

BRADENHAM PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes of Bradenham Parish Annual General Meeting on
Tuesday 13th May 2025 at 7.30pm in the Village Hall

Welcome

Teresa Frost, Steven Parker, Michael Bell and Neil Fegan with the Clerk Mrs D Ruppert and Helen Crane (District Councillor) plus 4 Residents.

Apologies received from Lisa Johnstone– Working, Jon Murphy – Family issues.
Ed Connolly- County Councillor and Pete Bates District Councillor

The standing Chairman Teresa Frost open the meeting and then ask the Clerk to announce the Election of Office

Due to only 4 members of the PC in attendance, Teresa Frost showed interest in being Chairman and Steve Parker in Vice Charman.

The PC held a secret ballot for Chairman and **Teresa Frost was re-elected as Chairman**
Declaration of acceptance and undertaking of Office was signed by the Chairman.
Vice Chairman and Village Hall Committee member will be agreed at the next meeting.
Declaration of acceptance was signed by the other attending PC

Bradenham Charity no longer require PC member due to a change in their new constitution

FINANCIAL STATEMENT FOR YEAR ENDING 31ST MARCH 2025

RECEIPTS

Precept	8000.00
UK Power Networks	246.90
VAT Refund	1415.48
Cricket Club Fee	350.00
PCC Grass Contribution	1037.04

PAYMENTS

Community Heart - Pads	57.95
Bradenham Hall Farm -Footpath	368.00
Village Hall – Rent	60.00
T TSR Grass Cutting + Moles	4679.52
Clerk – Wages	822.76
PAYE	205.60
Zurich Insurance + Inspection	1220.51
ICO – Data	47.00
CPRE – Monthly Membership	5.00
NPTS – Yearly Membership	80.00
Community Heatbeat – Battery	222.50
Spire Solicitors – Cricket Club Lease	185.00
Julian Reading – Photocopying	17.36
TTSR – Tree Work on Green	500.00
Dereham Meeting Point- Donation	100.00
Banking Charges-Lloyds x2	8.50
Bradenham Website Domain Name	8.00
VAT	1271.03

£11049.42

£ 9858.73

SUMMARY

	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
	£	£	£	£	£
Precept	8000.00	8000.00	8000.00	8000.00	8000.00
Interest Credited	12.22	4.54	0.47	0.00	0.00
VAT Refund	953.75	1416.68	2866.02	2307.96	1415.48
Other Income	3979.45	7091.00	4329.87	1329.28	1633.94
Balance C/F	9539.34	11169.15	8679.25	6906.18	7944.45
Expenditure	11315.61	19002.12	17643.60	10598.97	9858.73
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Balance	11169.15	8679.25	6906.18	7944.45	9135.14

The Clerk presented the above statement of the Parish Councils' finance for the year ending 31st March 2025, showing income for the year of **£11049.42**, expenditure of **£9858.73** and a balance carried forward of **£9135.14**. This needs approval by the Parish Council

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2025 The last 12 months has seen the greatest turnover in the Parish Council for many years, Chris Allhusen as the long standing chair stood down in November 24 and Julian Reading took on the chairs role for 2 months. I stepped up to vice chair and then to chair in very quick succession in December 24. Since September 2024 the parish council has been grappling with how to best respond to preventing this blight occurring to our countryside through the High Grove Solar Farm proposal which will surround the village with sites to the South, North and East of the village. This is probably the most significant and important challenge that the Parish Council has ever had to deal with and it is fair to say that as a council we have not always agreed on the approach we should take. This will need to be resolved this year and a majority vote will take our approach and response on behalf of the village forward.

I would like to thank all our Parish Councillors past and present for their work, done on your behalf, over the past year, and our Clerk, Dee Ruppert who is such an asset to us with her many years of experience. I would like to thank Edward Connolly, our County Councillor and our District Councillors, Helen Crane & Peter Bates for the work they have put in on our behalf during the year.

I would like to thank Steve and Lorraine Parker and their army of litter pickers who continue to keep the streets, roads, and Village Green of Bradenham so tidy and clear of litter. I would also like to thank Phil Hayward and Michael Bell for looking after our speed signs and capturing data. Along with the community Speed watch team for their dedicated work to tackle speeding traffic through our village, they are always in need of new volunteers so please consider training to undertake this important role. During this last year Breckland District Council has agreed another five year Asset of Community Value on the Lord Nelson Public House.

In January the plans for Devolution and Local Government reform were announced. When these go ahead and we lose a layer of councils there is likely to be more responsibility that falls to Parish Councils and as a small village Council ourselves we need to prepare for this and ensure we are fit for purpose before these reforms take place.

Our precept remains the same as last year at £8,000. As you can see from the financial statement, our two largest items of expenditure were the usual Village Green insurance and the grass cutting of the green and churchyards.

BRADENHAM CHARITY REPORT 2025 The Bradenham Charity owns the Meadows and Allotments on Half Mile Drift and manages a small portfolio of investments. The Higher-Level Environmental Scheme on the meadows runs for another year. This scheme pays for the meadows to be retained as a haven for wildlife. I am also pleased to see that we still have full occupancy on the allotments, and even a short waiting list. The Charity repeated the support we give to parents of Bradenham children at schools in Shipdham and Scarning with the cost of their uniform in moving up to High School. The Chairman of the Charity is Cathy Norton and Parish Council Trustee has been myself. A new constitution for the charities has been agreed and as a result the Parish Council no longer requires to provide a representative to the charities going forward. Any organisation, or individual, in the village is welcome to put forward suggestions for help with their funding requirements to the Trustees, all of whom I would like to thank for their work on the Charity.

District Councillor's Report – Helen Crane ANNUAL REPORT Annual report for Saham Toney Ward (Bradenham, Carbrooke, Ovington, Scoulton) Breckland Council was a successful bidder for more than £250,000 of national funding to make Dereham leisure centre more efficient and environmentally friendly. This funding enabled solar panels to be installed on the leisure centre. The solar panels will reduce the building's carbon emissions by as much as 47 tonnes each year.

New electric vehicle charging points were installed in Theatre Street car park in Swaffham and Kittle Close car park in Watton. Worked with 39 businesses helping with de-carbonisation plans. Secured new heating solutions for 75 households through the Warm Homes discount scheme.

The council launched a new Healthy Homes initiative, seeking to improve the living conditions for the district's tenants and offer guidance and resources to support local landlords.

A new housing strategy was launched in September. The strategy looks at matters surrounding housing and identifies key priorities for addressing housing and homelessness in the district. The council secured over 1 million £ in funding to support its ongoing work to deliver essential housing support. In October the council received 1.24 million £ which was used to acquire 10 properties, helping to ensure residents facing housing challenges have access to safe secure accommodation. In addition the council also approved monies from section 106 contributions of £224,000.

Launched The Pop-Up Pantry with support from partners. Assisted over 270 households with food, energy, clothing and other costs through the Household support fund.

Delivered training sessions on bereavement, social media use, youth well-being and mental health. Awarded 75k of grant funding through the inspiring communities grant scheme.

The dog warden service received its 2nd platinum award from the RSPCA to go alongside its previous 5 gold awards for its service. There was also a gold award for its kennelling services. Breckland Council has taken a decisive stand against animal cruelty and in a landmark case successfully prosecuted a dog owner on abandonment and neglect.

A new Hub was opened in Dereham called The Link. The Link is inside Breckland business centre and aims to provide a one stop shop of support and early intervention. It has been created in partnership with Waveny Mind. Partners including Citizens advice, department for work and pensions, the BOOST skills programme, Nova training and NHS talking therapies are also housed in The Link.

Breckland Council relaunched its website with a new look that is designed to be more user friendly and accessible for residents, businesses and visitors to the district.

The council has continued to crack down on fly-tipping and littering. Introduced safer street wardens in Thetford. The budget was reviewed in January for 25/26. The budget is balanced, ensuring that planned expenditure aligns with expected income and it maintains all its core services without any cuts. Over 1,000 trees planted through The Kings Coronation grant scheme.

Minutes of Bradenham Parish Council Meeting held on Tuesday 13th May 2025 in the Village Hall.

Teresa Frost, Steven Parker, Michael Bell and Neil Fegan with the Clerk Mrs D Ruppert and Helen Crane (District Councillor) plus 4 Residents.

Apologies received from Lisa Johnstone– Working, Jon Murphy – Family issues. Ed Connolly- County Councillor and Pete Bates District Councillor

The minutes of the last meeting were signed by the Chairman as a true record.

DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Members are asked to declare any interest in the following items on the agenda.

Dispensation is granted to all Parish Councillors in order to discuss the Precept and other financial matters.

Helen Crane – District Councillor - The installation of the solar panels at Dereham leisure centre are now completed. It is expected that the solar captured will meet around 35% of the centres electricity needs reducing carbon by up to 48 tonnes per year

The next round of the Inspiring Communities grant scheme is open and details can be found on the Norfolk Community Foundation website. If any community group would like to be considered I am happy to have a conversation with them to see if they meet the criteria.

Devolution-The Government has responded to the joint proposal from Breckland, Broadland, Great Yarmouth, Kings Lynn & West Norfolk, North Norfolk and Norwich City Council's For a 3 unitary model for Norfolk. This model will enable tailored approaches to local economies and housing. Recognise the distinct characteristics and needs of each area. Balance of power across the region ensuring that no single entity dominates and allowing local voices to be heard across the County.

Cllr. Bill Borrett is the Cabinet member for Devolution and LGR (Local government reorganisation).

Why aren't Breckland supporting a single unitary model for Norfolk?

Simply put, it will cost you more and make decision making more remote from you.

Why will it cost more?

Despite claims to the contrary, we have no confidence that a single unitary will lead to significant savings. The clear experience from the sector is they cost more than they save:

Somerset Council, unitarized in 2023, created out of four District Councils and one County Council. Seven months after coming into existence (and claiming large savings could be made) the new Unitary Council declared a financial emergency, saying they needed to immediately find £100m. It then went on to ask the Government for Exception Financial Support (EFS) of over £70m, less than half the predicted savings have been identified. Independent reviewers highlighted that "the business case for unitarization may have underestimated the complexity of the transformation and integration of systems has posed challenges for the new authority that it has yet to overcome".

Cornwall, unitarized in 2009, identified a £50m budgetary black hole in 2024/25 and are having to consider cuts and sale of assets.

In fact, over the last 10 years not one of the new unitary councils has delivered much in the way of savings, the Councils with the highest Council Tax in the Country are both unitary councils one in an urban area (Nottingham) and a rural one (Rutland).

Council Tax harmonisation will force Breckland Residents to pay more, this is because currently Breckland's is the lowest of all the councils in Norfolk. The 3 unitary option will not include Breckland residents with the more expensive councils like Norwich City Council so the increase will be less.

Residents will be required to pay for all transition and implementation costs estimated to be in the 10's of millions of pounds, the more councils are merged into one, the greater the risk of increased costs.

Why will decision making be more remote?

A single unitary in Norfolk would be, one of the largest authorities in the Country, covering over 2000 square miles and 930,000 people, risking diseconomies of scale (a council that is too large and cumbersome to drive change and appropriate efficiencies).

A single unitary would lead to a catastrophic loss of accountability, with a councillor to elector ratio over three times larger than current districts and a loss of connection with communities. Far removed from local communities to design appropriate services, maintain flexibility, and adapt to local need in both prevention and reaction.

Whilst we are committed to not seeing LGR as a "race to the bottom", and a race to identify the most cuts, we do have robust independent analysis which demonstrates £7.6m of real savings initially, without sacrificing service delivery and local representation. We also believe strongly that the more profound savings are through local work to join up services and better prevent need – which is much more achievable at a local level. This is in direct contradiction to reports that a three unitary will cost more than the status quo.

Comprehensive and independent research undertaken by Deloitte identified a single unitary as the weakest of the three, scoring lowest against five of the six criteria for Local Government Reorganisation laid out by the Government. It was identified as the worst option for maintaining responsive and localised public services, maintaining place identity, supporting devolution arrangements, and against several other metrics.

As a reminder – we want to work with Members, and parishes – to amplify local voices in the debate. It is important that everyone takes part in the consultation, use the link below:

Have your say via <https://www.future-east.co.uk/>

We will be arranging further briefings and sessions with parishes, and are happy to come and speak at events if you have any upcoming you think would be appropriate

PUBLIC SESSION No questions were asked

Mark Waller – Resigned from the PC in early April, we thank him for his service to the village.

Parish Council Vacancy – James Ruppert was accepted on to the PC. Teresa informed the PC that James was married to the Clerk Dee. He is also a part of the opposition Solar Farm Group and a member of Bradenham Charity Committee. The Clerk will arrange for the DPI paperwork to be sent via email to James and inform Breckland of the new PC.

MATTERS ARISING

George Freeman – Meeting 25th April - Teresa Frost reported the following.

Myself and Steve attended the meeting at Holme Hale Village Hall. George Freeman's steering group consists of 18 Villages. Also in attendance was Terry Jermy – Labour MP, Fabian R Eagle County Councillor – Conservative, Breckland Head of Planning, Head of town council, Mayor of Swaffham plus 32 residents of various surrounding villages. Breckland are very concerned about the amount of solar farms planned in Norfolk. Some Parishes have no idea this is happening.

They discussed net zero push and what the legal process will be. They felt that the grading of land was not done correctly. 40 applications are in the pipeline. Should we fight this or not?

All the power will go direct to London. The solar farm could affect food security, tourism house prices and the roads. Disruption for several years.

George and Terry ask each PC's what they thought at present? Ashill – Against, Bradenham – Against, Cranworth – No position, Dereham – Not Discussed Fransham – Concerned, Holmes Hale – Undecided, Little Dunham – Mitigation, Longham – Okay, Necton – Undecided, Saham Toney - Against, Scarning – PC issues at present, Shipdham – No Objection, Sporle – No Objection, Swaffham Against.

Bradenham will stay a part of the steering group. Since the meeting we have heard nothing from George Freeman regarding the date of the next meeting.

Neil was surprised that other PC are not aware of the Solar Farms. Everyone should work has one group. He also felt that George Freeman should head the group, he may have more knowledge.

Teresa - The next consultation is 20 page document and very wishy washy and the red lines have changed.

No one from the PC attended the online teams meeting.

Teresa will re-advertise the RWE meeting at Bradenham 22nd May on the Hub.

Steve Parker – We can supply residents with questions they should be asking.

Opposition Group Update – This was removed from the agenda

Review of Standing Orders etc – Teresa confirmed that ¾ of the orders have been completed and these will be sent to all PC for their comments.

Mill Street – Drainage issues – it was agreed to leave this until Highways contact us again

Scarning Road Speeding – Part of the road is in the Parish of Scarning. The Clerk has been in contact with Scarning PC, they have said that they cannot help with any signage. Highways have also said they cannot put signs up, due to it is not an accident hot spot.

Nelson Close – Street name – This will be replaced by mid-May

CORRESPONDENCE

Audit – Sign section 1 before section 2 - The Clerk prepared the audit and this was signed by the Chairman with the approval of the Parish Council. Section one was agreed and signed before section 2 of the Audit form. The Clerk again will be sending in a certificate of exemption because we can confirm that we neither received gross income nor incurred gross expenditure, exceeding £25,000 in the year. This would mean the audit would still need to be completed but we will not need to send it to the auditors and this will save us £200. The internal audit was very kindly carried out by Serena Barnes (Bradenham Hall Farm Secretary). The PC thanked Serena.

Village Checklist– Has been completed and returned to Breckland

RWE – Open Meeting 22nd May time 2-7pm.. We have advertised this in the Hub and the Mardle. residents should attend and ask questions. Neil asked if RWE could hold meeting later in the evening so residents that work could attend as well. Steve Parker also had a few RWE brochures and questionnaires. Teresa will put this meeting again on 'The Hub'.

Two email reports from CPRE and Norfolk and Suffolk Nature Recovery Partnership – Neil Fegan

CPRE our providing an opportunity to contribute to a research project on farming, conservation and recreation in Norfolk being conducted by a Luis Sanchez Seto PHD a student from Leeds university.

Last year he conducted a survey interviewing stakeholders, farmers etc. regarding views and priorities for farming landscapes.

He is now inviting participants that live, work and are interested in Norfolk including visitors to complete a survey and give their views.

Regarding the Norfolk and Suffolk Nature Recovery Partnership. They are also asking for views by way of a survey.

The aim of this consultation is to identify habitat and landscapes worth protecting in order to form a local nature recovery strategy. With a view to restoring and protecting landscapes and habitats.

It is a very thorough report incorporating over 300 pages of detail. Interestingly included in the report is a map showing an area of Particular Importance for Biodiversity adjacent to areas of proposed solar panels at the Grove wood at the top of Southend. Perhaps this could be cited in mitigation when discussing the sighting of the panels.

I hope this summary of the two reports will help with the understanding and if possible to encourage a contribution to the surveys for the benefit of Norfolk

PLANNING

APPLICATION :- None

APPROVAL :- None

FINANCE:-

Opening Balance £ 9576.74

Virgin Account

Expenditure		Precept	Income
Bradenham Footpath fee	441.60		4000.00
Gift for Serena Barns – Audit	15.00		
CPRE – Monthly Membership	5.00		
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	£ 461.60		£ 4000.00

Balance £ 13115.14

It was confirmed that all payments made were agreed by the Parish Council

Any Other Business

Julian was asked by the Clerk if he was happy to repair the Village Noticeboard. Julian is happy to do this at a cost of £80. The PC were happy to accept..

The PC also thank Julian for repairing the foot bridge which is used at the Fete.

NEXT MEETING Tuesday 12th August 2025

Meeting Ended 8.42pm