

Pre-Meeting Business: None

Public Participation: a) Mr. Ben Earle of the North Elmham Living Sustainably (NELS) community group referred to a Biodiversity and Sustainably Action Plan which had been released earlier in the day but had not been seen. Members will receive a copy which will be read and considered in readiness for the next meeting. Mr. Earle will be invited back for a further discussion in “say” two months’ time.

b) The Chairman of North Elmham Football Club detailed the plans for next season. They hope to gain promotion to the Anglian Combination league which would mean that some facilities would need improving. In particular, a referee’s room with toilet and shower would be required. This would possibly involve the provision of a portacabin. In addition, a storage container and dug-outs would be useful additions. Grants of 75% are apparently available to assist with improvements of this kind.

NORTH ELMHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the

MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL

held in the Pavilion at 7.30 p.m. on Wednesday 5th March, 2025

.....

293 Those Councillors Present Were:

Mr. P. Grainger (Chairman), Mr. M. Phillips (Vice Chairman), Miss A. Ferris, Mr. T. Fitzalan Howard, Mrs. A. Keeble, Mr. N. Markwell, Mr. M. Rayner, Mr. C. Smith and Mr. J. Sowinski.

Also in Attendance: Mr. K. Webb (Clerk), Mr. G. Bambridge (District Councillor) and three parishioners.

294 Apologies for absence:

Mr. B. Gee and Mr. F. Gillespie.

295 To Receive Declarations of Interest:

The Chairman reminded the meeting that, should the occasion arise, interests should be declared by Councillors as soon as this was realised, and the interest should be minuted.

296 Minutes of Meeting held on Wednesday, 5th February, 2025:

Resolved to approve the minutes as a true and accurate record. Agreed by all, (proposed by Mr. Phillips and seconded by Miss Ferris), with the following addition:- "No formal decision was reached in respect of item 289 (1) with quotations for possible costs not yet being obtained and, as such, no official vote taking place. The comment relating to another bin was a view expressed but the matter will be further discussed in the next meeting on 5th March with subsequent ratification following the receipt of the necessary financial information". The appropriate details will appear in the item "Minutes of Meeting held on Wednesday, 5th February, 2025".

UPDATED INFORMATION AND MATTERS ARISING

297 Land Management Matters (item 271)

- (a) Village Green Nothing to report.
- (b) Cathedral Ruins Nothing to report.
- (c) Cathedral Meadows An annual grazing licence has been issued to Mr. Fish and an invoice for £500 raised. A parishioner has expressed an interest in making an offer to purchase Cathedral Meadows. The Parish Council has no desire at the present time to make this land available.
- (d) Broom Green Nothing to report.
- (e) Millennium Wood (and Jubilee Wood) There are some broken posts. In total, there are about 80 posts in the Wood. They are to be inspected and quotations obtained for replacement. Mr. Sowinski is to attend.
- (f) Bridleway on disused railway line and other railway linked matters Nothing to report.
- (g) Prince William Wood Nothing to report.
- (h) Church Meadow The sheep will be returning in the near future.

298 Allotments (item 272)

Nothing to report.

299 Street Lights (item 273)

No further news has yet been received from UKPN or Westcotec regarding the issue at 29 Eastgate Street.

300 Highway Matters (item 274)

There has been no further news regarding the temporary bus stop near the County School Station junction. The Parish Partnership road safety application for £15,668 has been successful (Parish Council/Norfolk County Council 50% contribution each). Matt Lines, Highways Engineer, Norfolk County Council has responded regarding the suggestion from a parishioner for a 20 mph speed limit along Eastgate Street. Speed limits in village centres will only be funded by the County Council where there is an elevated personal injury record involving pedestrians and cyclists. There have been no accidents in Eastgate Street in over ten years. The Parish Council could fund a speed limit review, typically costing around £4K, but there would be no guarantee that this would recommend a 20 mph speed limit. Any changes would likely cost between £12K and £15K, considerably more if physical traffic calming is required. No further action is to be taken at this stage.

301 Pavilion and Playing Field (item 275)

A window in the pavilion has been smashed. A new piece of perspex is needed. The wall at the top of the field has been damaged and a quotation for repairs is to be obtained.

302 Eastgate Centre (item 276)

Some larger than normal water bills are being received. These are to be monitored.

303 Brookside Development update (item 277)

Nothing to report.

304 Risk Management – considerations and updates (item 278)

Nothing to report.

305 Overview of Parish Council financial situation (item 279)

Nothing to report.

306 Defibrillators (item 280)

Nothing to report.

307 Local Plan update (item 281)

The number of new houses required across the Breckland District has gone up by 44%, from 625 to 903 per year. Another consultation is to be held, probably in the next few weeks.

308 Archive Group records (item 282)

The Village Hall committee has this matter on the agenda of their next meeting.

309 North Elmham Living Sustainably (NELS) Group (item 283)

Please refer to “Public Participation” a) above. All members are to read the report.

310 Christmas arrangements (item 284)

A further letter had been received from the Chairman of the Elmham News confirming the decision not to be involved in the 2025 event.

311 New Village Hall (item 285)

A second meeting of the sub committee has been held. Swanton Morley village hall is to be visited on 25th March. In addition, it was suggested that other relatively new village halls should be viewed. Amongst those mentioned were Foulsham, Bawdeswell, Lyng and Marshland St. James. The Chairman had contacted Sport England and it had become obvious that the provision of footballing facilities is very important. Another meeting is to be held before the next Parish Council meeting.

312 The future of the churchyard

The Parish Council is not in favour of accepting responsibility for the ongoing maintenance of the churchyard on the basis that it is full because it is not. The adjoining Church Meadow continues to be available. The Parish Council does not accept that the condition of the churchyard is “good”. The wall is in a poor state of repair. The District Council will be advised of the Parish Council view on closing the churchyard. In addition, in the same way that the PCC can give notice to the PC under Section 215 of the Local Government Act 1972 to take over the responsibility of maintaining a churchyard which has been closed by Order in Council, the PC can give notice to the District Council, requiring the DC to take over the responsibility. To summarise, the Parish Council believes that the grounds for closure can be challenged due to the condition of the churchyard and the existence of adjoining land which is available to be used. Appropriate action, i.e. returning the documentation served on the Parish Council with the above views expressed, will be taken. Proposed by Mr. Rayner and seconded by Mr. Phillips. All in favour except Mr. Fitzalan Howard who abstained, preferring to wait until the legal position is clarified.

313 Parish waste bins

It was agreed by all that a new dog bin should be placed on the car park at the entrance to the Boars Hill development. This would be of benefit to everyone and would be situated well away from all properties. Proposed by Mr. Sowinski and seconded by Mr. Fitzalan Howard. The new bin will need to be approved by Breckland Council who will be responsible for collecting the waste.

314 Reports from District and County Councillors

Mr. Borrett had submitted a report for February, 2025. This can be viewed on the Parish Council section of the website.

**DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORT - MARCH 2025
GORDON BAMBRIDGE - UPPER WENSUM WARD**

Council Tax

20th Feb saw Breckland fix its district council tax for the year with a band D for 2025/26 set at £118.53 per annum and increase of £4.95 on last year. This is still the lowest district council tax but will allow Breckland to provide services required by law plus carry on the additional services we have traditionally provided to the area and maintain a balanced budget for the year. Full details of the budget can be found within the council minutes on the Breckland website and you can follow the meeting on Breckland YouTube. I am always happy to answer questions from residents in the ward and these and other matters. The parish councils precept is also contained in these minutes alongside the amount this adds to individuals householders total bills, of course most houses are below band D and will pay a lesser amount.

Planning Matters

I should have an update briefing very soon, if you have questions please ask. sorry about all the delays.

Devolution and Local Government Reform

Key areas for parishes to consider over the next few months and years.

Most of you will be aware that Norfolk CC applied and were successful in getting into the first tranche of two tier council areas to enter this process, from this your county elections for May 2025 have been cancelled and as yet we are not certain when the replacement bodies will be in place. We are told that there will be an election for a Mayor for Norfolk and Suffolk combined in May 2026, it is likely that District elections will be cancelled in 2027 and we could be in place until 2028 when a shadow authority may be elected but it all seems very fluid.

We are advised that parish councils will remain, possibly as community councils, not sure what that means yet.

One absolute certainty will be that it will cost us all on several levels:-

1/ Breckland are currently the lowest council tax in Norfolk (probably England) and whatever replaces Districts will certainly have council tax harmonisation, which for us will mean upwards (with Kings Lynn/West Norfolk +30% with North Norfolk +48% with all of Norfolk + 53% on current figures)

2/ Central Government will **not** absorb councils debt, and Breckland is one of few with not real debt. Several hundreds of millions across the county which will be rationalised.

3/ harmonisation of assets, Breckland has a considerable portfolio of property acquired mostly over the last 30 years or so by prudent management and providing an income for the district greater than our council tax.

4/ the only certainty given regarding community councils is that there will be no funding for them.

5/ at the moment we all have district councillors each representing just under 3000 constituents as an average, with county councillors on an average of less than 12,000 - after the proposed changes we estimate you will have one councillor/representative for between 7 and 11000 constituents dealing with all questions giving a severe democratic deficit for local government.

6/ Norfolk could be presented as one, two or three separate unitary council areas, no decision has been made but each would have its own advantages/disadvantages. But with a single mayor for two counties.

7/ Breckland currently has 49 district councillors (with a proposal to increase to 51 pending) County has 84 members across Norfolk. The Boundary commission sets a limit of 120 councillors in a single body.

Boundary Review

This may well be another exercise in futility, but you can also follow from the council minutes. I would commend you do follow as **IF** devolution falls (and it has before) then this may apply. Both the Boundary commission plan and the Breckland Council plan are shown. I am aware that whatever, there will have to be changes in this corner of Breckland if we remain a district council.

Everything in this report has been driven by central government - the council tax increase is dictated by them, the reorganisation of devolution and local government reform (not the same thing as you know) are driven by them and the final say on boundaries is controlled by the Local Government Boundary Commissioners, who last time ignored everything we said and insisted on different (at that time I was part of the Breckland team)

I do remain your elected member and will happily support your parish council in every way I can as long as I have this position. Pressure of increasing meetings does mean I am not always available on your PC evenings, but will always attend if I can, and if I am unable to attend on the day I will be willing to meet clerks, parish councillors or members of the public outside of those times - just ask.

Gordon Bambridge
07540973229

315 Accounts for Payment and Schedule of Income

a) Resolved to approve the following Accounts for payment:-		
24/2/25	Biffa (wheelie bin service from 25/1/25 to 21/2/25) - (d/d)	£63.84
18/2/25	E-on Next (pavilion from 5/1/25 to 31/1/25) – (d/d)	£110.21
25/2/25	Drax (street lights electricity – 1/10/24 to 31/1/25)	£942.85
5/3/25	D. Tyson (pavilion cleaning for February)	£137.28
5/3/25	Mandrake (payroll services – February, 2025)	£27.72
5/3/25	K. Webb (Clerk's pay for February)	£872.76
5/3/25	HMRC (Tax and N.I. on Clerk's pay)	£264.15
5/3/25	Norfolk Parish Training and Support (annual subscription)	£338.48
5/3/25	J. Duffield (work in Cathedral ruins – Dec, Jan and Feb)	£310.00
5/3/25	Dereham Meeting Point (donation)	£100.00
5/3/25	P. Grainger (Chairman's half yearly expenses)	£50.00
5/3/25	M. Phillips (Vice Chairman's half yearly expenses)	£50.00
5/3/25	K. Webb (travel expenses from 1/10/24 to 31/3/25)	£58.05

b) Schedule of Income:-		
28/2/25	HSBC (coif inc div)	£29.59
28/2/25	HSBC (coif inc div)	£47.86
3/3/35	Bank interest (from 3/12/24 to 2/3/25)	£162.90
7/2/25	Allotments rent	£15.00
7/2/25	Pavilion takings	£30.00

Balances (at 3/3/25):- Current a/c - £65,029.27 Business Premium a/c - £46,730.36

(Expenditure approved by all members – proposed by Mr. Rayner and seconded by Mr. Phillips)

(Cambridge Building Society - £82,483.96)

316 To Consider Planning Applications and Determinations:-

- a) **Applications**
None
- b) **Determinations**
None

It was mentioned that some potential planning breaches have been noted and these will be monitored and, if required, duly followed up.

317 Correspondence

- 1) Notification from Barclays Bank of reduction in savings account rate from 1.35% to 1.25%.
- 2) Parishioner e-mail regarding overhanging trees near the property.
- 3) Details of the Norfolk Nutrient Mitigation Fund.
- 4) Request to Annie Mary Smith Charity for assistance from the Handicapped Children's Action Group in Grimsby (not able to assist).
- 5) Follow-up letter from Elmham News Committee confirming no involvement with the 2025 Christmas Tree event.
- 6) Mandrake advising that they will no longer be providing payroll services from 6/4/25.
- 7) Breckland Council offering a quotation for a trade waste contract.
- 8) Presentation on Norfolk Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation held on 3rd March.

318 Any Other Matters (for information only)

None

319 Agenda items for next meeting:

- a) North Elmham F.C. facilities.
- b) NELS' Biodiversity and Sustainability Action Plan.

320 Next Meeting:

Wednesday, 2nd April, 2025 at 7.30 p.m.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 9.43 p.m.

Chairman

Date

