



YAXHAM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF YAXHAM PARISH COUNCIL ON WEDNESDAY 23rd JULY 2025 AT 7.30PM IN THE DAVID MYHILL ROOM AT YAXHAM VILLAGE HALL

Present: Cllrs Ben Conway (Chair), Maggie Oechsle (MO), Paul Bone (PB), Graham Howe (GH), Chris Couves (CC), Gary Davison (GD) and Bob Gust (BG).

In attendance: Clerk, and 9 members of the public.

1. Chair's opening remarks

The Chair welcomed everyone and thanked them for their presence. The Chair of Yaxham's Neighbourhood Plan working group was thanked for all his hard work. All councillors were thanked for their valuable expertise and contributions to council operations. It was noted that the meeting was being recorded.

On behalf of the Parish Council, condolences were offered to the family of the lady who tragically passed away in a recent road accident on Norwich Road.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received and accepted from DC Paul Plummer.

3. Declarations of interest in items on the agenda and to consider any request for dispensation

Cllr's BG and GH declared an interest in item 12.

4. Public Session

A local farmer raised concerns regarding Breckland District Council's decision that prior approval was not required for planning application PLA/2025/0763/PAAF – the erection of a barn on Cutthroat Lane. He questioned whether the applicant had provided sufficient evidence of being a genuine farmer to qualify for permitted development rights. He noted no borehole permission had been granted, contrary to what was stated previously, and highlighted environmental concerns due to the site's proximity to a site of Special Scientific Interest and a conservation area.

He expressed that outdoor pig farming on a 30-acre plot poses a risk to the nearby River Tud - a chalk stream - due to effluent runoff and build-up of copper and phosphate levels. He added that while building on a floodplain is restricted under normal planning processes permitted development appears to bypass these safeguards. The farmer requested that the planning officer be contacted to review the application and clarify the evidence submitted. If no action is taken, he suggested escalation to the ombudsman.

He also raised concerns about the frequent road accidents on the B1135 between Dereham and Yaxham. An accident had occurred that morning on the Dereham side. He proposed setting up a WhatsApp group for villagers to report and photograph incidents, creating a record for the parish council to use when next going to Highways asking for the 60mph speed limit to be

lowered. He also noted that part of his roadside hedge remains uncut due to safety concerns as vehicles travel dangerously fast along that route. The Chair informed the resident that the parish council had previously contacted Highways regarding the matter, and police records showed no accidents in the area. The parish council will continue logging any future incidents to share with Highways.

The farmer involved with the pig farm reported he had met with the Environment Agency, who had reviewed the farm's practises including having a buffer zone between the river and the pig tents and had expressed support for the measures in place. Cllr CC asked how runoff would be monitored to ensure no adverse impact on the River Tud. The farmer confirmed that water quality is being monitored by an external organisation, and he was committed to taking corrective action if pollution is detected including ceasing pig farming on the site if necessary.

After a discussion councillors main concern is that Breckland District Council followed proper protocol and maintained consistency with past applications. If not, this issue should be formally addressed with Breckland District Council. It was Resolved the Clerk would write to the Breckland planning officer seeking clarification on why this application has not followed standard procedures unlike the other agricultural buildings and workshops in Yaxham and due to concerns raised by residents, the Parish Council requests that Highways be consulted.

Mr Lowing's noted the Parish Council had previously explored the possibility of designating Cutthroat Lane as a quiet lane. He also expressed concerns regarding the ability of articulated lorries to safely navigate the narrow route and suggested that, when writing to Breckland District Council the parish council consider requesting a weight restriction to limit heavy vehicle traffic on the lane.

Mr Lowing raised concerns about the sharp bend on the previously discussed stretch of road. A flashing bend warning sign was once at the location, which encouraged drivers to slow down and helped reduce accidents. However, the sign was knocked down and later removed by Highways. Attempts to have the sign reinstated were unsuccessful, as the sign was situated on the Dereham side of the boundary not within Yaxham.

The Chair confirmed that the Parish Council had explored the possibility of designating the lane as a quiet lane. However, Norfolk County Council are no longer introducing quiet lanes.

Cllr BG asked if item 12 could be brought forward on the agenda and discussed now. The Chair agreed.

5. Reports from County and District Councillors if present

There were no reports from District Councillors.

6. Minutes of Previous Meeting

6.1. To approve the minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on 18.6.2025.

The minutes of the meeting were approved without amendment and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

6.2. To receive the Clerk's Report on matters since the last meeting.

- A Modification Order was received from Norfolk County Council - Section 53 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981 Norfolk County Council (Whinburgh, Yaxham and Garvestone) Modification Order 2023 – this Order is to add a restricted byway along the route.
- A reminder to members the Christmas Tree Light switch on meeting with the YVAA is on 8th September at 7.30pm

- The Council received an email from a resident raising concerns regarding the risk of brushfires on the farmland adjacent to properties in Norwich Road, St Peters Close and the new development. The land has remained untouched in recent years, and with the recent hot, dry weather, households are concerned a fire could rapidly spread to their nearby homes. I have contacted Lanpro and they are looking into the ownership to arrange for the land to be cleared.
- Yaxham Parish Council's formal response to Breckland's round table consultation has been submitted and receipt has been confirmed.

6.3. To consider matters arising from minutes of previous meetings not considered elsewhere on this Agenda.
None.

7. Planning

7.1. New planning applications
None

7.2. Planning decisions

PL/2025/0784/HOU - HOU Householder application for planning permission for works or extension to a dwelling - Proposed Single Storey Side and Rear Extension - Marco Paper Street, Yaxham – **Granted with decisions**

PL/2025/0763/PAAF - Application to determine if prior approval is required for a proposed: Erection, extension or alterations of a building for agricultural or forestry use - Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development)(England) Order 2015 (as amended) Sch 2, Part 6 Erection of 1 Agricultural Storage Building and Permeable Farm Track - Land Off Cutthroat Lane, Yaxham - **Prior Approval not required**

Yaxham Village Hall Shipping Container – Breckland Planning enforcement have stated that there is no breach of planning control and have closed the case.

7.3. Response to the Independent Examiner and Breckland for the Yaxham Neighbourhood Plan review

The Chair of the Neighbourhood Plan working group reported that the plan is currently with the examiner, who has been complimentary but raised questions requiring a response from the Parish Council. These primarily concern the proposed Local Green Space behind the new Badger Homes development, which has been objected to by Breckland District Council and Lanpro.

With support from the planning consultant, the Working Group prepared a detailed response addressing the examiner's questions, including a covering letter and a request for clarification on Yaxham's housing allocation. This documentation was circulated to all councillors ahead of the meeting and presented during the meeting.

Following a discussion, councillors unanimously **agreed** the Clerk submit their response to the examiner by the 28th July.

7.4. Update from Yaxham's Neighbourhood Plan review As discussed under item 7.3

8. Play Area Report

8.1 To consider the weekly inspection reports and agree any actions arising.

Cllr CC reported he and Cllr BG carried out lubrication of bearings on the swings. All other equipment was in good working order.

9. Events

9.1 Yaxham and Clint Green Car boot and Yard sale held on Sunday 22nd June - update

Cllr PB reported that holding both on the same day was not ideal. For future events, it would be more effective to focus on one at a time. The car boot sale had a very low turnout, with only three attendees. Despite being listed in the local paper, it may have benefited from better advertising.

The yard sale was more successful, with several villagers reporting good results. Cllr PB recommended continuing with this type of event, suggesting a small participation fee in future to encourage greater commitment.

He also proposed exploring collaboration with the friends of the local school.

10. Highways and Footpath issues

10.1 Footpath or highway issues needing attention

The Chair confirmed his satisfaction with the ratification of the new footpath, as detailed in the Clerk's report.

Cllr CC reported that the bridle path sign at the junction of Cutthroat Lane and Green Lane had been deliberately knocked down. A local farmer offered to reinstate the sign, councillors thanked him and accepted his offer.

Standing orders were suspended – all agreed

Cllr GD reported he had discussions with a parishioner regarding the footpath running beside the school to Cutthroat Lane, and the cutting of the grass by the council's grounds maintenance contractor. Due to the long grass having been trampled down, the mower only cuts across the top and strimming is required for proper maintenance. Cllr GD also noted the hedge belonging to the local school is encroaching onto the footpath, narrowing the walkway. Cllr GD asked how frequently this area is maintained and whether the council is permitted to manage it directly. He also queried responsibility for hedge trimming - whether it lies solely with the owner and does it include both sides? Councillors stated the responsibility lies with the school.

Cllr GD volunteered to cut the grass himself and confirmed he will arrange for the hedge to be cut back.

10.2 Email received from a resident regarding the fire hydrant at the top of Elm Close.

A resident had emailed the Clerk expressing concern over the lack of cutting at the top of Elm Close by Highways, noting that a fire hydrant is located within the undergrowth. The Chair had visited the site, photographed the area and shared the image during the meeting. The hydrant remains visible and is also marked by a yellow roadside indicator.

The council discussed the area and **agreed** that:

- It does not obstruct visibility or pose a traffic issue.
- It is appropriate to leave the area as a wild space.
- The fire hydrant is sufficiently marked and accessible in case of emergency.

It was **agreed** that the Parish Council will not incorporate this area into its cutting programme, and maintenance will remain under the responsibility of Highways.

11. Flagpoles and flags in the Village

An email was received from a resident regarding the condition of flags in the village. Photos of all village flagpoles were displayed and reviewed by councillors, who confirmed they were all within height regulations.

Councillors acknowledged that some flags had previously appeared ragged but noted that Rani's flags are now new and up to date. The eight flagpoles at the Badger Homes development are temporary and will be removed once houses are sold.

Councillors were happy with the current condition of all flags. The Clerk will respond to the resident confirming these findings.

12. YVAA lease surrender for the Church Room – Legal costs, grant application and Council Support options

Cllr GH, as a trustee of the YVAA, provided a background on the sale of the Church Rooms. He explained that the auction date had been delayed due to difficulty securing a RICS surveyor, which was required before the YVAA could relinquish the lease. The sale has now been completed, relieving both the YVAA and the parish council of any liability relating to dilapidations of the property. Cllr GH commended Andrew Thorpe, a fellow trustee, for his diligent work in progressing the sale.

He shared that the YVAA now faced legal and professional fees relating to the sale, which they are unable to fully cover. A spreadsheet detailing anticipated costs and recent unexpected expenditure was displayed, with final invoices yet to be received. The YVVA treasurer noted the importance of retaining some financial reserves for future maintenance of the village hall, and one the payment of these bills would deplete their funds entirely.

The treasurer had approached a member of the Parochial Church Charity to request a contribution towards the fees noting that the charity will significantly benefit from the sale proceeds. A request had been made for this matter to be formerly considered at the charities meeting in September. The YVAA requested whether the Parish Charity could offer a grant towards the costs.

Councillors discussed this and resolved that a grant application should be submitted to the Yaxham Parish Charity. It was further **agreed** that a meeting would be held on 13th August at 7pm. This is subject to confirmation from Cllr GH to the Clerk that the relevant invoices have been received.

13. Biodiversity and receive an update on the wildflowers on the Playing Field

Cllr MO had received a complaint for a resident reporting the presence of ragwort on the playing field. The Chair confirmed a small amount was present and agreed to remove it.

It was noted that wildflowers have still not appeared on the playing field. Members acknowledged that wildflower growth can be unpredictable.

14. Finance

14.1 All agreed the following payments be approved for payment * - already paid

To Pay	Detail Invoices available for viewing	£ Total	VAT	Ex VAT
Unity Bank	Service Charge*	6.00	-	6.00

Craig Delph	Jubilee Field, Mouses Lane, Pinn's Corner and Pinn's Lane	585.18	-	585.18
R Wade	EDP Car Boot and Yard Sale Advert	82.80	13.80	69.00
Norfolk PTS	Chairman Training	72.00	12.00	60.00
HMRC	PAYE on Clerk's salary	0.20	-	0.20
R Wade	Clerk wages and expenses for July	649.89	2.16	647.73

14.2. To note any receipts

Detail	£ Total
Interest	121.30

14.3. Neighbourhood plan payments

To Pay	Detail Invoices available for viewing	£ Total	VAT	Ex VAT
None		-	-	-

14.4. Neighbourhood plan receipts

Detail	£ Total
None	-

14.5. Bank Position and budget

This was circulated prior to the meeting.

14.6. To consider the Internal Financial Officers report

Cllr PB had reviewed the accounts ahead of the meeting and was happy to report they were in order.

14.7. Parish Partnership Scheme 2026/27

It was **agreed** to revisit this later in the year.

15. Correspondence received since last meeting

Emails from residents, Mattishall Neighbourhood Plan review, Breckland - Share your priorities to shape strong vision for future of council services in Norfolk, Lanpro Services, Breckland BOOST - opportunities for young people aged 16 - 30 across Breckland, Breckland Planning, Charity Commission, CCLA Investment Management, Yaxham Village Amenities Association (YVAA), Breckland – Workshops, CC Ed Connolly Parish report, about Dereham, Healthwatch Norfolk and Police – Safer Neighbourhood Action Panel (SNAP) meeting.

16. General Parish Issues (for information only)

Cllr PB proposed creating a separate page on the Village website for information regarding the upcoming Local Government Reorganisation to a Unitary Authority. Councillors agreed this was a good idea, noting that content must remain accurate, up to date, and unbiased. The Clerk had already uploaded information containing links to the website's news feed, however, as this content moves down when new posts are added, the Clerk was asked to continue prioritising this item at the top of the feed.

Cllr MO Informed the council that Reverend Sally Thurgill would shortly be retiring, and another village would no longer have a resident vicar. She proposed that the Clerk send a letter on behalf of the parish council expressing thanks for Reverend Thurgill's dedicated service and wishing her a happy retirement. Councillors were happy for the Clerk to do this.

17. Date of the next Parish Council meeting

24th September 2025

The Chair closed the meeting at 9.49pm