

Hockering Parish Council

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MINUTES of the **Parish Council Meeting** held on Tuesday 10th December 2024 at the Village Hall, Hockering.

Cllrs Present at the Meeting: J Blackwell, P Cocker, R Neave and B Higgins

Also Present: Parish Clerk, District Councillor Gordon Bambridge and 2 residents

1. **Welcome and apologies for absence** – Apologies were received from Cllr L Parker. All councillors agreed that a hamper be sent to Cllr Parker wishing her a speedy recovery.
2. **To receive any declarations of interest** – there were no declarations of interest.
3. **To approve the minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Tuesday 8th October 2024** – having previously been circulated to all councillors, Cllr Neave proposed, and Cllr Cocker seconded that they be approved and signed. All agreed.
4. **To receive County/District Councillor reports** – Cllr Borrett had sent a report which is attached to these minutes. In summary, he mentioned the achievements of NCC Highways, the difficulties surrounding the Western Link Road, rural transport in Norfolk, proposed new Dentistry School at UEA, Health and Wellbeing Partnership, moderating drinking habits, emergency services, new poetry project, awards for Norfolk teams and a map of Norfolk trails. Cllr Bambridge reported that Breckland Council will be closed for the 25th and 26th December and 1st January but the 24/7 helpline will still be available. The carparking consultation is still open until the 16th December www.breckland.gov.uk/car-parks/policychange. Current thinking is that Breckland Council would like to charge for parking but with at least one free carpark but any changes are unlikely to take place until the end of 2025. It is anticipated that a private company will undertake the running of the carpark fee collection, and the income will cover the costs of carpark maintenance. Any surplus will be returned to Breckland Council with the charges being reviewed accordingly.
5. **To receive updates from:**
 - a) **Village Hall** – The Hall are waiting for work to be done on installing new plug sockets and having the interior redecorated.
 - b) **Village Church** – Cllr Neave reported that there are 29 vacancies for vicars in Norfolk and it is hoped that applications will be received by January next year with interviews taking place in February to find a new vicar for the 6 parishes. There will be a Carol Service on the 22nd December but no Midnight Mass. The School will be going to Church on the 16th December. Cllr Neave reported that even when the Church is not being used, they still have to pay £400 a month for the electricity service. Cllr Bambridge said that this was disgraceful, and residents should lobby their MP to get this standing charge reduced. The Coffee Mornings are popular and will continue but there will only be 8 coffee mornings next year as there are only two helpers to run them.
 - c) **Primary School** – It was reported that work is progressing in the new Garden area at the

school, with help from volunteers from Aviva. Discussion took place regarding improving the safety of parents and children outside the school by helping to reduce unsafe parking. This could include 'Keep Clear' markings, or a one-way system through the layby. The School will be asked for their views and NCC Highways are to be contacted to ask for their advice.

6. **Open Forum for Public Participation – maximum of 3 minutes per person** – A written question had been received from a resident and this is covered under Item 10 – Correspondence.
7. **To receive updates on the following Working Parties:**
 - a) **Neighbourhood Plan** – The Chairman said that he hopes to progress this matter in the next few months.
 - b) **Play Area and Youth Club** – Cllr Cocker said that the Football Club AGM takes place in January and she will report back at the next Parish Council meeting.
8. **To discuss the following:**
 - a) **Speeding and Parking in the Village** – The Chairman reported that the SAM2 machine which is used in rotation with other local parish councils, has been in Hockering for the last few months and will be passed on to another council shortly. It was suggested that when we next have the SAM2 machine it could be sited on Heath Road on the approach to the village to remind motorists of the speed limit. It was felt that a Police presence to check on speeds would be helpful and could be raised at the next SNAP meeting.
 - b) **Overgrown hedges and verges** – It was noted that the hedge on the boundary of the turn from the A47 into the village coming from Norwich has been cut and many of the hedges alongside village roads have also been cut by the farmers. A letter had been received from a resident stating that the bushes and brambles outside their back garden fence, backing onto the A47, had weakened their fence which had now blown down. They have contacted Highways for help. It was agreed that another Clean-Up Day be held next year to tidy verges and clear litter. Date to be decided.
 - c) **Renovation of brick bus shelter** – The Chairman said that he is waiting to hear from the Community Payback Scheme as to when this work will be started as it will be coordinated with the redecoration of the Village Hall. It was noted that the guttering and fascia boards need repairing and costings will be sought on replacing the noticeboard.
 - d) **Possible use of Parish Partnership Funding** – This scheme is designed to deliver local highway improvements in partnership with Parish Councils. Councillors will bear this funding in mind in time for the next round of funding requests later next year.
9. **To consider future Village Events** – The Friends of Hockering School have a variety of events planned which will be of interest to all residents, and the PC would be happy to support them. A Village Fete is planned for June/July next year.
10. **Correspondence for circulation** – An email had been received from a resident who was concerned about traffic in Hockering and the local villages following the completion of the A47 dualling. This will mean that the roundabout at Easton will be removed with the closure of Church Lane into Ringland, and he was concerned that traffic crossing between the A47 and Fakenham Road might come through Hockering. The Chairman explained that he is meeting with 6 local parishes later this week and that the question of increased traffic through the villages will be discussed and he will seek their views and advice on the next steps to take to safeguard our village roads. He will report back to the PC at the next meeting. In the meantime, NCC will be urged to do all they can to ensure the Norwich Western Link Road goes ahead, despite objections from Natural England concerning wildlife in the habitats affected by the proposed route, as this would greatly improve the traffic flow around the west of Norwich. However, even if the Western Link goes ahead, there will be a gap of at least 4-5 years between the completion of the dualling of the A47 and the opening of the Western Link which will mean increased traffic on narrow roads through neighbouring villages during that period of time.

The matter of lack of parking in Manor Close was raised by a resident asking if the green could be used for parking. Unfortunately, as there are service pipes only just below the surface of the grass this would not be suitable as a parking area. Councillors agreed that they must be vigilant when considering new planning applications to ensure that adequate parking is available.

11. Planning Matters –

- a) No applications have been received
- b) Decisions made:- Application C/3/2017/3002/BCN/C10. A Breach of Condition Notice has been served by NCC on Norfolk Recycling Ltd on land at Stone Road, Hockering. Breach of Condition 10 concerning protection of environment and Breach of Condition 11 concerning Highway improvement work. Issued on the 20th August 2024. In addition, an Enforcement Warning Notice, ENF/1824/EWN, has been issued, concerning material change of use of land to the storage of waste and recycled materials produced from the adjacent permitted waste recycling operation.

12. Finance & Governance Matters

- a) **To approve the following payments and note Bank Balance –** There had not been a meeting in October but the payments had been approved by email. The payments for November were also approved by all following a proposal by Cllr Neave, seconded by Cllr Higgins.

PAYMENTS FOR APPROVAL IN OCTOBER AND NOVEMBER: THE CO-OPERATIVE BANK COMMUNITY ACCOUNT					
BALANCE AS AT 08.10.24				£23,432.88	
PAY TYPE	PAYEE	DESCRIPTION	ACTUAL AMOUNT	VAT	
BACS	M Ridgwell	Oct Salary & Exps	365.40		
BACS	HMRC	PAYE to Period 7	87.40		
BACS	Information Comm Office	Data Protection Annual Fee	35.00		
BACS	M Ridgwell	Nov Salary & Exps	297.60		
BACS	HMRC	PAYE to Period 8	71.20		
		Less	£856.60		
			£18,432.88		
BALANCE C/FWD 10.12.24				£22,576.28	

- b) The draft budget for 2025-26 was presented to councillors and will be considered in detail at the meeting in January prior to sending in a Precept Request to Breckland Council for next year.

13. To receive any new items for the next agenda – To progress and receive updates on matters raised above and to consider possible spending on a new noticeboard. Chairman will report on his meeting with 6 local parishes and any progress on the Norwich Western Link Road.

To note the next meeting of the Parish Council – This will be held on Tuesday 14th January 2025 in the Village Hall. It was agreed that there will be 10 meetings in 2025, excluding February and August.

The meeting closed at 9.00pm

Signed

Cllr BILL BORRETT - December 2024 Report
Elmham and Mattishall Division Norfolk County Council

Norfolk takes the top spot in national highways survey for second year in a row

I am really pleased to report that Norfolk has been ranked number one for the second consecutive year in the National Highways and Transport (NHT) survey, reinforcing the county's commitment to delivering excellent roads and transport services. With an impressive overall score of 49, Norfolk once again outperformed 29 other similar UK counties and authorities, surpassing the average score of 44.

This year, Norfolk residents have expressed high levels of satisfaction across several key transport areas, including the condition of highways, local bus services, and traffic levels. The county scored at or above the national average in 24 out of 27 Key Benchmark Indicators, showcasing the continued improvements being made in Norfolk's transport infrastructure.

Notable highlights from this year's survey include:

- **Public Transport:** Norfolk scored above the national average in nearly all public transport categories, reflecting the positive impact of the county's Bus Service Improvement Plan.
- **Electric Vehicle Charging Points:** Norfolk saw a remarkable 31.3% improvement in electric vehicle charging provision, highlighting the success of the county's Electric Vehicle Strategy.
- **Cycle Lanes:** Satisfaction with the provision of cycle lanes has soared, with Norfolk ranking first this year, up from fourth place last year. This reflects the county's dedication to active travel, including projects like the Heartsease roundabout improvements.
- **Children's Cycling Safety:** Norfolk now ranks first for the safety of children cycling to school, a significant improvement from seventh place last year.
- **Potholes and Damaged Roads:** Satisfaction with how Norfolk addresses potholes and road repairs has risen, with the county moving up to third place, up from sixth last year.

These outstanding results underscore the County Council's ongoing commitment to creating a safer, more sustainable, and user-friendly transport network for everyone. For more information, the full survey report is available on the NHT website.

Norfolk County Council supports Norfolk's Family Farms

I'm pushing the County Council to take proactive steps to support the county's hard-working family farms in response to recent budget announcements from the Labour Government. Recognizing the essential role that farming plays in the local economy, the Council is now going to submit and debate a motion aimed at ensuring that Norfolk's farmers are well-supported as they navigate the challenges brought on by these new policies.

The motion reflects the Council's strong commitment to championing local businesses, with a particular focus on protecting the livelihoods of those who sustain Norfolk's agricultural heritage. Norfolk's family farms are the backbone of rural communities, and the Conservative-led Council is dedicated to ensuring that their voices are heard and their concerns are addressed.

Understanding the issues that local farmers (and businesses that support farming) face, ranging from financial pressures to complex regulatory changes, the motion highlights the importance of offering practical support.

Norfolk County Council is committed to creating a future where local farmers can thrive, ensuring a sustainable and prosperous agricultural sector for generations to come.

Norfolk Winter is here - gritters move out across the county

Norfolk's gritting fleet is hitting the roads for the first gritting runs of the season, ensuring the county is ready for the icy conditions forecasted. This year, for the first time ever, all 58 of Norfolk's gritters are equipped with cutting-edge auto-salting technology, which uses satellite navigation to deliver precise, efficient salting. This innovative system reduces manual intervention, ensuring better accuracy, saving time, and cutting down on waste—making the gritting process even more effective.

As winter weather sets in, Norfolk County Council is launching its annual #NorfolkWinter campaign, providing vital information and tips to help people travel safely across the county. Whether you're driving, walking, cycling, or using public transport, the Council's expert highway team will be monitoring weather forecasts and sensors to make sure the right roads are treated at the right time to keep Norfolk moving.

With over 2,200 miles of road treated during each 3-hour gritting run, Norfolk's gritting operation covers all A and B-class roads, key commuter and bus routes, and even one route into every village. Additionally, the County Council ensures around 2,000 grit bins are stocked across the county for public use on pavements, cycle paths,

and local roads, helping everyone stay safe.

Stay up-to-date with gritting schedules and winter travel advice by following #NorfolkWinter on Facebook, Nextdoor, and X. You can also check out gritting routes and the location of grit bins on the interactive map at www.norfolk.gov.uk/gritting. For more details on how to stay safe this winter, visit www.norfolk.gov.uk/winter

Norfolk County Council strives to resolve Norwich Western Link issue

The confusion at Westminster continues. The Department of Transport recently paid Norfolk County Council another £7m to continue with the road but Natural England (which comes under Defra) are trying to stop the project. We have written to the Government Ministers to tell them their assistance is needed to positively resolve an "impossible position" the council finds itself in on its priority Norwich Western Link project.

This vital 3.9-mile dual carriageway, which will significantly improve transport connections to the west of Norwich, has encountered an unexpected obstacle. In March, just before the planning application for the project was set to be submitted, Natural England issued updated guidance on barbastelle bats, which are found in the area around the proposed route. This new unheralded guidance has created a challenge to moving forward with the project as planned.

At a Cabinet meeting on December 2nd, Norfolk County Council reviewed the current status of the project, including ongoing discussions with Natural England. Unfortunately until the Ministers decide the project is at a standstill.

I am pleased to report that the Council is still committed to the road, which will make a huge difference to all the villages all across my County Council Division.

Accelerator fund gives boost to rural transport in Norfolk

A groundbreaking project supporting sustainable travel in rural Norfolk has received a significant boost, with more than £144,000 in funding from the Connected Places Catapult and the Department for Transport (DfT). This funding, secured through Norfolk County Council's support for Alchera Technologies' application to the Rural Transport Accelerator Programme, will enhance rural transport options, providing more choice and better connections for local communities.

Alchera Technologies will develop a "Rural Travel Behaviour Model," using data to gain deeper insights into the travel patterns of Norfolk's rural population. This innovative approach will help the County Council make more informed, strategic transport decisions that align with community needs. The anticipated benefits include increased economic growth for the region, greater adoption of public transport, and strong progress toward Norfolk's ambitious net-zero goals.

In addition, a second exciting project backed by Norfolk County Council has also been successful. This initiative, led by Norwich-based commuting emissions reduction specialist, Mobilityways, is supported by Transport East and Norfolk County Council. The IVORA (Increasing Vehicle Occupancy in Rural Areas) project aims to tackle the challenge of detecting car-sharing, enabling employers and local transport authorities to incentivize and boost lift-sharing in rural areas.

The trial, which is taking place at Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Kings Lynn, will target the 75% of staff who currently drive alone to work. Many of these employees commute from rural areas, with 40% lacking active or public transport options. With 93% of staff open to car-sharing, IVORA will use cutting-edge camera sensor AI technologies and the Mobilityways app to monitor car occupancy. The app's new incentive tool, CommuteBoost, will reward shared journeys, and innovative VMS signage will raise awareness to encourage more staff to embrace car-sharing.

These forward-thinking projects demonstrate Norfolk County Council's commitment to sustainable transport, reducing emissions, and improving connectivity across the county, creating a brighter, greener future for rural communities.

£1.5 million funding agreed for dentistry school

The Greater Norwich Growth Board has approved moving forward with an exciting new project, recommending the allocation of £1.5 million to help establish a new School of Oral Health at the University of East Anglia (UEA). Pending final approval, this funding, from the Infrastructure Investment Fund, will be used to extend the Edith Cavell Building on the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital Campus. Construction is already underway on a ground floor extension that will house UEA's new Anatomy Suite, and this additional funding will enable the creation of a first-floor extension for the School of Oral Health.

The new space will be fully equipped with state-of-the-art dental chairs, clinical-grade fittings, and specialized teaching facilities, including phantom heads, a teaching laboratory, and seminar rooms. Once completed, the school will have the capacity to train 40 undergraduate students each year. With training expected to begin in September 2026, the first cohort of dental students will be fully qualified as dentists by June 2031, with the opportunity to start providing basic treatment much earlier.

UEA's extensive experience managing a successful medical school will play a key role in retaining graduates in

the region. Currently, one-third of UEA Medical School graduates remain in the area long-term after qualification. This development marks a major milestone in tackling the shortage of NHS dentists in Norfolk and promises to make a lasting impact on healthcare in the region.

Health and Wellbeing Partnership celebrates achievements

I hosted a conference of all the Leaders from Norfolk's Health and Wellbeing Partnerships to celebrate the fantastic progress made so far and to explore exciting new opportunities for the future. The event brought together a diverse group of attendees, including representatives from District Councils, Norfolk County Council, the Integrated Care Board (ICB), Primary Care Networks, and a wide range of voluntary, community, and social enterprises.

One standout initiative is North Norfolk District Council's PositiviTea drop-in events, which offer a warm, welcoming space for people to connect, relax, and receive valuable support on various issues, including financial advice, physical and mental health, care needs, and tackling loneliness and isolation.

Additionally, the Safe and Habitable Homes project is making a real difference in Norwich by providing vital support to people facing self-neglect and hoarding challenges. This initiative helps individuals who may be struggling with self-care, hygiene, health, and safety, while also addressing the impacts of hoarding, where excessive accumulation of items can create unsafe living conditions.

These efforts highlight Norfolk's commitment to improving the wellbeing of its residents and demonstrate the powerful impact of community collaboration in creating a healthier, happier future for all.

Norfolk Public health encourages people to think about their drinking habits

As we head towards the festive season, Norfolk Public Health is encouraging people to reflect on their drinking habits. Understanding what a unit of alcohol looks like and knowing how to avoid harm can help people make healthier and safer choices.

Health professionals recommend a limit of 14 units of alcohol per week. In Norfolk, although there's an overall decrease in the average amount people drink, men over 40 remain more likely to drink above this limit.

For example, a single pint of beer is generally 2 units and a medium glass of standard wine (175ml) is just over 2 units, though these can vary with the strength of the drink.

Regularly drinking more than 14 units a week can seriously affect people's health. Drinking less brings longer-term benefits, such as reducing the risk of developing heart disease, diabetes, stroke, liver damage and certain types of cancer.

Information and support to make lifestyle changes to improve health and wellbeing is available at www.norfolk.gov.uk/readytochange.

East Anglian counties partner with US city of Virginia Beach for mutual business and economic growth

Norfolk, Suffolk, and Essex Councils are excited to announce a new partnership with Virginia Beach, a dynamic US city known for its thriving technology and renewable energy sectors, aimed at boosting transatlantic trade and collaboration. Virginia Beach, the largest city in Virginia, is located on the US East Coast, and the partnership marks a significant milestone in fostering international growth and innovation.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was officially signed on November 12 at the US Embassy in London by the leaders of the three counties—Kay Mason Billig from Norfolk, Matthew Hicks from Suffolk, and Kevin Bentley from Essex—alongside Virginia Beach's Deputy City Manager, Amanda Jarratt.

This enhanced partnership will span a wide range of areas, including business development, research, academia, and training. It builds on a previous 2021 MOU between the now-defunct New Anglia LEP and Virginia Beach, which facilitated joint participation in conferences, business webinars, and offshore wind training opportunities through East Coast College in Lowestoft.

With several offshore wind farms under development along the US East Coast, including the Coastal Virginia Offshore Wind project near Virginia Beach, the partnership is well-timed. This project has already attracted UK-based Cadelar (formerly Seajacks) to expand its presence in the US. Discussions are already underway for several exciting initiatives for 2025 and beyond, including providing support for US investors and exporters interested in exploring opportunities in East Anglia.

This MOU represents a promising new chapter in transatlantic collaboration, unlocking new opportunities for innovation, business, and renewable energy development between the UK and the US. Just in case you are interested there is no chance of any Members of the Council travelling to Virginia on the taxpayer!

Norfolk street lighting goes green

Norfolk is leading the way in energy efficiency with the successful completion of its street lighting upgrade project, finishing almost a year ahead of schedule. This major initiative will cut CO2 emissions by over 200 tonnes annually, helping the county make significant strides toward a greener, more sustainable future.

The upgrade, carried out by Amey on behalf of Norfolk County Council, involved replacing 16,800 traditional High-Intensity Discharge (HID) lights with 15,531 state-of-the-art LED lanterns. This transition, which began in August 2023, will ensure that, starting in November 2024, 100% of Norfolk County Council's street lighting will use low-energy LEDs.

The final phase of this project will save approximately 1,099,032 kWh of energy each year, translating to an estimated £380,000 in savings based on current electricity prices.

Since the first LED streetlights were installed in 2008, the county has saved around 71 million kWh of energy, reducing carbon dioxide emissions by over 22,200 tonnes, equivalent to the carbon savings of 6.7 million litres of diesel. This project marks another significant achievement in Norfolk's ongoing commitment to reducing its environmental impact and promoting energy sustainability.

Life-saving emergency services partnership in Norfolk shortlisted for award

A collaboration between Norfolk's ambulance and fire services, designed to provide faster medical assistance, has been nominated for a national award.

Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) has seven fire stations across the county that respond to medical emergencies. Firefighters, trained by the ambulance service, can be sent to life-threatening medical emergencies in their communities.

This partnership is in the running for the Collaboration of the Year at the Excellence in Fire & Emergency Awards. The winner will be announced on 6 December.

Since January, NFRS co-responders have been sent to 48 cardiac arrest calls, and in 40% of cases fire crews arrived ahead of paramedics. Firefighters arrived on average three minutes before an ambulance in those incidents.

In a life-threatening emergency such as a cardiac arrest, getting medical help on scene as quickly as possible increases the chances of survival.

New poetry project launches across Norfolk libraries to celebrate Norfolk as a county of welcome

Norfolk Library and Information Service has teamed up with Creative Arts East on a multi-lingual Words of Welcome Poetry Exchange, launching this month in all 47 libraries across the county. The project aims to celebrate Norfolk's cultural diversity and showcase it as a place of welcome, by inviting library visitors to read specially commissioned poems on the themes of welcome and sanctuary and respond with their own 'words of welcome'.

National Centre for Writing have selected and commissioned acclaimed poets George Szirtes and Marjorie Lotfi to write two original poems. These have been translated into Arabic, Lithuanian, Polish, Portuguese and Ukrainian - some of the most widely-spoken languages in Norfolk. Beautifully designed postcards with these poems and their translations can be found in each of Norfolk's 47 libraries, for visitors to read and take home.

Library visitors are invited to respond to these poems on blank postcards with their own words of welcome and post them in the collection boxes provided. Whether it's a poem, short anecdote, simple reflection or even a picture, any contributions will be added to a growing collection that celebrates Norfolk as a place of inclusivity, belonging, and community.

Norfolk team wins national awards

Norfolk County Council's People from Abroad Team has won the Overall Social Worker of the Year award and gold Team of the Year award in the Children's Services category (including MDTs), after beating competition from across the country.

Friday's Social Worker of the Year Awards saw people from across England gather to celebrate positive stories of outstanding social work, creative and compassionate practitioners, and exemplary practice.

The team, which has helped more than 500 people to date, supports children and families in need, as well as adults who struggle to access traditional services due to their immigration status; resettled refugee families; and families who have no recourse to public funds.

For more information about the awards visit www.socialworkawards.com

Discover the Best of Norfolk: Explore 1,500 Miles of Scenic Trails for Walking, Cycling, and Horse-Riding

Norfolk offers over 1,500 miles of beautiful walking, cycling, and horse-riding routes, each showcasing the county's unique nature and rich cultural heritage. Whether you're exploring tranquil river valleys, historic landscapes, or scenic coastal paths, Norfolk's trails offer something for every adventurer.

Highlights include the **Angles Way**, a 93-mile walking route through woodlands and heathland, and the **Boudicca Way**, a 36-mile journey through ancient Roman and Iceni heritage sites. For those seeking to explore the Broads, the **Bure Valley Path** offers a 9-mile route along a heritage railway. History buffs will enjoy the **Kett's Country Trail**, which follows the story of Kett's Rebellion, while the **Peddars Way** takes you along an

ancient Roman road.

Other stunning routes include the **Norfolk Coast Path** (a 112-mile National Trail), the **Marriott's Way** (26 miles of scenic walking, cycling, and horse-riding), and the **Wherryman's Way**, a 40-mile trek through the beautiful Broads National Park.

Whether you're interested in history, nature, or simply exploring the countryside, Norfolk's extensive network of trails provides the perfect way to experience this beautiful region.

For more information please visit www.norfolk.gov.uk/article/42852/Norfolk-Trails

