The Local Plan - as I said last month I am unhappy with two matters, and I am still proposing to vote against it.

Ref the village matter, Bawdeswell seem to have their issues in hand, so am leaving this mostly up to them with a nudge to officers now and then. Other villages, whilst not all happy, are progressing well.

Regarding the highways matter against the 2500-unit development near the southern end of the proposed Western Link Road, I am not voting for the plan with this in it, unless there is a condition specifying that the Western Link be dual carriageway. This is because of the continued and increased traffic which will affect almost all villages in the ward plus, of course, much of the County North of the A47 and West of the A140. Members will also be aware of a potential plan for 4000 houses near the Northern end of the WLR.

I have been challenged on this as NIMBYism, but can say to you all that where I live, I am one of the very few houses in the ward exempt from virtually all problems caused by this road/lack of road, so will be able to fight your corner in planning inspectorate.

Grants - Breckland are still able to make small local grants so if you have projects or groups needing short term help, do apply, and contact me also so I can write in support. Applications on website.

Wind-farms - Breckland remain opposed to Drove Solar Farm proposal, and are cautious regarding others.

County Matters - I have had dealings with several county members and cabinet members regarding Ward matters in recent weeks. Making these contacts has been slower than I would have hoped since the regime change but now seems to be working well. Highways, Planning and Flooding have all be on the agenda.

Personal - Whilst I am fit and well, my wife is unwell just now and this may mean that I miss some evening meetings over the next few months. I should generally be able to attend all Breckland meetings, which are mostly daytime, and will always be available to meet with parish councillors and/or clerks between PC meetings if required. Please do feel free to ask. With business and private visits to constituents I am in most of our villages most months. And I am always happy to meet in Breckland offices.

Best regards,
Gordon Bambridge