

OXBOROUGH PARISH COUNCIL

2024/1
MINUTES

Ordinary Meeting held at the Village Hall, Oxborough
Wednesday 13 March 2024, starting at 7.30pm

PRESENT:	David Hotchkin	Chair
	Simon Willies	Vice Chair
	Graham Allison	Councillor
	Martyn Cockerill	Councillor
	Jackie Lambert	Councillor
	Ian Sherwood	Breckland District Councillor

5 Members of the Public

Open Forum (questions regarding the agenda)

A member of the public asked if it would be permitted for members of the public to raise matters not specifically included in the agenda. The Chair affirmed this.

1. Apologies for absence

None.

2. Declarations of Interest

None.

3. Declarations of recording and social media use

None.

4. To approve the Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held 17 January 2024

The final draft Minutes had been circulated and displayed on the Notice Board (and PC website). Cllr Cockerill proposed that the minutes should be accepted, seconded by Cllr Lambert- 4 in favour, 1 abstention; the minutes were signed by the Chair.

*The Chair suspended Standing Orders to take a question from the public: would items recorded in correspondence received be discussed at the meeting. The Chair said yes, that would be the case.
The meeting resumed.*

5. Matters arising

Cllr Cockerill asked if the question concerning the new stump on the village green (leftover from the felling of the chestnut tree) should be discussed now. The Chair advised this would be handled under agenda Item 10. Cllr Willies asked whether NCC Highways had responded to the request from the PC - not yet. Cllr Hotchkin reported that a number of LEDs in the SAM2 equipment had failed, and that the council would need to consider repair or replacement of the unit - other councillors mentioned guarantee (unit purchased in 2017, so likely expired) and insurance (normal wear and tear, so unlikely that a claim would be accepted).

6. District Councillor's Report

See PC website for Bedingfield Ward Report from Councillor Ian Sherwood. He spoke further about the recent council tax increase, pointing out that Breckland Council increase was the smallest in the country (once again). His report details information on the Chairman's Champions, that new collection routes may see residents' bins emptied on a different day and how Breckland's new Local Plan will determine growth and development in the district for the next 25 years. Councillors asked questions: whether green field sites would be included (yes, possible) and whether conservation areas would be protected (he confirmed this). He spoke about neighbourhood plans which

can enable parish councils to prepare, with the community they represent, a formal planning document for their area. There continues to be a national shortage of housing and Breckland Council cannot push back to central government about the housing requirements in the district. A member of the public thanked him for his explanations, speaking a little about the development of brown sites, and then asked about the small plot of land for sale in Oxborough (St. Johns Close) and whether any of the neighbouring properties might be offered the chance to purchase it. Use would normally be restricted to amenity/community use such as allotments/community kitchens. Cllr Sherwood only knew that it would be auctioned off soon and he would see what further information was available. The Chair thanked him for his time and Cllr Sherwood left the meeting at 8pm.

7. County Councillor's Report

None.

8. Planning Matters

- a)3PL/2024/0107/LB: Oxburgh Hall - Proposed onsite external installation of ground mounted air conditioning system with internal a/c head unit to support commercial kitchen temperatures.
- b)3PN/2023/0039/HR: Prior approval under Regulation 77 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (Habitat Regulations) for assessment of the proposal's effect on the integrity of the statutory designated nature conservation sites: Approved
- c)TRE/2024/0004/TCA: Oxburgh Hall - permission to fell 2 x sycamore trees
- d)3PL/2024/0157/HOU-Proposed Erection of garden shed/store (Mr Charles Howard-Vyse, 23 The Green).

9. Accounts

Sonex3 letter received (dated 26 Jan 2024) concerning outstanding balance of £219.99 with Npower. This is the second letter received (first dated 7 June 2023)

a). To receive bank balance and reconciliation

The councillors considered budget vs. actual (Appendix A). Cllr Willies proposed accepting this, seconded by Cllr Lambert, all in favour.

b). To consider authorisation of payments and to sign cheques

- i. CGM (hedge cutting) £450 plus VAT (£540)
- ii. Clerk's annual salary £1510.50
- iii. Clerk's annual expenses £234.11 (Incl VAT £17.30)
- iv. Oxborough Village Hall annual hire of the hall £90
- v. Accountants annual invoice -£81 plus VAT (£97.20))

Concerning the clerk's annual expenses, Cllr Allison asked why the invoice (£14.16 plus £2.83 VAT) for the anti-bird spikes had not been paid when purchased. The clerk explained that she submitted all her expenses annually (at the March meeting). He added that it should not be included in expenses as it was an asset purchase. Cllr Willies disagreed, rather it was a running cost and not a significant amount to be treated as an asset. Cllr Lambert added that she would be willing to reimburse the clerk, suggesting that Cllr Cockerill (who had installed the anti-bird spikes when asked by the clerk) might remove them now and that councillors should then take it in turns to clean up the bird droppings from the swing nest, a task which the clerk had been doing at regular intervals over the previous 1½ years. There was a question concerning the possible loss of VAT reclaim on the purchase, but the clerk reassured the Chair and Councillor Allison that all VAT was reclaimed (on any and all purchases for which she received a VAT invoice). The Chair expressed his disapproval about the purchase of the anti-bird spikes made without first approaching the council for permission but felt reassured on the question of VAT reclaim.

The Chair proposed the payments, seconded by Cllr Willies, all in favour - passed. The cheques were signed, and the counterfoils initialled by cheque signatories. Cllr Allison asked if 3 days before meetings, the clerk would supply hard copies of the bank reconciliation.

10. Correspondence Received

- a) Norfolk Police: see website
- b) NCC: see website
 - i. Caroline Jeffery, Principal Planner (Minerals and Waste Policy), Community and Environmental Services: Norfolk Minerals and Waste Local Plan - Notification of Submission. The representations received about the Publication version of the NM&WLP in 2022 are available to view in documents A4 and A5 of the examination library on Norfolk County Council's website at: <https://norfolk.oc2.uk/document/59>
 - ii. Email from Cllr Eagle: Please find attached a flyer for the Norfolk rural Business awards to share and encourage businesses in your parishes to enter. This is one of my ideas which I hope will increase engagement

between the County Council and the business in the rural areas as well as promote the wide range of business in our rural community's

c) Breckland Council: see website

i. The Mobile Food Store is now at Gooderstone (Thursday, 1-2pm at the Swan pub). The Clerk requested an information leaflet to display on the notice board/PC website.

ii. Breckland Local Validation List available to view via at <https://www.breckland.gov.uk/planning/local-validation-list>. Any comments to be received by 15 March (see PC website).

d) Email from PCC Julie Wood, expressing thanks for the annual donation of £175.

e) Norfolk Rivers Trust email: partnered with Aviva and WWF UK to launch a new fund to help break down barriers for groups struggling to access Norfolk's rivers and countryside. The Aviva access to Nature Fund is available to local community groups and charities, so if you struggle to visit nature then we would like to hear from you. Attached is an application form, as well as our terms of reference, where you can apply from anywhere between £150 to £1500 for: Equipment, materials and clothing / Guide leaders / One-off events/room-bookings Staff/consultant costs related to the project / Training costs / Transport / Entrance fees/parking costs /Accommodation / Volunteer expenses. The deadline for applications is Sunday the 3rd of March. If you wish to discuss the Access Fund further, please contact our Engagement Officer Tim on tim@norfolkriverstrust.org / 07538 720515.

f) Email from Mrs. Frankie Watkins: I note that the tree at the entrance to the village green by the Pound has been felled. I am concerned that the trunk has been left at about a metre high, I believe that this is not safe. Is there a plan in place for the roots to be ground out? If not, is there a risk assessment in place for the current situation to continue bearing in mind any likely degradation of the stump. Cllr Willies posed whether the stump had been left at a dangerous height and Cllr Allison explained how he and a few others had worked hard to remove the tree, but that none were willing to operate their chain saws at ground level, which also might result in a trip hazard plus the problem of mowing around it. The possibility of digging out the stump had been considered, especially in regard to just how long the roots might be, possibly risking damage to the nearby path, hedging and play area. Cllr Lambert agreed with this, suggesting the use of orange barrier mesh fencing whilst the stump rots down and Cllr Hotchkin also offered to apply a solution which accelerates this process - and councillors agreed this should be the first course of action. Cllr Cockerill stated that the PC could not afford the cost of stump grinding, so he offered to dig around the stump, use his own chain saw to remove it beneath ground level and finally back fill the soil. Concerning the remaining pile of small branches, left against the hedge, Cllr Allison pointed out that it would take repeated trips for him to load his trailer and take to the dump. Cllr Lambert offered to provide a location for burning the pile and Cllr Cockerill offered to collect them with his trailer, for which Cllr Allison offered his assistance. The Chair concluded that the tree had been made safe.

g) Quote for grass cutting received from Nurture Landscape (previously CGM) -£104 per cut(x13), £52 per spraying (x2)

11. Highways

a) ENQ-688850-V5T9V8: raised by Cllr Hotchkin "concerning the question of what we can lawfully do regarding highways maintenance in the parish". The Chair will follow up his enquiry.

12. To consider the Nurture Landscapes Ltd quote for grass cutting, £104 per cut (x13), £52 per spraying (x2)

Nurture Landscapes had acquired CGM (May 2023). Cockerill stated that no other provider could offer a cheaper quote. Cllr Willies asked if there were any other quotes to consider, but the clerk pointed out that the previous year all other quotes received then were far in excess of CGM and that Nurture had added just 4% for this year. Cllr Allison asked if Nurture would cut grass when asked (for special village green events) and the clerk confirmed this. Cllr Lambert proposed accepting the quote, seconded by Cllr Hotchkin, all in favour, passed.

13. To consider review of policy documents:

a. Risk Assessment (Currently Rev H, update to Rev I)

b. Financial Regulations (currently Rev C, update to Rev D)

c. Statement of Internal Control and Annual Review of Effectiveness of Internal Control (Currently Rev C, update to Rev D)

The Chair proposed that all these revisions should be accepted, seconded by Cllr Allison, all in favour, approved.

14. To consider making the Public Participation agenda item (separate from the open forum) a standard item for every general OPC meeting

Cllr Willies made an opening statement: that it seemed the PC want to keep Oxborough residents at arm's length; the Public Participation (PP) is a key component, as it allows resident to immediately comment on decisions made following the agenda items and the possibility for future items to be considered. He considers the requirement to secure 2 councillors support for agenda items excessive, concluding that OPC does not have to fall in line with other councils who have removed the PP. Cllr Cockerill seconded this proposal, that the open forum should be for public comment on the agenda items whereas the PP is the time for the councillors to be held accountable and the moment to fast track agenda items for the next meeting. Cllr Lambert agreed with these comments. Cllr Allison had some sympathy for these views but asked the Chair to clarify what NALC had to say concerning this issue. Cllr Hotchkin confirmed that the PC should be no different from other councils and that there is no statutory requirement for a PP; he concluded that he would not be in favour of the proposal. Further comments were made concerning finishing the evening in a timely fashion, rather than going on for some time; a couple of councillors suggested that maybe the open forum should be the place for considering future agenda items. The Chair concluded that any decision made here could be revisited in 6 months' time. He asked for a vote - 3 in favour, 1 against, 1 abstention - proposal passed.

15. Report from PC representative to the Village Hall Committee

Ongoing quiz nights and Mexican evenings are all in hand for the next few months, dates available on the Village Hall Website. Rehearsals for the Oxborough pantomime are in full swing, so don't miss your opportunity to buy tickets for the performances on 12/13 April. The Committee will be meeting in early April to discuss the summer programme so more news to follow then. Cllr Allison wanted to check that the dates of the panto rehearsals would not clash with any existing bookings - the clerk said these had been added to the village hall website calendar to avoid any possible clashes.

The meeting closed at 9.05pm

Public participation

16. To receive information or suggested items for consideration at the next meeting

Future dates were agreed as follows: Parish Meeting 17 April, starting at 7pm. Parish Council AGM 15 May, starting at 7pm, followed by the Ordinary Meeting. Ordinary Meeting dates for the rest of the year: 17 July, 18 September, 20 November, starting at 7.30pm. Dates for 2025: 15 January and 19 March, starting at 7.30pm.

One member of the public offered to assist on remedial works to the verges, once NCC Highways had given permission. Another member of the public asked if the PC would object to the village hall committee looking into possible funding options concerning the SAM2 equipment. The Chair said no objection, adding that the next NCC Parish Partnership scheme should be accessible to the PC, but that this would require match funding.

APPENDIX A	Meeting 13 March 2024				
Report: Accounts reported against the budget quarterly					
IAW Statement of Internal Control and Annual Review of Effectiveness of Internal Control (section Financial Reporting)					
BUDGET 2023/24	Budget	Actual	Variance	Outstanding Estimate Y/E	
Estimated Gross Payments					
Accountants	158.40	0.00	158.40	158.40	
Clerk's salary	1430.00	0.00	1430.00	1510.60	
Clerk's expenses	165.64	0.00	165.64	210.62	
CGM (grass cutting x13 plus herbicide) Note 1	769.45	1440.00	-670.55	0.00	
Hedge cutting (x1 cut)	344.68	0.00	344.68	540.00	
RoSPA annual playground inspection	88.20	94.20	-6.00	0.00	
St. John the Evangelist donation	175.00	175.00	0.00	0.00	
Royal British Legion donation	30.00	30.00	0.00	0.00	
Insurance	322.99	283.42	39.57	0.00	
Bank charges	60.00	60.00	0.00	0.00	
Village Hall Hire	84.00	0.00	84.00	90.00	
Village green bench	380.00	0.00	380.00	0.00	
Cleaning of the war memorial	546.00	0.00	546.00	0.00	
Election Costs	1000.00	596.64	403.36	0.00	
E.on Electric	0.00	70.35	-70.35	0.00	
Westcotec maintenance check	0.00	102.00	-102.00	0.00	
	5554.36	2851.61	2702.75	2509.62	
Estimated Receipts					
Village Green Hire	260.00	260.00	0.00	0.00	
National Trust Lease	200.00	200.00	0.00	0.00	
VAT refund on usual expenditure	140.00	398.90	258.90	0.00	
Precept	3358.00	3358.00	0.00	0.00	
	3958.00	4216.90	258.90	0.00	
Bank Reconciliation					
Bank Balance b/f	6759.52		2868.26	Estimated	
<u>Add Receipts:</u>				Balance end	
				of financial	
sub-total	0.00			year 2023/24	
<u>Less Payments:</u>					
Breckland Council (election costs)	596.64				
St.John the Evangelist (annual donation)	175.00				
CGM (grass cutting)	600.00				
Bank charges	10.00				
sub-total	1381.64				
Bank Balance @ 2 March 2024	5377.88				