

OXBOROUGH PARISH COUNCIL

2024/5
MINUTES

Ordinary Meeting held at the Village Hall, Oxborough
Wednesday 18 September 2024, starting at 7.30pm

PRESENT:	David Hotchkin	Chair
	Simon Willies	Vice Chair
	Graham Allison	Councillor
	Martyn Cockerill	Councillor

7 Members of the Public

Open Forum (questions regarding the agenda)

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. A member of the public (MOtP) questioned why the village green hedge had been cut during the bird nesting season. The Chair advised that the PC is not bound by the same rules for agricultural hedges, that hedge cutting could be carried out at any time, only there is a need to check for nesting birds. Cllr Cockerill commented that previous hedge cutting by flail had been inadvisable as this method causes long-term damage to the hedges, and that the tractor messes up the village green at the same time. The same MOtP added that the hedge cutting during June, July and August (and verge treatment), is at odds with the PC biodiversity policy, adding that the inside edge of the hedge is brown in places, due to the use of herbicide. Cllr Cockerill responded that hand cutting (by the volunteers) leaves the hedge denser and safer for bird nesting and saves the PC money. Cllr Allison also criticized the use of a flail tractor (causing damage in the past). It was noted that the hedge fronting the pub was particularly high and difficult to cut, but a MOtP volunteered to carry out a (further) cut once the verge vegetation had died away.

Concerning the plot of land for sale in St. John's Close, Cllr Hotchkin stated that he still had not received a response from Cllr Sherwood, but that Melanie Badman (BC Land and Development Officer) had requested an update (see 8.b.Planning), that he had drafted a letter to Anglian Water concerning the drainage and sewage infrastructure in that location, plus drafted a second letter of complaint to BC, only he had been waiting on fellow councillors to make comments first. A MOtP asked if, after a conversation she had with Cllr Hotchkin by chance in Waitrose, he had considered her own draft letter to BC, which she had emailed to him a few weeks back (see Clerk ¹note). Cllr Hotchkin objected to having been approached in the shop to discuss the plot of land, but another MOtP pointed out that electors have the right to speak with elected parish councillors. Cllr Hotchkin considered that he would not have any problem with this draft letter, only that it must be sent via the Clerk; Cllr Allison considered the draft letter to be too long. Another MOtP asked why there was a continued delay in the PC updating BC and the Chair responded that BC has ignored the PC response (which included opening a dialogue) and just repeated that the land would be put up for sale, so the first MOtP urged the PC to request the criteria which would need to be met for gifting the land to the parish. Another MOtP asked if this draft letter might harm the PC's position as it had been requested that BC should gift the land and Cllr Cockerill agreed, stating that the PC should not further criticize BC in the handling of the sale of the plot of land, when although they certainly did not follow the correct protocol, the PC might benefit if refraining from raising a second complaint. Rather, inform BC of how Oxborough might make use of the land, which would require ongoing maintenance, making it clear that the PC has no funds to purchase. One possible use of the land is to provide allotments, but as another MOtP pointed out again, the village should be consulted. Cllr Cockerill suggested that BC should be asked whether a community project would meet the criteria for the land to be gifted, in which case a public meeting should be scheduled, but if not, then at least the PC would know the position. The Chair will follow this up with Melanie Badman.

Concerning item d.2 on Correspondence Received, a MOtP suggested that Dawn Willis should be asked if this change would mean the PC would have to pay future electricity charges (confirmed as zero at this point). The Clerk will action.

¹ The Clerk had acknowledged the receipt of the email but had neglected to add it into the Correspondence Received circulated prior to the meeting. Now added at Point 9.j.

1. Apologies for absence

Cllr Lambert and Cllr Eagle had both offered apologies. Cllr Sherwood was unaccounted for.

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 July 2024

The final draft Minutes had been circulated and displayed on the Notice Board and PC website. Cllr Allison proposed that the minutes should be accepted, seconded by Cllr Hotchkin. There was 1 abstention, 3 in favour; the minutes were signed by the Chair.

5. Matters arising

The Chair reported that the SAM2 sign had been repaired and returned to operation, and will liaise with Cllr Willies to return responsibility to him over the next few days. He stated that there had been no change concerning the graveyard situation, and that the PC must find out about the easement or covenant on the land.

6. District Councillor's Report

None

7. County Councillor's Report

None.

8. Planning Matters

a) Deb Glassop (Environmental Impact Assessment Advisor on behalf of the Secretary of State): The Applicant RWE Renewables UK Solar and Storage Limited for the Proposed Development (High Grove Solar Farm) intends to make an application for Development Consent under the Planning Act 2008. The Applicant has sought a Scoping Opinion from the Planning Inspectorate, on behalf of the Secretary of State, as to the scope and level of detail of the information to be provided within the Environmental Statement that will accompany its future application. The Planning Inspectorate has identified OPC as a consultation body to inform the Scoping Opinion and is therefore inviting OPC to submit comments by 8 October 2024. The deadline is a statutory requirement that cannot be extended. Emailed to all Councillors. **Cllr Cockerill stated that this project would impact a considerable stretch of land located in Marham (on both sides of A1122).**

b) Melanie Badman (Land and Development Officer): "Please can we be provided with an update and expected date of reply". The Chair emailed BC Councillor Ian Sherwood (with MB in copy) "... like to discuss with you the possibilities regarding transfer of the land into the keeping of Oxborough Parish Council".

9. Correspondence Received

a) Norfolk Police: see website

b) NCC: see website

c) Breckland Council: see website

1. Breckland Council is conducting a survey on the open space and playing pitch provision within Breckland to ensure that there is adequate provision of accessible, high quality open space and playing pitches to meet the needs and aspirations of local communities. Clerk submitted information on the current status.

d) UK PowerNetwork & Npower

1. Dawn Willis (Specialist Complaints Advisor) acknowledged "Just to confirm the agreed resolution has been implemented and the account is closed with a £0 balance."

2. industry program P434, focuses on modernising all Non-Half Hourly (NHH) Unmetered Supplies Metering Systems to ensure they are not only prepared for the upcoming MHHS changes but also settle on a half-hourly basis. As OPC has an existing NHH UMS supply, we will migrate you to HH UMS between 23 September 2024 and 31 March 2025.

e) Oxburgh Hall National Trust - email from Estate Manager Eloise Balcombe, concerning their future plans for the area of land leased from the PC for use as a carpark. Clerk acknowledged email and sent it onto the Councillors.

f) Email from Frankie Watkins concerning the SAM2 sign - and that as Speedwatch Co-ordinator, she has "not received any SAM data since December 2023 so have not been able to use it to help plan our Speedwatch sessions". Clerk acknowledged email which has been sent onto the Councillors. The Chair responded to Mrs Watkins.

g) SBA email (on behalf of PKF Littlejohn LLP) confirm they received and logged the notification of exempt status for the year ended 31 March 2024. 'There is no review to be performed and consequently no auditor certificate and report, or any other closure documentation, will be issued by us for this reporting year'.

h) Email from PC147 Les Maguire (Beat Manager, Thetford Police Station) "concerning 2025 Safer Neighbourhood Action Panel meetings which the police are mandated to hold. Request to hold a meeting in Oxborough village hall on Wednesday 9 July 2025 (6.30pm) -As is the norm, we are reliant on each respective council's goodwill to grant us use of the venues". Clerk passed this onto the Village Hall Committee for consideration.

i) Email from Andrea Shimwell - concerning the cutting of the village green hedge during the bird nesting season. The Clerk acknowledged the email and supplied extract from minutes dated 12 July 2023.

j) **Email from Bar Prichard - a draft letter to Breckland Council Ned Adams- Felton response dated 24 May 2024, which she has prepared for Cllr Hotchkin to consider. *The Clerk had acknowledged receipt.***

10. Accounts

a) To receive bank balance and reconciliation

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

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

1. TSB bank fees -£10

2. Nurture Landscapes (invoice #351601) - grass cutting- £200 plus VAT (£240).

3. Nurture Landscapes (invoice #352433) - grass cutting- £200 plus VAT (£240).

b) Receipts

1. Ryston Runners (hire of village green)- £100

2. NCC (repair of SAM2 sign) -£208.50

Cllr Hotchkin proposed payment to Nurture Landscapes, seconded by Cllr Willies - all in favour. The invoices were combined and a single cheque/stub was signed.

11. Highways

None.

12. Report from PC representative to the Village Hall Committee

The VHC agreed on new signage to remind users to quietly exit the hall and car park, and a no unauthorized access/no trespassing sign at the garden gate. The storeroom doors opening onto the garden have deteriorated over the last few years so grant funding is being sought to replace them. With limited space in the storeroom, it has been proposed that the old black plastic chairs might be stored externally. The Committee agreed to purchase a replacement table tennis table at a cost of £975 (purchased and delivered a few weeks ago). The current balance is very strong, but it was agreed that the car park refurbishment will be postponed, until the necessary three quotes from contractors have been secured. After the BBQ event held in August, which had been very successful, the Committee agreed to retain ticket prices for the following year. Arrangements for the Christmas Craft Fair (24 November) are in hand. But the Committee has taken the difficult decision *after much discussion- taking into consideration several Trustees state of health*, and also the apparent lack of villager support for the other fundraising events held throughout the year- to not put on the Children's Magical Christmas event in December.

13. To consider a fresh approach to Oxburgh Hall to discuss and agree a way forward for the maintenance of the verges outside Oxburgh Hall grounds

The verge is owned by NCC, who has the responsibility to maintain it, but Cllr Willies commented that NCC Highways has given permission to the PC to cut down the verges as and when needed. The Clerk agreed, citing a meeting held between Oxburgh Hall and the PC (3 August 2022) when the following was agreed by the then head gardener (Dea Fischer): A National Trust volunteer will rough cut the entire width of the verge on the same schedule as the County Council would follow, being four times between May and September. At the same time, serving councillor Mr. Chapman would mow at times in between. The Clerk has contacted the new head gardener (Ryan Thomson) but no response yet. Some comments followed about how messy it has looked, especially in view of the fact that there is a National Trust property in the village and that the condition of the

entire verge has deteriorated over the years. The Chair asked for a show of hands for the proposal, and all were in favour, so Cllr Willies and Cllr Cockerill agreed to take this further. The Clerk will contact the National Trust again.

The meeting closed at 8.55 pm.

Public participation

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

A MOtP reported a broken 30mph post (rusted and snapped at the base, fallen into the overgrown verge) at the entrance of the village (Stoke Ferry end) - the Clerk will report this to NCC Highways. A MOtP offered to trim around the broken post (help minimize the hazard to pedestrians)- Cllr Cockerill thanked him. A Village Hall Trustee corrected a portion of the PC representative report (see Point 12 italics). A MOtP referred to the minutes (dated 17 July) meeting when Cllr Hotchkin had stated (in Public Participation) that he would be reviewing the Standing Orders - the Chair confirmed that he would be working on this and the Financial Regulations also. A MOtP asked that should Beachamwell decide to oppose the proposed solar farms application, would the PC support them - Councillors commented on how the application was only at the initial stages and that some consultation would be expected. It was noted that the village hall committee successfully apply for grants and that there should be available funding opportunities for the PC, however such grants normally require match-funding.

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APPENDIX A		Meeting 18 Sept 2024				
Report: Accounts reported against the budget quarterly						
IAW Statement of Internal Control and Annual Review of Effectiveness of Internal Control (section Financial Reporting)						
	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Variance</u>	<u>Outstanding</u>		
<u>BUDGET 2024/25</u>				<u>Estimate Y/E</u>		
Estimated Gross Payments						
Accountants	158.40	0.00	158.40	158.40		
Clerk's salary	1569.10	0.00	1569.10	1569.10		
Clerk's expenses	195.82	0.00	195.82	195.82		
Nurture Landscape (grass cutting x13 plus herbicide)	1680.00	660.00	1020.00	1020.00		
Hedge cutting (x1 cut)	540.00	0.00	540.00	540.00		
RoSPA annual playground inspection	94.20	98.40	-4.20	0.00		
St. John the Evangelist donation	175.00	0.00	175.00	175.00		
Royal British Legion donation	30.00	0.00	30.00	30.00		
Insurance	283.60	283.60	0.00	0.00		
Bank charges	60.00	30.00	30.00	30.00		
Village Hall Hire	84.00	0.00	84.00	84.00		
Cleaning of the war memorial	546.00	0.00	546.00	546.00		
NALC membership	103.55	103.55	0.00	0.00		
E.on Electric	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00		
Funds (received in error)transferred to OVH	0.00	56.00	-56.00	0.00		
	5519.67	1231.55	4288.12	4348.32		
Estimated Receipts						
Village Green Hire	260.00	130.00	-130.00			
National Trust Lease	200.00	0.00	-200.00			
VAT refund on usual expenditure	398.90	223.50	-175.40			
Precept	3559.48	1779.74	-1779.74			
Norfolk County Council (SAM2 sign repairs)	0.00	208.50	0.00			
Funds received in error (for OVHC)	0.00	56.00	0.00			
	4418.38	2133.24	-2285.14			
Bank Reconciliation						
Bank Balance b/f	4588.04		1758.76	Estimated		
Add Receipts:				Balance end		
Ryston Runners (village green hire)	100.00			of financial		
NCC (SAM2 repairs)	208.50			year 2024/25		
sub-total	308.50					
Less Payments:						
RoSPA annual playground inspection	98.40					
Transfer payment to OVHC	56.00					
Westcotec (repairs to SAM2 sign)	250.20					
Nurture Landscape	660.00					
Bank charges	10.00					
sub-total	1074.60					
Bank Balance @ 9 Sept 2024	3821.94					