

Hockering Parish Council

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| Chairman: J Blackwell Tel: 07808 927910 e-mail: jonty.b@btinternet.com | Parish Clerk Margaret Ridgwell Tel: 01603 871636 e-mail: hockeringparishcouncil@gmail.com |
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MINUTES of the **Parish Council Meeting** held on Tuesday 14th October 2025 at the Village Hall, Hockering.

Cllrs Present at the Meeting: J Blackwell (Chair), G Bambridge, B Higgins, P McIntee and R Neave

Also Present: Parish Clerk and 5 residents.

1. **Welcome. To receive apologies for absence** – There were no apologies for absence.
2. **To receive any declarations of interest** – Cllr McIntee declared that as he is on the FoHPS committee, he would not vote on any financial matter concerning the Primary School.
3. **To approve the Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting on the 9th September** – having previously been circulated to all councillors, Cllr Higgins proposed, and Cllr McIntee seconded that the Minutes be approved and signed. All agreed.
4. **To receive County/District Councillor reports** – District Cllr Bambridge reported that he is now covering all drainage problems for Breckland Council. He will also be attending a Planning Committee meeting dealing with a large development in Thetford. Cllr Borrett's report is attached to these minutes.
5. **To receive updates from:**
 - a) **Village Hall** – It was reported that quotes have been received for the upgrade to the electrics in the Village Hall and work will take place soon.
 - b) **Village Church** – There has been no interest to date in the vacancy for a vicar. The School Harvest Festival Service will take place on the 16th October. The Coffee mornings continue to provide much needed income.
 - c) **Primary School/Friends of Hockering Primary School** – Current projects include refurbishing the toilets, arranging a 'Bangers & Bingo' session in November, organizing outings for the children to Christmas pantomimes.
 - d) **Playing Field – Ownership & Management** – Cllr Blackwell has been in contact with the Playing Fields in Trust organisation and an Extraordinary General Meeting will be arranged to invite volunteers to join a new restructured Committee.
 - e) **Village Maintenance** – Cllrs then discussed the matter of getting quotes to carry out a risk assessment on the trees which are the responsibility of the Parish Council. Two quotes were considered and following a proposal from Cllr McIntee, seconded by Cllr Higgins, all agreed that Norfolk Trees be engaged to carry out this work. Cllr Blackwell will contact them with details of the work needed. Breckland Council will be sent a Freedom of Information request for details of their contract with SERCO to maintain trees in Hockering.
 - f) **Footpaths** – It was noted that there are overhanging trees along the Stile footpath, FP9, and NCC will be contacted to clear this path. They will also be asked to clear the verges of other footpaths in Hockering which are encroaching on the paths.
6. **Open Forum for Public Participation** – A resident raised the issue of road closures in the locality due to the road improvements on the A47, particularly the five-month closure of the A47/Wood Lane junction, starting in November. Concerns were raised about the inadequacy of road signage giving motorists details of the diversion route well in advance of the actual closure. Although the recommended diversion route does not come through Hockering, it was felt that it was inevitable that there will be a huge increase in traffic through the village, particularly HGVs. Speeding in the village, particularly along Heath Road, was

already a problem and will be even worse with additional traffic. It was suggested that a camera could be fitted on the outside of the Village Hall to record movement of HGVs who exceed the 7.5T limit on the road. The haulage companies could then be contacted, or information passed to the Police. Concerns were also raised that the upcoming weekend closure of the A47 is not even on the National Highways website and no notice has been given to Parish Councils who will be affected by these closures. A resident kindly offered to repaint the Hockering village road sign. It was suggested that prices be sought for materials and time which could be agreed at the next meeting. A resident pointed out that there was information on the Breckland Planning website relating to sites in Hockering which have not been received by the Clerk. Breckland Planning will be contacted.

7. To receive updates on the following Working Parties:

- a) **Play Area** – The Play Area is now closed as the equipment is not safe. Cllrs felt that the Play Area is not in the best location and alternative sites should be looked at before more money is spent on the existing area and equipment. This is particularly relevant if future plans for additional housing developments in the village mean that more families move into the area and a larger play area is needed.

8. To discuss the following:

- a) **Purchase of Village Noticeboard** – Quotes had been received for a new Noticeboard for the village and a quote from Earth Anchors Ltd for £630 including delivery, ex VAT, was agreed by all following a proposal by Cllr Bambridge, and seconded by Cllr Higgins. Quotes will also be sought for a smaller board to be sited outside the church wall to contain a map of the village.
- b) **Purchase of gov.uk email addresses** – Central Government have recommended that it is best practice for all Parish Councils to use gov.uk domains and websites. As members of the Norfolk Parish Training Support organization, the PC is entitled to a discount from their associate company, Parish Online, to provide such email addresses at an initial cost of £160 ex VAT for the first year, and £260 ex VAT for each subsequent year. This will be followed up by the Clerk.

9. Highway Matters:

- a) **To consider the purchase and placement of dog bins.** Cllr McIntee suggested that dog bins be purchased to be sited at the junctions of footpaths and roadways and it was agreed that he would provide details of such sites. Permission will then be sought from Breckland Council for these sites and prices for bins and their installation will be presented at the next meeting.
- b) **To consider the setting up of a Community Speedwatch Group.** Some residents have shown an interest in joining such a group, and it was agreed that a Working Party be set up to organize this. The Police Community Speedwatch team advise that at least 6 members are required, training and equipment is provided and locations and timetables are agreed with the Police. The Parish Council agreed to fund the cost of providing the Village Hall for such meetings and a report from the Working Party should be submitted to the Parish Council monthly.

10. Correspondence for circulation – all relevant correspondence had been circulated to councillors and dealt with as required.

11. Planning Matters –

- a) No planning applications had been received since the last meeting.
- b) No planning decisions had been received since the last meeting.

12. Council Policies – The following PC Policies had been passed to the councillors for them to read and approve: Standing Orders, Code of Conduct, Financial Regulations, Risk Assessment and IT. There was an amendment to the Standing Orders concerning the meeting date of the PC, and councillors will consider other policies at the next meeting.

13. Finance & Governance Matters

- a) **To approve the following payments and note Bank Balance** – The payments and receipts for September were noted and approved by all, following a proposal by Cllr Neave, seconded by Cllr Higgins.

| PAYMENTS FOR APPROVAL THIS MONTH: <i>THE CO-OPERATIVE BANK COMMUNITY ACCOUNT</i> | | | | |
|--|-------------------|---------------------------|---------------|------|
| BALANCE AS AT 09.09.25 | | | £20,945.11 | |
| PAY TYPE | PAYEE | DESCRIPTION | ACTUAL AMOUNT | VAT |
| BACS | M Ridgwell | Sep Salary & Exps | 362.20 | |
| BACS | HMRC | PAYE to Period 06 | 86.20 | |
| BACS | Screwfix | Padlock (Pd by B Higgins) | 21.99 | 3.67 |
| | | Total | 470.39 | |
| RECEIPTS | | | | |
| | Breckland Council | Precept | + 5,000.00 | |
| BALANCE C/FWD 14.10.25 | | | £25,474.72 | |

14. To receive any new items for the next agenda – To progress and receive updates on matters raised above. To consider the Budget for 2026/27, including the Precept required.

15. To note the next meeting of the Parish Council – This will be on Tuesday 11th November 2025 at 7.30pm in the Village Hall.

The meeting closed at 9.10pm

Signed

Cllr BILL BORRETT

Parish Report for the Elmham and Mattishall Division

October 2025

Contact: bill.borrett@hotmail.co.uk

This month the County Council will vote on **the Government' Devolution proposals**. This will decide whether we get one Mayor for Norfolk and Suffolk on top of the existing County and District Councils.

I have listened to your feedback as it has now been discussed for many months and will be voting against the proposals for all the reasons that you have given me. Not least the increased complication, increased cost and loss of democratic accountability. A number of tasks currently carried out by Breckland Council and Norfolk County Council will go up to the new Mayor who will be elected by one and a half MILLION people, so diluting your opportunity to hold him/her to account in your Parish.

As before if you want to know more about the Government's plans, **please go to** www.futureeast.com where you can find more information.

Norfolk County Council Invites Communities to Grow Greener with Discounted Tree Packs

Tree planting in Norfolk is set for another boost this season as Norfolk County Council continues its drive towards 1 million trees for the county.

The Council's subsidised tree scheme is also open again, offering individuals, Parish Councils, community groups, businesses, schools and landowners the chance to apply for tree packs and protection materials at up to **50% off the original price**.

For those who want to do their bit to boost the number of trees in Norfolk but don't have space for woodland, subsidised tree packs are available to order now.

For the first time this year, a limited number of 'Taller Tree Packs', grown at Gressenhall Community Tree Nursery, are also available. These include larger beech, oak, and birch trees, making it possible

for more people to take part and be 1 in a million.
For more information on Norfolk's One Million Trees initiative
visit www.norfolk.gov.uk/milliontrees.

The Local Plan

The Local Plan is coming to the Cabinet meeting on Monday 20th October. If it is agreed, then the next stage of Consultation will begin on 31st October for 6 weeks until the 12th December. **All Parish Councils will be contacted** and emailed details of the Consultation and how to get involved.

I do urge everyone to have a look at what is proposed because now is the best time to influence the Plan before it goes off to the Planning Inspectorate for adoption next year.

Start the new school year with the Safe School Run Pledge

As the new academic year kicks off, Norfolk County Council's Public Health Road Safety team is inviting schools, parents, and carers across the county to take part in the **Safe School Run pledge**, an initiative promoting safer, healthier, and more sustainable travel during school drop-off and pick-up times.

Last year, nearly sixty schools joined the pledge, making a real difference. Participating schools reported a **10% increase** in walking, scooting, or cycling, fewer cars at busy times, and greater road safety awareness among children and their families.

This year, schools will receive **updated resources** to support safe parking, reduce engine idling, and improve air quality around school entrances. These free materials, created by Norfolk County Council's Public Health Road Safety team with input from Norfolk Constabulary and Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service, are designed to help schools engage their communities in making streets safer and cleaner for everyone.

The pledge encourages simple but effective actions such as parking a short distance away and walking the last stretch, switching off engines while waiting, and choosing active travel options like walking, wheeling, or cycling whenever possible.

Schools interested in joining the pledge or accessing the free resources can visit the [Norfolk County Council's website](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/councils-website) or contact the Road Safety team for support.

Strong progress in transforming SEND education in Norfolk

Norfolk County Council is making significant strides in improving education for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), according to a recent report.

New teams and initiatives are enhancing support for inclusion within mainstream schools, while hundreds of additional places in specialist resource bases (SRBs) are enabling more children to remain in their local mainstream schools with tailored support.

The report, presented to the council's cross-party Children, Families and Communities Select Committee, highlights the council's substantial progress despite national delays in SEND reform and ongoing funding challenges.

Thanks to Norfolk's Safety Valve agreement, the council has secured over £130 million in joint investment with the Department for Education. Despite managing a cumulative Dedicated Schools Grant deficit of £131.9 million, Norfolk has committed more than £15 million in additional funding to bolster SEND services and continues to collaborate with the DfE to secure further funding aimed at reducing the deficit.

Councils launch package to support staff at Lotus Cars

The taskforce set up by Norfolk County Council and South Norfolk Council has launched a comprehensive support package designed to help employees and their families impacted by the recent announcement of redundancies at Lotus Cars.

The package that will be offered to Lotus employees and those affected in its supply chain, provides a holistic range of services designed around three key pillars of support, hardship and financial stability, employment and skills, and business start-ups.

The taskforce will use the time between now and the end of the financial year, when the redundancies are expected, to work with Lotus and its staff and help them navigate their next steps. The

comprehensive support package, detailed below, offers practical assistance focused on three key areas: hardship and managing finances, finding a new job and business start-up.

Best wishes

Bill

BILL BORRETT