

OXBOROUGH PARISH COUNCIL

2025/1
MINUTES

Ordinary Meeting held at the Village Hall, Oxborough
Wednesday 15 January 2025, starting at 7.30pm

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

7 Members of the Public

Open Forum (questions regarding the agenda)

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and reported that Mrs. Jackie Lambert had resigned at the last parish council meeting. A member of the public (MOtP) questioned when the replacement tree on the village green would be planted: the Chair said that once the stump had finished rotting down and then removed, a new tree would be planted (a little distance from the original). A MOtP questioned the ongoing absence of District Councillor Ian Sherwood - direct contact to Breckland Council was suggested. The same MOtP asked why the 'Albanwise' planning application was not on the agenda and the Chair pointed out that the developer had been asked to make a public presentation (the clerk has sent a booking form). Another MOtP questioned why the draft budget included increased figures for maintenance, when budget costs were preferable, why the beech tree inspection and potential election costs had not been included. Cllr Allison asked if following the annual Remembrance Service, the bugler had been thanked formally for playing. Mr. Howard-Vyse had kindly taken responsibility for the event, and it was assumed he might have sent thanks as in the previous year.

7. County Councillor's Report

Cllr Eagle presented his report, speaking at length on the issue of devolution, following up with the budget and the effect on council tax (to be increased to the maximum of 4.99%). He spoke about the ongoing Mobile Signal Mapping exercise (carried out by council lorries but also fitted into his own vehicle) and that so far EE network has been the most reliable versus Vodaphone being the most unreliable (although completely opposite situation in Oxborough). Throughout his report, Cllr Eagle answered many questions, including concerning bird flu outbreaks (in Cranworth).

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 20 November 2024

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

5. Matters arising

5.1. Concerning the open forum, Cllr Willies asked whether the Chair had contacted Breckland Council concerning the absence of Cllr Ian Sherwood - no. The clerk was asked to find out the situation.

5.2. Concerning Agenda point 5.1 had the Chair carried out a site meeting at St. John's Close - not yet, but he has been working towards achieving this, adding that BC had not yet put up the land sale notice perhaps pointing to a change of mind. Cllr Allison stated that if this was the case, then it would be necessary for the district

council to continue the upkeep of the land. The Chair confirmed that he had contacted Highways concerning the question of carrying out works to the verges but still had no response.

- 5.3. Concerning Agenda point 5.2, had the Chair spoken with the Diocese - not yet, but the letter is currently being carefully worked on, as a copy will be provided to the Church Wardens.
- 5.4. Concerning Agenda item 11, has Highways responded. The clerk confirmed that yes, Highways had finally replaced the broken road sign, but that no works would be carried out on the other issues ('do not currently meet our intervention criteria').

6. District Councillor's Report

None

8. Planning Matters

- a) Planning Consultation: PL/2024/0909/PAEC - Land at Oxborough Sewage Pumping Station, St John's Close: Proposed Arqiva smart metering 1No. OMNI Antenna at 13.45m mean mounted on proposed 12m streetworks pole. Proposed Arqiva smart metering 1No. GPS Antenna at 12m mean mounted on proposed 12m streetworks pole. Proposed Arqiva smart metering 1No. 3G OMNI Antenna at 4.15m mean mounted on proposed 12m streetworks pole. Proposed Arqiva smartmetering equipment enclosure to be installed on a root foundation. Comments must be made within 21 days of the date of this notice (21 Nov 2024). Cllrs had noticed that the work had already been carried out and that it appeared to be a matter of 'deemed consent'.
- b) PL/2025/0009/PAPW consultation concerning land ff Ferry Lane, Oxborough: (Albanwise) Application to determine if prior approval is required for a proposed: Formation, alteration or maintenance of private ways for agricultural or forestry use (Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) - Schedule 2, Part 6, Class A/B/E
- c) PL/2024/1195/HR Proposal: 7 water control structures and agricultural track improvements in agricultural land near the River Wissey. Applicant: Mr. Andy Millar (Albanwise Environment Ltd) Land Off Oxborough Road and Ferry Lane, Oxborough, Application Status: Pending Consideration

9. Correspondence Received

- a) Norfolk Police: see website
- b) NCC: see website
- c) Breckland Council: see website
1. Email from Jack Fulham (Senior Economic Policy Officer): The Norfolk Armed Forces Covenant 2025 Commemoration Fund is now live, a funding scheme for community projects to commemorate the 80th anniversaries of VE Day & VJ Day next year. Fund will award grants of up to a max of £500. Town & parish councils, charities, community groups, and schools can all apply. The deadline for applications is the 9 December. The clerk passed this over to the VHC.
2. Notice of Vacancy confirmation from Alex Elliott (Senior Electoral Services Officer) - deadline 17 December. Confirm that BC have not received 10 requests to fill the vacancy by an election, therefore the Council can go ahead and fill the vacancy by co-option.
3. A consultation on draft recommendations for ward boundaries in Breckland has begun, ending on 24 Feb 2025. See <https://www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/breckland>
4. Email from Julie Britton (Democratic Services Officer) concerning guidance notes on how to use the new Idox Planning Portal. <https://publicportal.breckland.gov.uk/planning/index.html>. The clerk has registered for the OPC.
- d) Email from Eloise Balcombe (Estate Manager, National Trust) - acknowledging the update car park lease situation and 'grateful if the Parish Council could keep this proposal in mind in the future should they change their mind'.
- e) Quote from Nurture Landscape for grass cutting in 2025: 13 cuts at £116 each plus VAT
- f) Email from Emilie Fox-Teece (Nature Recovery Project Officer) of Albanwise Environment Oxburgh New Fen project: ...'owners and managers of a 300-acre block of land in the south-west of Oxborough Parish, by Ferry Lane and the Wissey, south-west of Oxborough Hall. We have an opportunity at the site for an exciting peatland restoration and wildlife habitat creation project. Our vision for the site is to create wetland habitats that will encourage wildlife to thrive, restore the degraded peatland beneath and form part of a network of nature rich sites in the local area. In time we hope to graze the site extensively with cattle and ponies. We aim to begin work on the ground in the new year and throughout 2025, and it is a project we would like to share with the local community in Oxborough. We'd welcome the opportunity to come and speak with the Parish Council to tell you more about it and hear your thoughts and ideas.' The clerk has sent a village hall booking form to enable a public presentation.

- g) Email from Gov. Uk: confirm receipt of the latest VAT return (£268.10).
- h) NorfolkALC: special resolution: That the Norfolk Association of Local Councils converts from a co-operative society to a company limited by guarantee and that the services of legal expert Roger Taylor will be employed to carry out the conversion, ensuring all assets are transferred to the new company limited by guarantee. Respond CountyOfficer@norfolkalc.gov.uk (by 7 March).

10. Motion to update Financial Regulations to Revision E

Cllr Allison proposed accepting this, seconded by Cllr Cockerill, all in favour - passed. The Chair and Clerk signed, and the Chair confirmed he would email the word/pdf. copies for the clerk's records/website.

11. Accounts

a) To receive bank balance and reconciliation
The councillors considered budget vs. actual (Appendix A). Cllr Hotchkin proposed accepting this, seconded by Cllr Willies - all in favour, passed.

b) To consider authorisation of **payments** and to sign cheques (none).

1. TSB bank fees -£10

b) **Receipts**

1. National Trust - annual payment- £200

c) Motion to make the annual donation of £175 to St. John the Evangelist Church.

Cllr Hotchkin proposed the payment, seconded by Cllr Cockerill, all in favour - the cheque was signed.

d) Consider quotes received for village green maintenance:

1. Nurture Landscapes (NL)£116 (plus VAT) per cut (includes herbicide treatments)

2. Kew Grass Care £198 (plus VAT) per grass cut, plus £190 (plus VAT) per spray

3. Countrywide Grounds - no quote

4. Nurture Landscapes Service Agreement (SLA) for x14 cuts/herbicide treatments £135.34 + VAT per month

Cllr Allison mentioned another contractor- Top Garden Services (Thetford)- which had been recommended to him by other parish councils who had rejected Nurture Landscapes (due to higher costs and inferior works). He added that the Ts & Cs provided by NL indicated problems for OPC. Cllr Hotchkin stated that he would not be recommending accepting the SLA provided by NL. Cllr Cockerill pointed out that March was not far off and that the first cut could well be required before the next meeting and Cllr Willies suggested the NL SLA should be accepted now and then the search for an alternative begin before the end of the year. The clerk explained that works pertaining to quotes should be carried out by the RFO and asked why this had not been requested in the case of Top Garden Services. Cllr Allison stated that he had only been made aware of TGS the evening before the meeting and there had not been time to inform anybody. After further discussion, Cllr Hotchkin proposed that the council accept NL SLA, seconded by Cllr Cockerill - 3 in favour and 1 against - passed.

e) Set the budget for the year 2025/26 and (f) Motion to consider the Annual Precept (submit to Breckland Council by 24-01-2025)

The Chair stated that there was insufficient time to discuss the grass cutting, draft budget and precept and suggested an EGM, adding that BC had confirmed that the deadline for submitting the precept request can be extended to 3 February. The clerk pointed out that the draft budget comprised provisional figures for income and expenditure, which allowed the Councillors to review and make changes particularly as the estimated gross payments included non-essential costs. Cllrs considered that election costs should be added (Cllr Allison suggested that £2000 would be appropriate) and Cllr Willies stated that this would need to be ring-fenced. Following repeated interruptions from the Public, Cllr Cockerill stated that there is a vacancy on the PC available to anyone who disagrees with the parish council's discussions and decisions. Cllr Allison suggested that any unused budget funds could be used for other costs. Cllr Hotchkin added that the OPC budget had been seriously underfunded in recent years and that a temporary large increase in the precept would be required, suggesting 36% (which includes contingency). Cllr Allison recommended a rise of 30% and suggested grazing sheep on the village green over the winter to help with the cost (as had been done in the past). There followed some discussion concerning increasing income by way of permitting grazing on the village green and a reminder that Cllr Hotchkin had personally saved the PC a significant amount of money having funded the felling of the old beech tree, including enabling the VAT refund of almost £2000. Cllr Willies suggested that the precept levels should be increased over a period of years, but with the proviso that the budget would be reviewed and updated throughout the year. The tax base for the village is 99.40. A 10% increase (£3915.43) would result in an annual figure of £39.39 for a Band D property whereas an increase of 20% would result in an annual figure of £42.97. Cllr Cockerill had abstained previously from voting on the precept as he works but does not live in the village, but that he would support a 10% increase repeated over the

next 3 years. Cllr Allison repeated that he would not vote for the NL SLA, as he considered it too expensive, and Cllr Willies pointed out that the bus shelter might require maintenance soon (the clerk added that OPC has a duty of care in regard to the war memorial). The proposal to increase the precept by 10%, based on the understanding that the same would apply to the next two years following, provided that our budget would be reviewed was proposed by Cllr Willies and seconded by Cllr Hotchkin -2 in favour and 2 abstentions -passed. The Chair proposed accepting the draft budget, with the proviso that it will be reviewed and updated at the next meeting, seconded by Cllr Willies - 3 in favour and 1 against - passed.

12. Highways

None.

13. Report from PC representative to the Village Hall Committee

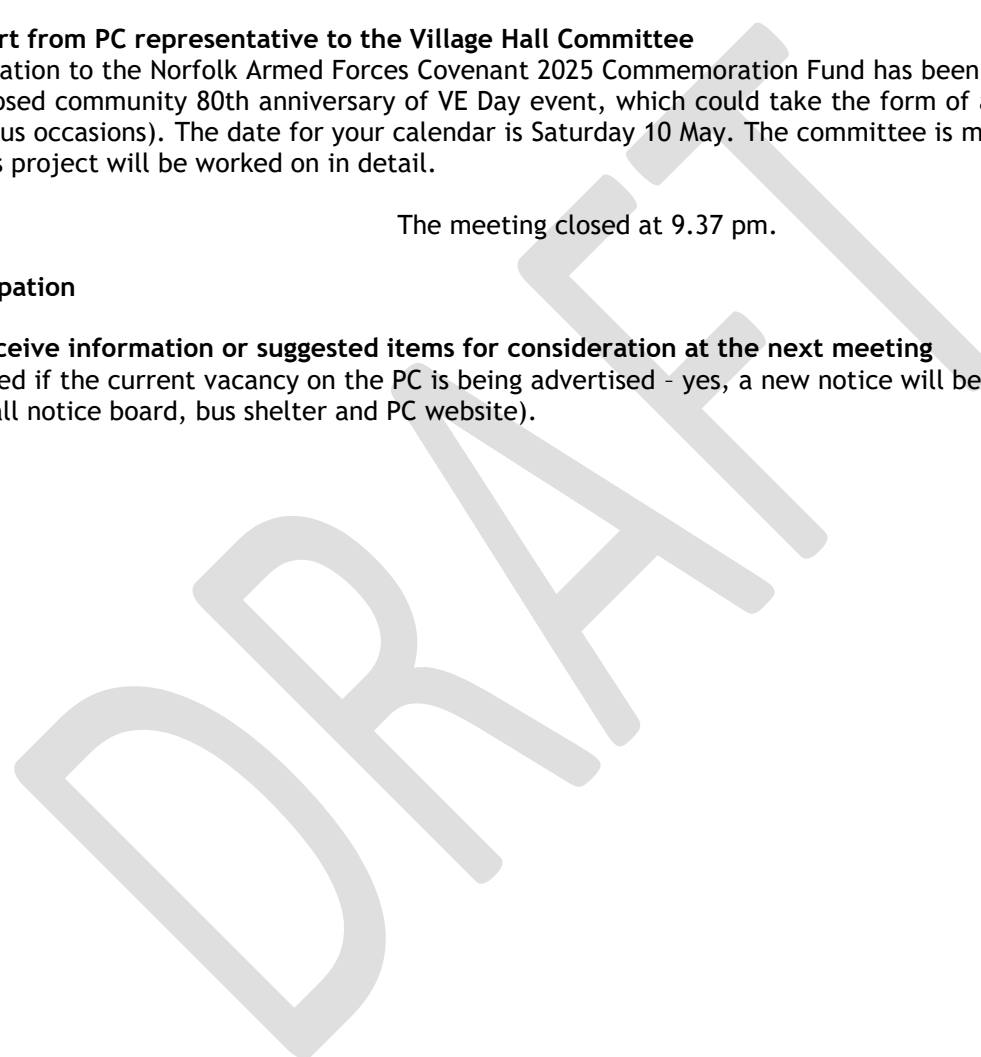
An application to the Norfolk Armed Forces Covenant 2025 Commemoration Fund has been made in connection with the proposed community 80th anniversary of VE Day event, which could take the form of a Picnic on the Green (as on previous occasions). The date for your calendar is Saturday 10 May. The committee is meeting again in February, when this project will be worked on in detail.

The meeting closed at 9.37 pm.

Public participation

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

MOtP asked if the current vacancy on the PC is being advertised - yes, a new notice will be displayed shortly (on the village hall notice board, bus shelter and PC website).



APPENDIX A Meeting 15 January 2025					
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 2024/25</u>	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Variance</u>	<u>Outstanding</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	195.92	254.70	-58.78	254.70	
Nurture Landscape (grass cutting x13 plus herbicide)	1680.00	1260.00	420.00	420.00	
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	30.00	0.00	0.00	
Insurance	283.60	283.60	0.00	0.00	
Bank charges	60.00	50.00	10.00	10.00	
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	
Westcotec -repair SAM2 sign	0.00	250.20	-250.20	0.00	
Funds (received in error)transferred to OVH	0.00	56.00	-56.00	0.00	
	5519.77	2386.45	3133.32	3757.20	
Estimated Receipts					
Village Green Hire	260.00	130.00	-130.00		
National Trust Lease	200.00	200.00	0.00		
VAT refund on usual expenditure	398.90	223.50	-175.40		
Precept	3559.48	3559.48	0.00		
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	4112.98	-305.40		
Bank Reconciliation					
Bank Balance b/f	5111.68		1699.88	Estimated	
<u>Add Receipts:</u>				Balance end	
Precept	200.00			of financial	
				year 2024/25	
	sub-total	200.00			
<u>Less Payments:</u>					
Nurture Landscape	120.00				
Royal British Legion	30.00				
Bank charges	10.00				
	sub-total	160.00			
Bank Balance @ 7 Jan 2025	5151.68				