

Hockering Parish Council

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MINUTES of the **Parish Council Meeting** held on Tuesday 9th December 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 1 resident.

1. **Welcome. To receive apologies for absence** – There were no apologies.
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 11th November** – having previously been circulated to all councillors, Cllr Higgins proposed, and Cllr Neave seconded that the Minutes be approved and signed. All agreed.
4. **To receive County/District Councillor reports** – District Cllr Bambridge reported Breckland Council had confirmed that there had been a delay to the proposed local elections and Mayoral election until 2028. This delay could cost many thousands of pounds. In the meantime, Breckland Council will continue to give grants to support local rural businesses. Cllr Borrett's report is attached to these minutes.
5. **To receive updates from:**
 - a) **Village Hall** – New lighting and sockets have been fitted in the Village Hall and plans are underway to upgrade the toilet in the kitchen.
 - b) **Village Church** – There is no mains electricity in the Church as the wiring and fuseboards need updating. There is a Carol Service in the Church on the 21st December at 3.00pm, and attendees are asked to bring a torch with them (not a candle).
 - c) **Primary School/Friends of Hockering Primary School** – The school is preparing for and enjoying the end of term Christmas festivities and look forward to making plans for the next school year.
 - d) **Playing Field – Ownership & Management** – Cllr Blackwell reported that he had heard from the one remaining member of the Hockering Playing Field Association that they are stepping down. Following discussion, it was agreed that in order to ensure the Playing Field is effectively and legally managed as an asset to the village, Hockering Parish Council, as a corporate body, should become Interim Managers and register as such with the Charities Commission. A new constitution could then be agreed and a vision for the future of the Playing Field be proposed. At this stage residents should be invited to express their interest in joining the committee of the restructured Hockering Playing Field Association. This suggestion was proposed by Cllr Blackwell, seconded by Cllr Bambridge and carried by all councillors. Once the Charity Commission have agreed to the appointment of Hockering Parish Council as the interim managers, then an inventory should be taken of the Playing Field and the Pavilion, together with changing the security system of HPFA's assets. It was also agreed that interim expenditure, such as changing locks, would be paid for by the Parish Council, to be reimbursed by HPFA when a proper accounting system is in place.
 - e) **Play Area** – the Parish Council has closed the Play Area for safety reasons. The matter will be reconsidered next Spring.
 - f) **Community Speedwatch Group** – the paperwork to register 8 residents as part of this group has been sent to the Police and the training of volunteers and issuing of equipment is likely to take place early in the New Year.

- g) **Village Maintenance** – Cllr Blackwell reported that he had received a report from Norfolk Trees on the condition of trees along the footpath from Rectory Lane, across Heath Road and onwards. The Councillors will review this report early next year and decide which trees should have maintenance work carried out on them. In the meantime Cllrs Higgins and Blackwell will remove excessive ivy and growth from the base of some of the trees. A Freedom of Information request was sent to Breckland Council for details of their contract with SERCO to maintain trees in Hockering. Breckland confirmed that the contract with Serco is not specific to a single area of Breckland but applies to the whole district. The Clerk is to write to Breckland Council asking them to ensure that the roads and streets in Hockering are swept as soon as possible.

6. Open Forum for Public Participation – Concerns were raised about the three pallets of office furniture currently outside the houses rented out by the Hockering Poor and Townlands Charity. Cllr Neave Rosemary spoke for the charity and said that the Charity are aware of this matter and the rubbish accumulating in the garden and are taking action.

7. To consider dates for First Aid/Defib training – this matter will be considered at the next meeting.

8. Highway and Footpath Matters -

- a) Purchase of Additional Dog Bins – Three sites for new dog bins adjacent to footpaths were proposed and this information was to Breckland Council and Norfolk Highways for their approval. Two sites have been approved, but we are waiting to hear from NCC on approval of the third site. Once these have been approved, dog bins will be ordered and fixed to help keep the footpaths in the village free of dog excrement and safe for walkers. Cllr Blackwell proposed and Cllr Bembridge seconded that this purchase is agreed. All were in favour.
- b) It was agreed to organize two dates for rubbish clearing and cleaning of the brook in the village. The first date suggested was the weekend of 21st February, and a further date will be arranged during the summer.

9. Correspondence for circulation – all relevant correspondence had been circulated to councillors and dealt with as required. Matthew Hutton from Hockering Woods, confirmed that the Woods would be open on Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day from 10.00am to 2.00pm. Admission is only through the North Gate on Heath Road. Please note that the Woods are not open at any other time during the winter months as timber harvesting operations are being conducted, together with deer and squirrel control. For safety reasons it is vital that this rule is adhered to.

10. Planning Matters –

- a) A planning applications was received: PL/2025/1718/FMIN, for the demolition of agricultural buildings and erection of new self-build dwelling and change of use of agricultural land to residential. Site: Ash Lodge, Low Road, Hockering, NR20 3HF. Councillors considered this site to be in North Tuddenham but still replied to Breckland stating that all building work south of the A47 should be suspended for the duration of the A47 improvements, as there is excessive traffic on minor roads in the area and new building work would exacerbate the situation.
- b) Application 3PL/2022/0761/D. 31 Dwellings on Heath Road. Decision issued on 09.09.25. REFUSED
- c) Application 3PL/2021/1312/D. 28 Dwellings on Heath Road. Decision issued on 09.09.25. REFUSED
- d) To consider the response of the Parish Council to the consultation taking place on the Breckland Locality Plan. The Council's views were submitted to Breckland and included the following concerns: that the proposed developments for 1000 plus dwellings would totally change the character of the village which currently has around 400 dwellings; Community funding for additional infrastructure would not be put in place until after dwellings are built and the current infrastructure, such as roads, broadband, public footpaths, recreation areas, water and sewerage, local school places, doctors' surgery capacity and job opportunities, is already inadequate.

11. Finance & Governance Matters

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

PAYMENTS FOR APPROVAL THIS MONTH: <i>THE CO-OPERATIVE BANK COMMUNITY ACCOUNT</i>				
BALANCE AS AT 11.11.25			£24,147.52	
PAY TYPE	PAYEE	DESCRIPTION	ACTUAL AMOUNT	VAT

BACS	M Ridgwell	Clerk Nov salary and allowances	£310.20	
BACS	HMRC		73.40	
BACS	Norfolk Trees	Survey	360.00	60.00
BACS	ICO	Data Protection	47.00	
BACS	Hockering PCC	Donation Churchyard Maint	500.00	
		Total	1,290.60	60.00
BALANCE C/FWD 09.12.25			£22,856.92	

- b) **To consider expenditure for the new financial year budget** – a draft budget was forwarded to the councillors for their consideration before the meeting. Following discussion it was proposed by Cllr Higgins and seconded by Cllr Bambridge, that the Precept required for the year 2026/2027 should be increased by £500 to £10,500. Three councillors voted in favour of this proposal and two councillors voted against. Breckland will be informed of the Precept requirement. This will mean an increase to residents in Band D Council Tax bracket of £1.79 per annum.

12. To receive any new items for the next agenda – To progress and receive updates on matters raised above. To consider the offer to repaint the village sign and the publication of a Village Newsletter.

13. To note confirm Parish Council meetings for 2026 – As the Village Hall had already been booked, there will be no meeting in January. The dates for the other months are as follows: 10th February, 10th March, 14th April, 12th May for the Annual Meeting and 19th May for the Annual Parish Council Meeting, 9th June, 14th July, no meeting in August, 8th September, 13th October, 10th November and 8th December. The next Parish Council Meeting will be on the 10th February at 7.30pm in the Village Hall.

The meeting closed at 9.50pm

Signed

Cllr BILL BORRETT
Parish Report for the Elmham and Mattishall Division
November 2025

Tory suspended after voting against plans for new mayor

A senior Tory has been suspended after rebelling against plans for a mayor for Norfolk and Suffolk.

OWEN SENNITT
owen.sennitt@newsquest.co.uk

Bill Borrett, inset, has been temporarily removed from the group after voting against a £1bn devolution deal, which will include the creation of a cross-county mayorship.

The former leader of the authority was one of only two councillors to object to the plans at a Norfolk county council meeting earlier this month, which he says was "not a political act".

His suspension from the Conservatives follows a previous act of dissent at the start of this year, when he quit his cabinet position for public health in protest at a decision to suspend local



elections next year.

Mr Borrett, who represents the Elmham and Mattishall division in

Breckland, said: "In the

meeting, all I did

was represent the

views of my

residents.

They had

been very

clear that

they did not

support

creating a

mayor for

Norfolk and

Suffolk.

"I was just

representing their

interests in the meeting. It

was not a political act and it

is what I would expect any

local member to do.

"Having said that, I look

forward to resolving the

issue within the

Conservative group."

Other than Mr Borrett,

the only other councillor to

vote against the deal was Alexandra Kemp, a West Norfolk independent.

The deal would give powers for issues such as transport, housing, jobs and adult education from Whitehall to Norfolk and Suffolk, along with a 30-year multi-million pound investment fund.

For it to proceed, an elected mayor will be created for the two counties, with elections to be held next May to decide who would head up a new combined authority.

But while the deal was supported by the vast majority of Norfolk county councillors, the proposal to create a mayor has proven controversial.

In a consultation, two-thirds of people in Norfolk and Suffolk did not feel a directly-elected mayor would bring benefits to the region.

Kay Mason-Billig, leader of the Conservative group at NCC, has been approached for comment.

You may have seen this article in the EDP on the 27th October. I am happy to say that I am no longer suspended, but it came about because I listened to your views. I voted against establishing an expensive new Mayor for Norfolk and Suffolk, in line with the feedback I received from you. This was despite being told to vote for it at the County Council.

I have always felt that it is my responsibility to represent the residents of the Elmham and Mattishall Division to the County Council not the other way around. Your views always come first.

New Norfolk-wide highways contract awarded with strong focus on boosting local skills and employment

Norfolk County Council has appointed Kier Limited as its new long-term contractor responsible for the maintenance and construction of Norfolk's highway network.

Kier will deliver a comprehensive programme of highways maintenance and improvement, including road resurfacing and surface dressing, bridge works, drainage and the delivery of new transport infrastructure.

As part of the contract, Kier will invest significantly in its existing site in Wymondham, upgrading facilities to reduce energy consumption and support the latest in sustainable construction and materials innovation, which will benefit the wider Norfolk economy.

A key feature of Kier's approach to the contract will be its commitment to local skills and employment. At any given time, Kier will employ at least 15 apprentices, providing structured training, professional qualifications, and career pathways for young people across Norfolk.

The company will also run an annual 10-week programme for young people in care and care leavers, offering taster sessions, work experience, and employability skills, with support from supply chain partners.

Most importantly we hope to see quality and timely actions to protect our Highways.

Norfolk bucking national trend for recruiting adoptive parents

Norfolk is bucking the national trend for recruiting adopters, with the numbers of adopters increasing in the county. This is so important as the life chances of children who are adopted

are so much greater.

Across the country, there are 12% fewer families considering adoption this year compared to last, whereas in the year 24/25, Norfolk County Council's Adoption Service recruited 43 adoptive households - a 53% increase on the number of adopters who were approved in 23/24.

Of these 43 households, 37 were couples and six were single adopters. The council has also seen an increase in adopters from global majority backgrounds and from the LGBTQ+ community.

The news comes as the county marks "**National Adoption Week**", with this year's focus being on busting the misconceptions about who can adopt.

People considering whether adoption is right for them are invited to contact Norfolk Adoption Services on **01603 638343** for a friendly chat and invitation to an information event where they can find out more.

Give Norfolk County Council your views on fire and rescue priorities

A public consultation on Norfolk Fire & Rescue Service's safety and risk plans for the next five years has gone live.

Residents, businesses and organisations now have an opportunity to feedback on areas the service has identified as priorities for 2026-2031, to mitigate risk and keep our county as safe as possible.

Eight proposals have been put out for the public to comment on, around the areas of:

- Road safety
- Prevention activity
- Building safety
- Preparing for and responding to emergencies
- Responding to climate change (specifically extreme weather risks such as flooding and wildfire)
- Supporting our people
- Fire station improvements
- Responding to medical emergencies

Details of the eight proposals are below. The public can fill in an online survey via www.norfolk.gov.uk/crmp to respond.

CRMP Proposal 1

Working to Improve Road safety: We will play a more active role in Norfolk's Road Safety Partnerships to analyse data and coordinate action to reduce the occurrence and impact of collisions on our county's roads.

CRMP Proposal 2

Focussing on prevention: We will work within Community Safety Partnerships to further focus on vulnerable groups, including children and young people. We will increase our early intervention activities, developing resilience in our communities and improving outcomes.

CRMP Proposal 3

Ensuring better Building Safety: We will prioritise inspection and engagement activity for the highest risk buildings in Norfolk, effectively applying legislation across relevant residential and commercial buildings to keep people safe in their homes, at work and during their leisure activities.

CRMP Proposal 4

Enhancing our Response: We will review how we locate and deploy our assets and resources to optimise how we train for, and respond to, emergencies.

CRMP Proposal 5

Responding to Climate Change: We will review our extreme weather response, specifically water and wildfire capability, to mitigate the impact of these incidents. We will continue to lobby government to make water and flood response a statutory duty for all Fire and Rescue Services in England.

CRMP Proposal 6

Supporting our People: We will continue to further develop our high performing and inclusive culture;

supporting our staff to be skilled, healthy and engaged, and empowering them to uphold the highest professional standards that our communities expect.

CRMP Proposal 7

Providing Fit for Purpose Fire Stations: We will secure long term investment in our fire stations, so firefighters are protected from contaminants and facilities are fit for a modern workforce.

CRMP Proposal 8

Responding to Life Threatening Medical Emergencies: We will continue to develop our work with East of England Ambulance Service Trust around Emergency Medical Response to improve outcomes for our communities.

Norfolk's budget consultation - Have your say

As the County Council's annual budget consultation has launched, residents are urged to take a look at the proposals and have their say.

The County Council is working to set a balanced budget, despite increased demand for services from Norfolk's residents.

This year there are 50 budget saving proposals, and proposals to increase Council Tax, which provides a large part of the funding the County Council needs to meet its growing obligations.

To help deal with cost pressures and invest in vital services, the current budget planning for 2026-27 includes options to increase council tax.

Three options are being considered:

- An increase of 3%
- An increase of up to 5%
- An increase of more than 5%

People can find out more detail on why these are being considered and have their say at www.norfolk.gov.uk/budget.

The consultation opens on Monday 27 October and closes on Monday 15 December 2025.

'It's never too late': Norfolk County Council is supporting healthy ageing

Looking after your health as you get older is not just a recommendation - it's a vital investment in your future quality of life. Evidence shows that staying physically active, keeping up with recommended vaccinations and screenings, and maintaining social connections are among the strongest predictors of how well you age. These actions play a direct role in preventing illnesses, reducing the risk of falls and long-term conditions, and supporting mental wellbeing.

Norfolk is home to one of the highest ageing populations in the UK. Now, the county council's Public Health department has launched a new campaign to encourage residents aged 50 and over to prioritise their health so they can live healthier, more connected lives as they age.

The campaign is centred around a brand [new Healthy Ageing subsite](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/healthyageing), called 'It's never too late', which highlights resources, guidance and opportunities to help residents make positive changes to their health and wellbeing.

This includes:

- Protecting your health: information on vaccination eligibility and booking, NHS screening appointments, and NHS health checks.
- Being active: information on moving more, strength and balance, falls prevention, and finding local groups.
- Feeling connected: finding clubs, groups and one-to-one support, building new connections, and practical guidance on transport and digital skills.

To explore the new webpage and find out more, visit www.norfolk.gov.uk/healthyageing.

Major refurbishment announced for Millennium Library to mark 25-year anniversary

Norwich's Millennium Library is the flagship Library and the hub from which Norfolk's Library Service is delivered. It is set to undergo a £1m transformation in 2026, marking 25 years since it first opened its doors.

The refurbishment has been shaped by extensive feedback from library users and will include a re-designed early years library as well as new homes for both the 8+ and teen library areas, each with their own identity. There are also plans for a bookshop-style entrance for easy browsing and an increase in study space, primarily on the first floor.

Accessibility has been a key part of the design with lower shelving units throughout the library and improved signage and wayfinding.

Visitors can also look forward to improved lighting, new furniture with built-in power points and a new gathering space for events and talks.

Work is scheduled to begin next year. While some disruption to services is expected during the refurbishment, full details will be shared closer to the time.

Parish Partnership Scheme

The deadline of the Parish Partnership scheme is fast approaching. All Parishes that are considering putting in bids please make sure that you are doing them now.

I am always delighted to support any proposals as it represents a way to get extra money from Highways for our Parishes.

If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me on
[**bill.borrett@hotmail.co.uk**](mailto:bill.borrett@hotmail.co.uk)

Best wishes
Bill