

# Hockering Parish Council

Chairman: J Blackwell  
Tel: 07808 927910  
e-mail: [jonty.b@btinternet.com](mailto:jonty.b@btinternet.com)

Clerk: Mrs Margaret Ridgwell,  
Tel: 01603 871636  
e-mail: [hockeringparishcouncil@gmail.com](mailto:hockeringparishcouncil@gmail.com)

---

**MINUTES** of the **Parish Council Meeting** held on Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> August 2023 at the Village Hall, Hockering.

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

**Also Present:** District Cllr Gordon Bambridge, 5 members of the public and the Parish Clerk.

- 1. Welcome and apologies for absence and to note resignations** – there were no apologies. Regretfully Cllrs Bassett and Mason had tendered their resignations following the last meeting and the Parish Council thank them for the work and support in the past. The Notice of Vacancies sign had been displayed.
- 2. To appoint Vice-Chair** - as Cllr Bassett had been appointed as Vice-Chair before his resignation, nominations were taken for this post. Cllr Parker proposed that Cllr Cocker be appointed, and Cllr Neave seconded this proposal. All were in favour and Cllr Cocker signed her Acceptance of Office form.
- 3. To receive any declarations of interest** – there were no declarations of interest.
- 4. To approve suggested Co-option Policy and consider any co-option applications received** – the Policy had been circulated to all councillors before the meeting for their consideration, and Cllr Cocker proposed and Cllr Parker seconded that the Policy be approved. All were in favour. The Clerk will publish the Policy on the Council Website. No Co-option applications had been received.
- 5. To approve the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting and the Annual Parish Council Meeting held on Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2023** – having previously been circulated to all councillors, Cllr Neave proposed, and Cllr Parker seconded that they be approved and signed. All agreed.
- 6. To receive County/District Councillor reports** – District Councillor Bambridge gave a brief report including information on the Breckland District Council Local Plan and the call for sites for future development. One of these is the proposal for a new town in the locality and almost all are against this plan. He encouraged individual parishes to watch for details of consultations when the Parish Council's views can be put forward. He was interested to hear that the Parish Council are proposing to investigate the possibility of developing a Neighbourhood Plan for the village and he is happy to support this. He explained that if such a Plan is accepted, and included the views of all organisations and residents, the village will have more influence on future planning and increased CIL grants would be received. He also added that it is important to review the Plan regularly to take account of any relevant changes. He suggested appointing a professional planner for advice. Breckland Council are in line for two awards – a saving of £3m yearly on income from investments, and the provision of social housing at Elm Road, Thetford, which saves £1m per year.
- 7. To receive updates from:**
  - a) Hockering Quarterly News** – The Summer edition of this publication had been edited and produced by Cllr Cocker and her husband and had been very well received. Cllr Bambridge and Hockering Councillors thanked her for her hard work and commended her on a job well done. Cllr Cocker said that the HQN Committee are looking for ideas on content for future editions.
  - b) Village Hall** – There were no updates from the Village Hall Committee.

- c) **Village Church** – The Curate, Rev Tori, said that the summer months were quiet in Church life and the next events are the Harvest Festival in Church on the 22<sup>nd</sup> October and on the 15<sup>th</sup> October for the School.
  - d) **Playing Field** – Cllr Cocker reported that there is now a new Committee, including a Financial Officer, Fundraising and Safeguarding representatives. It is proposed that the Playing Field management be divided between the Pavilion events and Football business with the Pavilion and play area being available for village residents. She said that there will be a more community-focussed approach in the future which was very positive.
- 8. Open Forum for Public Participation – maximum of 3 minutes per person** – everyone welcomed the news that the shop had been refitted and was now open for business. Two new residents to the village were welcomed and one of them explained that he is involved with the upgrading of the A47 road scheme. He said that as most local roads were not adequate for today’s increased traffic, it was important that the improvements to the A47 go ahead as soon as possible, and work will commence shortly. The matter of litter accumulating at the bus stop outside the Public House was raised and it was suggested that a new litter bin be acquired. This has to be erected on publicly owned land and advice will be sought. A resident wanted to hold a Macmillan Coffee Morning to raise funds for this charity and it was suggested this could be held as part of the usual Wednesday Coffee Morning, sometime in September.
- 9. To discuss proposals for a Working Party to investigate developing a Neighbourhood Plan** – The Chairman explained that if a Neighbourhood Plan is adopted and approved by the District Council this will allow Hockering to have a greater say in future planning decisions in line with Breckland standard planning requirements. Councillors were asked if they were willing to support this initiative and were unanimously in favour. Cllr Bambridge pointed out that it is important to produce a proper Neighbourhood Plan, not just a Planning Statement, and that this would be a significant undertaking. He felt it important to employ a Planning Expert to help and a Working Party of maybe 5-7 people would be the ideal number to push the plan forward and prepare regular updates for presentation to the Parish Council. The appointment of a committed Chairman with organisational expertise was important and ideas for who this might be will be considered by councillors. Funding is available to pay for professional help, but there would also be a financial commitment needed from the Parish Council which would have to be taken into account when setting next year’s budget. It is likely that the work could take 1-2 years to complete. All councillors were in favour of going ahead with the proposal.
- 10. Update on Play Area RoSPA Report and to consider setting up a Working Party to consider future options** – the Chairman said that there was quite a lot of work required to bring the play equipment up to scratch and he had approached the company who normally carry out repairs to go ahead as soon as possible. Unfortunately, they are fully committed at the moment but work will be started when they can. It was suggested that a Working Party be asked to consider rejuvenating the area and perhaps relocating the playground. Cllr Cocker said that there were good examples of playgrounds in Mattishall and on Sandy Lane, Taverham, which the Working Party could use for ideas. Cllr Parker said she would approach the School for volunteers when the autumn term starts. All councillors were in favour of this proposal.
- 11. To discuss proposals for a Working Party to set up a Youth Club** – A resident had already said she would be interested in helping to run a Youth Club in the Village and it was suggested that she be approached to progress this idea, and feed back to the PC on a regular basis. All councillors were in favour.
- 12. To consider the following –**
- a) **Holding a litter pick and clearing of the Brook** – The Chairman reported that Anglian Water had shored up the bank and cleared the area to some extent. It was proposed that a village event be organised, perhaps with a picnic or refreshments in the Village Hall, before clearing up litter in the village and along the Brook. Breckland Council are to be approached to provide litter pickers, bags and gloves, together with official guidelines and removal of litter on completion. It was pointed out that if any weeds and vegetation along the Brook were cleared, they must be left on the bank for several days or longer to allow wildlife to return to the river to preserve the

important ecological nature of the site. Other cuttings could be used for compost or scattered in rewilding areas. A date after the schools re-open in September was proposed.

- b) **Repairs to Stile Footpath bridges** - several wooden beams need replacing and Cllr Higgins said he would look into the possibility of using concrete beams to prolong the life of the bridges, or source a provider of timber for repairs if necessary.
- c) **New Local Area Map required for Bus Shelter** – Cllr Bambridge suggested either Breckland or Norfolk County Council be approached to provide a map and Cllr Parker would investigate providing a Perspex frame. It was also pointed out that the bus shelter itself was in need of repainting.

**13. To consider the purchase of Breckland Council approved signage** – it was felt that no further signage in the village was required at this time.

**14. To discuss defibrillator training** – The Clerk had tried several sources of training providers but was unable to find anyone to give First Aid and defibrillator-use training at the moment. A resident suggested approaching the East Anglian Air Ambulance organisation as they provide such training. The Clerk will investigate. It was suggested that a Saturday would be a good day to allow those residents who work during the week to come along and this could follow on from one of the Saturday Coffee Mornings.

**15. To consider update on village events** – Cllr Higgins reported that Bingo is carrying on and that a Village Clear-Up Day could be successful. The Pumpkin Fair would go ahead in October and it was suggested that a Village Fete next year would be a good idea. Other ideas included a Yard Sale, Craft Stalls, Music and a Scarecrow competition.

**16. To consider a Hockering Parish visit to Hockering Woods** – The Chairman reported that unfortunately some vandalism had taken place in the wood with signs being broken and beehives overturned. However, the owners are still willing to allow a visit for local residents to help educate and preserve this important ecological site. The Parish Council would fund this visit initially and consider charging visitors for the guided walk.

**17. Correspondence for circulation** - All correspondence had been circulated and dealt with as required. A letter had been received from Richard Hawker concerning the subject of the Parish records which had been reported on at the May meeting. Mr Hawker said that he had passed on all the Parish records to the then Parish Chairman, Mr McMahon, in late 2021. However, in March 2023 Mr Hawker asked the Parish Clerk at the time, Mrs Marsh, about the filing of historical documents and it was then identified that the paperwork she held was only from 2015 onwards. Mr Hawker is concerned that records prior to that date cannot now be found and asked that the Parish Council investigate the matter. Mr McMahon assured the current Chairman that all records he had received had been passed on during the handover to Mrs Marsh in late 2021. Mrs Marsh has also confirmed that all the records she received from Mr McMahon along with current records were handed over to the new clerk via the current chairman in May 2023. The Parish Council regrets the loss of the records prior to 2015 but do not see that any further action can be taken by them.

**18. Planning Matters** – In the recent call for sites for future development there is a plot for 35 properties off Heath Road, one on Sloeberry Lane, and one at the bottom of The Street at Lakeview which also included additional common land. Part of this development has already applied for a Planning Application. There is also a possible site on the other side of Heath Road. Some of these sites are outside the present village boundary, but there is a new Breckland Local Plan likely to be implemented in the near future which might change the boundary. Generally, planning development is not permitted outside the village boundary, but the matter needs to be kept under careful consideration.

- a) Applications for consideration - None received.  
Any other applications received after the publication of the agenda are available on <http://planning.breckland.gov.uk/OcellaWeb/planningSearch>
- b) To note any planning decisions/appeals – none received.

**19. To confirm the cancellation of Hockeringvillage.com website** – As this website is inactive, it was agreed by the Councillors that the contract be cancelled.

**20. Finance & Governance Matters**

a) To approve the following payments:

Clerk’s salary and expenses for June and July	£543.20
Play Area Padlock (Pd by JB)	£ 43.75
Playsafety Ltd RoSPA Inspection	£ 94.20
Harlequin Colour Printing of Hockering Life	£386.02
HMRC	£210.00
Zurich Insurance Annual Premium	£505.93

b) To consider adding another councillor to the list of authorised signatories with The Co-operative Bank to be able to use internet banking. Cllr Parker proposed, and Cllr Neave seconded that Cllr Cocker’s name be added to the list. All agreed.

**21. To receive any new items for the next agenda** – To progress and receive updates on matters raised above.

**22. To note the next meeting of the Parish Council** – This is scheduled for 7:30pm on Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> September 2023 in the Village Hall.

The meeting closed at 9.15pm

Signed .....

Date .....