



YAXHAM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF YAXHAM PARISH COUNCIL ON WEDNESDAY 24th SEPTEMBER 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), and Bob Gust (BG).

In attendance: Clerk, DC Paul Plummer, and 5 members of the public.

1. Chair's opening remarks

The chair welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending. He emphasised that Parish Council meetings are for the whole village, not just councillors, and encouraged residents to attend, share their views and stay informed. He asked attendees to spread the word and invite others to future meetings, noting that community input is vital. He also thanked councillors for their expertise and contributions.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr's Gary Davison, Chris Couves and CC Ed Connolly.

3. Declarations of interest in items on the agenda and to consider any requests for dispensation None.

4. Public Session

A resident reported that the hedge on either side of the mill, located on the South side of the main road was overgrown and obstructing visibility of the bus stop. It was confirmed that responsibility of the hedge lies with Glavenhill. The Clerk to contact them and request the hedge be cut back.

Mr Peter Lowings addressed the council regarding concerns about the proposed Dimpling Green development – item 7.8. He highlighted the lower elevation of Yaxham compared to surrounding areas referencing a Saxon era stone at the local church indicating the village sits just 24 inches above sea level. He expressed concern that despite proposed attenuation ponds and other mitigation measures, surface water from the development would ultimately flow into the River Tud in Yaxham.

Mr Lowing also noted that developers had attempted to purchase land near the railway bridge to facilitate a roundabout, but the offer was declined. He questioned whether the high cost of constructing a roundabout might lead developers to increase the number of proposed dwellings beyond the current 350.

Additionally, he raised concerns about traffic congestion at the existing Tesco roundabout and the potential risks of placing a new roundabout near sharp bend close to the development site. He asked the parish council to consider these points carefully when responding to the consultation.

Mr Lowing raised concerns regarding the planning application for the pig farm on Cutthroat Lane, specifically highlighting that pig effluent and odour are now considered material planning

issues. He acknowledged that the applicant had proactively engaged with experts who visited the site and provided strategies to address these environmental concerns.

He further noted that both Breckland District Council and the applicant have the option to allocate a contingency fund to address any future environmental impacts arising from the development. This fund, proposed at £10,000 for a project of this scale, could be used by Breckland to commission studies or undertake environmental work if necessary. He clarified that this contribution could be made voluntarily by the applicant or formally requested by Breckland District Council.

5. Reports from County and District Councillors

DC Paul Plummer Informed the Council that Breckland, alongside other district councils is lobbying the Minister to consider forming three separate unitary authorities rather than a single unitary authority. The main concern is Norwich City Council's significant debt. A single unitary authority could result in increased council tax rates across all districts to absorb the liability. The district councils are therefore seeking to distance themselves from Norwich City Council financially.

DC Paul Plummer noted that no feasibility study has yet been conducted to assess the comparative costs of one versus three unitary authorities. He expressed concern over the proposed reduction in the number of County and District Councillors, questioning how the existing workload would be managed given that County Councillors will remain part time. He also highlighted that parish councils would be expected to take on additional responsibilities. DC Paul Plummer felt service levels may decline as a result of these changes, despite government claims that restructuring would lead to cost savings.

6. Minutes of Previous Meeting

6.1. To approve the minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on 23.7.2025

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

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

- Yaxham Parish Council's response to the Neighbourhood Plan Examiner has been sent.
- A retirement letter has been sent to Rev. Sally Thurgill.
- The Charity accounts have been audited by the Independent Examiner.
- The Clerk has written to Highways regarding the speed limit on Dereham/Yaxham B1135 road.
- Photos of the recent cuts to the footpaths have been sent to Norfolk County Council.
- The Clerk I reminded all council members to use the clerk.gov.uk email address and not the previous Gmail address.

6.3. Matters arising from minutes of previous meetings not considered elsewhere on this Agenda.

MO noted that in relation to the recent planning application **PL/2025/0763/PAAF** gates had recently been installed and raised concerns regarding the height and positioning of these gates, which stand approximately 2 metres high and are located directly adjacent to the roadside. Currently, HGV's must stop on the road and exit their vehicles to open the gates, causing obstruction and preventing other traffic from passing until the vehicle has cleared the road. It was thought that gates of this height set so close to the roadside required planning permission and should be set back to allow heavy good vehicles to pull off the road before opening thereby avoiding obstructing traffic. Additionally, the paint colour of the gates was considered intrusive to the rural landscape character.

It was unanimously **agreed** that the Clerk would contact Breckland planning enforcement to:

- Confirm whether planning permission is required for the gates

- Raise concerns regarding the visual impact of the gate colour
- Send supporting photographs

7. Planning

7.1. To receive and consider any new planning applications

None.

7.2. To note any planning decisions

PL/2025/1294/TCA -Eucalyptus- Reduce radius from 7m to not less than 4m. Poplar-Reduce Garden side from 8m-5m radius & remove broken limb. Cherry- Fell (Dead) - Norwich Road Yaxham. – **For information only**

7.3. Response to a consultation being held regarding the Proposed Residential Development Land at Dumpling Green, Dereham

GH had circulated a draft response to all councillors prior to the meeting for consideration. The draft was displayed in full and discussed during the meeting.

It was agreed to incorporate Mr Lowing's earlier comments regarding surface water disposal and request a full hydrological survey. Additionally reference to Breckland's Local Plan Policy ENV05 will be included highlighting the value of the districts landscape in relation to its intrinsic character, biodiversity, geodiversity and historic conservation. It was unanimously **agreed** to submit the response once the above amendments had been made.

7.4. Response to Yaxham Neighbourhood Plan – Examiners Report Recommended

Gary Osborn (GO), Chair of the Yaxham Neighbourhood Plan Working Group, reported that the Examiner's Report had been received and was broadly positive and complimentary. However, two key proposals, the designation of an additional Local Green Space and priority for housing allocation to Yaxham residents, were not accepted. The reasons for the rejections were noted and while disappointing the rationale behind the decision was understood.

There were positives which included a reduction in the permitted density of future developments compared to the previous plan, and confirmation that Yaxham remains a village with boundaries.

The revised plan will be approved subject to the recommended changes but must proceed to a referendum, contrary to initial expectations.

GO recommended that the working group meets and along with the consultant review the report in detail.

It was **agreed** that the working group would meet and present its findings at the next parish council meeting, prior to the Council submitting its formal response.

8. Play Area Report

8.1 Weekly inspection report

In the absence of Cllr CC, BG reported during his inspection of the playground a few weeks ago the equipment was in good condition. He also reported he had cleared away gas cylinders that had been misused on the site.

9. Events

9.1 Christmas Tree Light Switch-On

It was confirmed that the event would take place on the 7th of December between 3:00 - 7:00 pm. Carlie from the Yaxham Village Amenities Association (YVAA) had prepared two leaflet designs for councillors to review, the second option was approved.

Councillors discussed whether to distribute the leaflet independently or include it with the parish council's upcoming newsletter. It was **agreed** that two leaflet drops would be the most effective.

- **First distribution** (Autumn) Double-sided featuring updates on the neighbourhood plan and other community matters.
- **Second distribution** (End of November) Leaflet promoting the Christmas light switch-on.

PB will circulate a draft of the newsletter for councillors to consider before the next meeting.

9.2 Litter pick - 25th October 2025

All **agreed** they were happy with the 25th October 2025.

GH reported that all equipment had been booked with Breckland environmental services.

Promotional posters had been displayed, and event details were available on the Parish Council website. A full risk assessment will be completed the week prior to the event. The village hall toilets had been booked for participant use. He will speak to Cllr GD regarding the possibility of acting as first aider for the event.

10. Highways and Footpath issues

10.1 Footpath or highway issues needing attention

The Chair informed the council that Highways Rangers will be visiting the parish in the coming months. Councillors are asked to notify the Clerk of any Highway issues requiring their attention, by providing a brief description, a photo if possible and a location using What3Words. The Clerk will then pass these on to the Rangers.

The Chair raised concerns regarding overhanging branches that pose a potential hazard to the public. It is the responsibility of landowners to ensure that branches are safely removed. He urged councillors or members of the public to report any branch that is broken or likely to fall, as they could cause serious injury to pedestrians, cyclists or motorcyclists.

It was also reported that the sign opposite Station Road on Norwich Road/Dereham Road, the randel had been removed from the top of it. The Clerk to report to Highways.

The Chair had been contacted by a resident who is concerned about increased lorry traffic originating from a farm in Garvestone, now operating as a contractor's depot. Initially, lorries travelled through Garvestone, but due to complaints the route was changed and now they travel through Brakefield Green, exiting via Stone Road or Well Hill, both of which are single carriageways.

PB expressed concern about the suitability of these roads for heavy vehicles particularly noting the poor condition of the Well Hill Road.

The resident intends to monitor lorry movements and has asked if other residents can do the same. Following a discussion the council **agreed** to monitor the situation.

10.2 Possible speed limit reduction on the B1135

The Clerk informed the Council that she had spoken to Matt Lines from Highways regarding the possibility of a speed reduction. Mr Lines had advised that a reduction was unlikely. He had declined to attend the Council meeting but was happy to meet with representatives of the Council. Mr Lines confirmed that "SLOW" road markings would be added. He noted the previous presence of a flashing sign and is investigating who was responsible for it. If Highways is found to be responsible, they will fund a replacement, if it falls under parish responsibility, Dereham Town Council will need to be consulted. He had said he would support a Parish Partnership bid. The Clerk had also informed Mr Lines that the Council is maintaining a record of all accidents. He responded that such records were unlikely to influence decisions unless reported by the police or insurers.

The Chair and GH are happy to meet with Mr Lines. The Clerk will contact Highways to arrange a meeting.

10.3 Outstanding FP4 footpath connection, as required by the Planning Inspector as part of Planning Appeal APP/F2605/W/18/3194045.

MO reported that multiple attempts had been made over the past year to determine whether the monies had been received by Norfolk County Council. Despite numerous emails, no responses have been received. The Council is keen to resolve the issue before Badger Homes leaves the site.

MO proposed to contact CC Ed Connolly to request his assistance in investigating the matter and submit a Freedom of Information request to clarify:

- Whether the £3,000 has been paid
- If so, who received the funds

All **agreed** they were happy to proceed with this.

11. The painting of the Yaxham WW1 memorial sign and agree any action arising

The Chair informed the meeting that a well-meaning resident had taken it upon themselves to enhance the memorial sign and rejuvenate it and that it was done with the best intentions. While the painting was done in good faith, it had elicited a range of responses from the community, some good and others negative.

Some residents expressed strong views during the meeting, with some requesting the sign be returned to its original state. It was noted that the green paint had already been removed, and some were unsure if the red paint could be removed.

Following a discussion, GH proposed, and BC seconded, and all **agreed** to consult with residents on whether the memorial sign should be returned to its original form or whether the red poppy should remain via the upcoming parish newsletter. Residents will be invited to submit their opinions via the Clerks email.

12. Restoration of the Yaxham Village sign

MO reported that, following a resident's suggestion that the sign needed repair, the Village sign was taken down for inspection and the wood was found to be completely rotten on one side. A local craftsman has kindly offered to restore the sign free of charge, with material costs to be covered by the Parish Council. It was unanimously **agreed** to proceed with the restoration.

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

The Chair noted that no wildflowers had appeared on the Playing Field this year, likely due to poor timing or lack of rain. Various options were discussed. MO proposed waiting until Spring, to allow time for moisture levels to increase and then possibly consider replanting. All **agreed** to revisit the matter in the Spring.

14. Finance

14.1 All **agreed** the following payments be approved for payment. Proposed GH and seconded by BC (* - 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 Cuts - August	259.44	-	259.44
Craig Delph	Jubilee Field Cuts and School Footpath – August*	313.86	-	313.86
K. Robertson & Son	Topping of wildflower area on the Recreation Field	60.00	10.00	50.00
PKF Littlejohn LLP	AGAR External Review	252.00	42.00	210.00
Nathan Couse	Play Area Cuts	172.50	-	172.50
R Wade	Clerk wages and expenses for August and September	1,100.54	5.39	1,095.15

14.2. To note any receipts

Detail	£ Total
Precept	

14.3. Neighbourhood plan payments

To Pay	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.

The Clerk asked if any additional cuts to the playing field or footpaths should be included in the upcoming budget for the following year. Councillors felt no further cuts were necessary, noting that this year's grounds maintenance had been satisfactory partly due to how dry it had been.

14.6. PKF Littlejohn (External Auditors) report

The external report was received, with no recommendations.

14.7. Understanding Charities course

All **agreed** that the Clerk would attend the course, with the charity covering the cost.

14.8. Wreath for Remembrance Sunday

It was unanimously agreed that the Clerk would arrange the purchase of a wreath, with a total cost including a donation not exceeding £50. It was further agreed that Peter Lowings would lay the wreath on behalf of the Parish Council.

15. Correspondence received since last meeting

An email from a resident was received concerned at the Ragwort on the Playing Field, Norwich Western Link, Breckland LGR Town and Parish Engagement Session, Community and Environmental Services – NCC, 2025 Community Biodiversity Awards, Email from a resident regarding the Farmland adjacent to Norwich Road, PKF Littlejohn, CPRE, Email from a resident regarding the Grass cutting, Breckland's Environmental Initiative Grants, Email from a resident regarding the Remembrance sign, Armstrong Rigg Planning – New Development Proposals, LGR Update – NCC, Breckland Engagement Sessions, Breckland - Norfolk Flooding Hotline, CC Ed Connolly – NCC briefing notes and Parish Reports, Healthwatch Norfolk, Community Action Norfolk, Norfolk PTS, about Dereham, Age UK and Breckland – Bowls for health.

Standing orders were suspended – all agreed

16. Trigger alerts from Norfolk Constabulary

Norfolk Constabulary had reached out to various organisations asking if they would be willing to receive alerts regarding the growing threat of courier fraud. All **agreed** they were happy to receive the alerts.

17. General Parish Issues (for information only)

BG reported that the existing noticeboard as Well Hill is insufficient in size to display all required information. The Clerk will look in costs for a replacement notice board and include the cost in the draft budget for the next financial year. BG also queried whether the landowner's permission would be required to place a new noticeboard as the land is not owned by the Parish Council.

18. Date of the next Parish Council meeting

22nd October 2025

The Chair closed the meeting at 9.38pm