

Hockering Parish Council

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MINUTES of the **Annual Parish Meeting** held on Tuesday 23rd May 2023 at the Village Hall, Hockering.

Cllrs Present at the Meeting: Cllrs J Blackwell (Chair), T Bassett, P Cocker, B Higgins, M Mason, R Neave and L Parker

Also Present: District Cllr Gordon Bambridge, 11 members of the public and the Parish Clerk.

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

None received.

2. To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 10th May 2022

All those present approved the minutes and the Chairman duly signed the minutes.

3. To receive reports from:

- a) Parochial Church Council – apologies were received.
- b) Hockering Quarterly News – no report was received.
- c) Hockering Primary Academy – no report was received.
- d) Poor and Townlands Charity – no report was received.
- e) Playing Field Association – no report was received.
- f) Play Area – it was reported that there were concerns that vandalism and anti-social behaviour has resulted in repairs being needed to play equipment and fencing.
- g) Village Hall Committee – no report was received.
- h) Hockering Woods – it was reported that the owners were trying to keep the woods open for all. It was important that the public use the main access point from the road, for Health & Safety reasons, rather than go over fences or through hedges. It was proposed that an Open Day be held later in the year, date to be confirmed.
- i) Breckland District Councillor – Gordon Bambridge – report attached to these minutes.
- j) Norfolk County Councillor – Bill Borrett – no report received.

4. Open Forum for Public Participation

Comments were received concerning the proposal to move the play area from its current position to alternative sites in the village. The problems with the current site include anti-social behaviour, litter, broken glass, damaged play equipment and fences. It was suggested that if such behaviour was noticed, it should be reported to the Police, or the Anti-Social Behaviour Team and the more reports that are received, the more they can monitor the situation and act if necessary. The Village Hall committee had voted to reject the suggestion of locating a playground in the village hall grounds. A resident said she would be willing to set up and run a Youth Club at the Football Field Hall, to provide activities and refreshments to different age groups on different evenings. Cllr Bassett suggested a working party be formed to help set up this scheme. A suggestion was made that football, play equipment and the Youth Club should all be on one site. It would be helpful if the sign stating age restrictions and no ball games was reinstated. The Parish Council noted the excellent points made and said that they are pleased to help as much as they can for the good of all residents and that they are happy to hear from parishioners with their views. The matter will be discussed at the next meeting.

The matter of the cutting of grass verges was raised and although Cllr Higgins is willing to do this, the removal of the clippings was a big problem now the grass is so long. Some areas in the village are the responsibility of NCC Highways who observe the 'No Mow May' ruling and are likely to resume mowing shortly.

A concern was reiterated about the missing Parish Council records prior to 2015. The Parish Council has confirmed that in 2021 the Parish Council received records from the former Clerk which did not include any records prior to 2015. This detail has been checked with the former Chairman who received the documents. It is noted that it is regrettable that these records have gone missing and if anyone has copies of the minutes please forward them to the Clerk.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and invited them to stay for the Annual Parish Council Meeting. The meeting closed at 8:05pm.

Signed Date

Having represented this ward or its earlier incarnation for some 20 years and this being an election year I have decided to stand for another 4 years if the people of Upper Wensum continue to support me.

The past year in Breckland has been very positive despite the whole community still feeling the effects of the tail end of the covid pandemic, we will probably have some fall out from that for a few years. Breckland remains a council producing a balanced budget and still levies a low council tax.

With 15 villages in the ward attending parish meetings has been less regular than I would have hoped, and for this I am sorry, but I am always willing to attend village meetings at other times or arrange to meet with parish clerks or councillors, or indeed members or groups of the public between meetings. These can be in the parish or in the Breckland offices. Inevitably we often get two or more parish council meetings on the same evening, nobody is at fault it just happens, but I will normally attend if asked.

Planning within the ward has ground to a stop on housing applications because of nutrient neutrality limitations, although planners from across the county are hopeful we will have some better ideas of mitigation by the end of this year.

Two things have arisen in this area.

1/ The proposed new town, which is the biggest public issue in our area, I am opposed to the principle of it on this site and have recorded that at Breckland, plus if it goes any further I will oppose the fact of it on two wide ranging grounds - infrastructure matters and environmental matters - if re-elected I will be speaking to all parishes about these.

2/ The introduction of Exception Sites policies. That is 'Local homes for Local people' two villages in the ward are already going down the road of considering these and any village could talk to Breckland about this form of housing provision.

Breckland are still able to provide some grants and match funding, so please raise any questions or place bids if needed. The big project funding is still mainly coming from the lottery as that is how it is set up nationally, but except for things like new halls this is not often needed in villages. I am normally supportive of community efforts and willing to write support letters for your applications.

During the election I have been publishing a daily blog of almost 100 promises Breckland have kept in the past year. I believe Breckland administration has fulfilled its manifesto promises.

I continue to support all the villages of Upper Wensum in practical ways and by promoting them within the council wherever possible.

Apart from the normal ward work I serve on Breckland Cabinet with responsibility for Housing and Homelessness. This means I am pretty much a full time councillor, Cabinet meets weekly in some form or another and I also attend many Breckland committee meetings.

Also like many other conservative councillors I meet with other organisations and levels of government regularly. For me I am pleased to meet with:- MP's and County Councillors as well as parish councils and both national and local organisations who influence how we all live. Plus I represent Breckland on:-
Norfolk Police and Crime Panel,
Norfolk Rivers Internal Drainage Board,
Norfolk Strategic Flood Alliance,
Water Resource East Strategic Advisory Board,
A47 Alliance. (As substitute)

During my time as your councillor I have always regarded my prime job was to represent you to Breckland, I have a secondary duty and that is to represent Breckland to you. I do try and fulfil both these roles.

Gordon Bambridge
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