

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF HOCKHAM PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON  
MONDAY 4<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2024 IN HOCKHAM VILAGE HALL.**

**Attending:** Councillors Bennett, Lambert, Thomas, Lloyd, Leech & Loft plus 5 members of the public and the clerk C Garrod.

- 1) **Apologies for absence;** District Councillor Cowen.
- 2) **Declaration of Interests;** Cllr Lambert as the owner and landlord of the Hockham Eagle, Cllr Bennett and Loft as allotment holders, Cllr Leech as a farmer at Little Hockham.
- 3) **Dispensation Requests;** None
- 4) **Minutes of the last meeting** These were taken as read and unanimously approved.
- 5) **Progress Report;**
  - a) The wheelchair ramp was ordered.
  - b) The info board price had been guesstimated at £2500 and a potential grant applied for.
  - c) NALC were having some internal issues. The clerk would try to get assistance with the website.
  - d) Drainage. The sludge gulper had visited the village again and sucked the drains. There was a debate about the drain near the pub and its lack of exit anywhere. The clerk will follow this up and ask for a camera survey.
  - e) Councillor co-option. The period for an election request had passed with no requests, so a co-option advert would be raised as per the co-option policy.
  - f) The bollards requested near the pub would be followed up with the new highways engineer.
  - g) The allotment hedge would be cut.
  - h) The clerk would be conversing with In Touch in more detail, with the councillor's thoughts.
- 6) **Public Participation.** The meeting was adjourned briefly for public comments.
- 7) **County & District Reports;** The Clerk read a report sent by Cllr Cowen.

*As autumn unfolds Breckland Council has commenced the budget setting process for the year 2025-26 and this time we are facing unprecedented financial pressures. At the last Cabinet meeting we learned that the 2024 Quarter 1 figures showed a potential year end overspend of £826,000. Cabinet next week will learn that in Quarter 2 this overspend has reduced to £481,000 helped in no small measure by the income we receive from investments and cash generated through loans, but the underlying trend is for costs, over which we have no control, rising. These factors outside of the council's control include:*

- *a significant fall off in planning income (£417k)*
- *increased costs around housing and temporary accommodation (£500+k)*
- *increased costs from NCC closing Shipdham waste transfer site and additional recycling costs (£600k)*

*However, we are able to mitigate for this year some of these cost pressures by redirecting cash from the general fund, but this still leaves the remainder of the year with uncertainty around such costs and income, and we must maintain a balance in the general fund sufficient to meet unknown demands.*

*In addition, the budget announcements will have an impact on us at District Council level and we are awaiting the detail behind some of the headline announcements specifically around what the financial settlement will be, what proportion of some of the additional monies announced, for example, for disabled facilities grants and homelessness will fall to us at district level.*

*It is against this background that Breckland Council is looking at both income and expenditure streams within the council to ensure that our core priorities for the provision of both statutory and discretionary services can be maintained, particularly for those who are most vulnerable in our society. In the meantime, we are reviewing our budget proposals that will be sent out for consultation in December 2024.*

*We have today published our public consultation questionnaire that is available by following the banner and links at <https://www.breckland.gov.uk/> Year on year our car parks cost the council some £450,000 to run and maintain and that cost is met by every council taxpayer irrespective of whether they are a user of our car parks or not. Views of residents and businesses alike are being sought to assist us in making an informed decision on for example, the most appropriate charging regime. This will assist us in directing resources and funding to support those vital non statutory services that are essential for so many of our residents and communities.*

*Much has been discussed around the local plan review that was on track to meet the project programme, but the government has introduced a revised National Planning Policy Framework that was consulted upon through August and September. The implications of the proposals contained therein coupled with the new policy of mandatory and increased housing targets (in Breckland an increase of 39%, or from 661 to 918 houses per year) has meant that most of the evidence used to formulate the local plan thus far is no longer valid. Consequently, Cabinet agreed to pause the process and await clarity from Westminster. We are advised that the result of the NPPF consultation will be available by the end of the calendar year, and that legislation will follow during the first quarter of 2025. Until such time as there is clarity regarding the legislative framework and the NPPF we are unable to rely on our current local plan.*

- 8) **Highways and Road Safety.** Cllr Thomas reported that the ditches and grips on the Watton Rd s bends had been dug out, but other works were yet to be completed. The SAM 2 system was in operation, a grant had been received from NCC. Cllr Eagle had added £1000 of his Cllr funds to the grant to make it a total of £2777. Thanks were conveyed.
- 9) **Planning Applications.** There was one appeal concerning Springfield, with the independent inspection team.
- 10) **Finances.** The clerk highlighted there was £19480.87 in the account, following receipt of a grant. Approval was given for Pearce & Kemp £45.60, the clerks salary and back pay of £186.96 and for the Serco maintenance and SLCC membership invoices when they arrived. Estimated spend till year end was £5000 so there would be a surplus from last year end figures. The finance committee had met and proposed an increase on the precept to £17500 for 25/26. This was carried. The N power unmetered supply had been

agreed for now, on terms that the PC could leave at any time., The unmetered power supply needed a new UMS certificate so the full effect of the LED lights power reduction could be seen, The Clerk and Chair would try and unravel the complexities of getting this certificate. Another Breckland Council grant had been applied for to try and get some of the money for the ramp and information board.

- 11) **Allotments.** A work party would be got together to tackle any maintenance required.
- 12) **Footpaths and Rights of Way.** The trod was still of concern but other paths were ok at present.
- 13) **Playing Field.** Cllr Lloyd gave a resume of the very successful fireworks display. Takings of £4122.96 had brought a profit of close to £1000 for the event. The Chair thanked the team for all their hard work. The Clerk explained that once monies had been banked and a float retained for future events, there should be just under £17,500 in the account. Thanks were given to Harry Stebbing for the new village hall sign.
- 14) **Councillor Update's;** The Chair thanked Enid Loft for the fantastic Remembrance Day display by the village sign. Dog fouling once again reared its head. The dog warden would be approached again. Cllr Lloyd would broach the subject of hazardous parking with the police at the next SNAP meeting. The Reading Room Garden and old phone box would be refurbished and painted in the spring by Townlands.
- 15) **Correspondence.** None.
- 16) **Next meeting** Monday 9<sup>th</sup> December 24.