

Minutes of Bradenham Parish Council Meeting held on Tuesday 25th March 2025 at 7.30pm in the Village Hall.

Teresa Frost, Steven Parker, Lisa Johnstone, Jon Murphy, Neil Fegan, Michael Bell and Mark Waller
The Clerk Dee Ruppert, Helen Crane (District Councillor plus 5 Residents.

APOLOGIES – Peter Bate – District Councillor

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

DECLARATION OF INTEREST

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

Teresa declared interest in the planning application land adjacent to 2 Ivy Cottage IP25 7QX

Steve and Jon declared that they were both a part of a group at High Green Neighbours.

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

Helen Crane – District Councillor - Local plan update- At cabinet on the 24th March it was agreed to do another 'Call for sites'. The reason is that with the new government figures of 905 houses per year compared with the previous 625 we simply do not have enough suitable land coming forward. And because of these new figures we had to pause the plan. This increase is mandatory and if we do not have in place an up to date plan and housing the government will step in and place houses where they think they should be. It is therefore really important that we engage now with Town and parish councils and residents and businesses to find where this land can be. The parish Council will get a village checklist to complete, this is so that we have up to date information about every village in Breckland. The focus will be to bring parish councils together in clusters to see where new homes can be put and where a smaller village could possibly take a few houses supported by the facilities in another village. We cannot and should not dismiss out of hand a small amount of houses in every village. The location will have to meet criteria and be deliverable.

Devolution-Cabinet agreed the consultation responses to the government regarding its plans on Devolution. We either disagreed or strongly disagreed to each question and you can find the questions and reasons why on pages 18 -20 of the cabinet report. I remain unsupportive of devolution of an area as vast and as rural as Norfolk and Suffolk. I do not believe there will be any money savings as has been shown in other areas where this simply has not worked. We are rural and although it may work in big cities such as Manchester it is not a suitable model for Norfolk and especially Breckland. Breckland has no debt and has the lowest Council tax which will be swept away when council tax is levelled with the other authorities we join. We also have vast assets again which will be amalgamated with any new authority.

Local Government Reform-Again our response along with all but one Norfolk authority has been for 3 unitary authorities for Norfolk. Breckland joining up with Kings Lynn and West Norfolk and a part of North Norfolk. We do already have shared services with all 3 of these authorities. Norwich standing alone and East and South Norfolk with the remaining part of North Norfolk another.

Car parks-We paused the car park consultation process because of devolution and what that would mean for our 5 market towns. We continue to work with Town Councils to see if there is a way of them taking on the car parks, leasing at a peppercorn rent, buying etc. The consultation process and data is not lost and will be given to whoever takes on the car parks in the future. If it is the Towns then it will save having to run the process again at expense to them.

Barnham Broom-The sale of Barnham Broom has completed. The site was bought in 2006 for 7million£ as a revenue stream and has been sold for 6.9million£. During the 19 year ownership of this site the Council invested a further 1.95million£ in the asset. The total income from the Golf club including its sale figure and rental figure was £11.68million£. This means the overall profit made by the council is 2.73million£. To be clear and although I was not a member at the time, this asset was bought because Breckland was cash rich at the time and the then government's devolution plans were to take any money back from a council that was not using it, hence Barnham Broom was bought. I accept that this has been a hugely controversial investment but it did make a good return. In anticipation of the sale of Barnham Broom Breckland has used some of the money to purchase temporary housing accommodation. This money, because it is capital sale money cannot be used to support services. Whilst on the subject of investments Breckland Council has assets that bring more in in rent than council tax, this is the money we can use for service delivery and support for residents and businesses.

Virtual Village Hall-The leader did a virtual village hall session with the EDP, no questions known in advance. Residents sent their questions to the EDP or they asked them live whilst watching. This can be found on the Breckland YouTube channel. Much of what I have mentioned above are the questions that the public asked.

Teresa Frost commented that we had received the Village Checklist and this will be filled in the returned by 24th April 2025.

Peter Bate – District Councillor – This was read out at the meeting , however parts of the report was very similar to Helen's, so this was not repeated.

Introduction The ruling party laid out their reasoning for the 25/26 Breckland budget in a council meeting, emphasizing the challenges posed by national policies and local devolution. Despite the tight nature of this year's budget, the ruling party managed to pass it, fending off amendments proposed by the Labour group.

Budget Overview This year's budget is notably tighter than usual, influenced by national policies and local devolution complexities. The Labour group proposed four amendments to the budget, aiming to address various concerns; however, all amendments failed due to insufficient support, leading to the budget's eventual approval

Support for Watton Sports and Social Club The ruling party was also asked about financial support for the Watton Sports and Social Club. They reassured the council that the club would receive the necessary support, demonstrating a commitment to backing local recreational facilities.

Conclusion The 25/26 Breckland budget discussion underscored the ruling party's strategies and responses to various challenges. While the budget was approved, the meeting highlighted ongoing concerns about devolution, local economic stability, and the prudent use of council resources.

PUBLIC SESSION – No resident made any comment

Solar Farm – Steve Parker attended the windfarm consultation held at Toftwood 18th Feb 2025 on behalf of Bradenham PC.

I established that once fully installed this project will have a capacity of 4.2GW and will produce the equivalent of the annual electricity needs of approx. 4.6 million households by the late 2020's about 10% of the UK's demand.

I was told that there would be minimal disruption this year as they propose to pull through the power cables. The ducting is already laid, therefore it should mean minimal disruption. There are apparently six ducts in the ground two per Wind Farm.

They envisage no disruption to Bradenham with the following provision that they will be reliant on the Police to escort the cable lorries to the site(s) in Bradenham which could cause traffic delays. Apparently these cable rolls and lorries are huge however, Murphys their delivery partner has designed a shorter trailer to transport the cable thereby making manoeuvres on and off site easier.

As I have said above, the next stage this year is the cable pull through. I understand that if in future capacity needs to be increased the already laid ducting will cater for this and therefore this would cause little disruption.

The pull through will effect – Vanguard West, Vanguard East and Boreas. All three sites run through Bradenham. The transport cabling comes in rolls of 1KM long. I am told the work this year will take a few weeks.

The first Wind Farm, Vanguard West, will be online 2027, Vanguard East 2027/2028 and Boreas 2028/2029 People can go on to RWE's website under wind farms to get updates.

Finally, in respect of the timing of such events I did express my concern in that it was fortunate that I was working in Dereham the day of this consultation otherwise like many others I would not have been able to attend. I did suggest that they look at the timings of such events in the future to cater for people who worked and also the venues they used. They were amenable to both and would come to any affected village if asked.

Jon Murphy commented that he had seen workers in Bradenham measuring the width of the road from Swaffham to Bradenham. Due to the narrow parts of Bradenham, we may have to put up with traffic lights for some time.

Neil Fegan suggested that Solar Farm Open Meeting date should be in the Mardle.

Mark Waller asked who is in the opposition group, do they have an email etc? Steve Parker replied: The opposition group are likeminded people and we have done and are doing the best we can to oppose this blight. We have so far done more than any of the Parish Councils put together.

Teresa and several other Villagers and PC members attended the Solar Farm meeting at Ashill on 18th March 2025. Meeting was opened by Alan Ketteringham- Chairperson of Ashill PC. All PC who are impacted by the High Grove Solar Farm were invited along with those from parishes on the boundary.

Mark Aitkin gave a talk. No handouts were shared. No source of evidence was presented.

High Grove Solar Opposition group were represented by Ashill, Necton and Bradenham PCs

Ashill PC are clear that they do not blame the farmers for taking the deal although one of their councillors has.

RWE Community engagement part 2 will start late April, next consultation and engagement for PC's likely January 26. Final decision from planning directorate April 26.

RWE will be providing the batteries for the Reegrate8 project in Shipdham Airfield, but Shipdham PC had no notification of this.

Solar Farms cannot be placed under existing power lines. Substations will never be removed so could give potential for village boundaries to housing to be extended to them.

£100M investment will not be awards to anyone until the solar farms start producing power, were the wind farm have already awarded to projects. There was one for the play area surface which was rejected.

Workers will be housed on site during build and there will be 24 security and lighting around the panels.

Not everyone agrees re Mitigation and it was said this was the role of George Freeman steering group. Only two meetings have been held so far and Ashill does not come under George Freeman's constituency so cannot take part.

Our communities need to understand the real danger of solar farms and object on the grounds of fire risk from battery storage units. Flooding and water management was raised and the need to create ponds to manage water which could help with flooding. This water could also be used by fire service. Discussion around land classification was raised and further challenges to DEFRA are ongoing and this needs to be updated and accurate. Discussion about joining Solar Farm Alliance, but only activists can do this ,so not suitable for PC to consider doing this.

Bradenham will host the next meeting on Tuesday 3rd June.

High Grove Solar Farm Opposition group will look to develop a factual sheet which will be circulated to PCs to be considered for sending out as wider awareness raising in parishes.

Actions that can be taken Advise homeowners impacted to check if they have legal cover on home insurance, possibly getting advice free

If RWE offer to do a full home survey on your home boundary accept this to get full measurement of your legal boundary - Land Registry documents are not detailed enough. Also consider having this done yourselves if your land is near to a field where panels are planned to be sited.

Be vigilant of any notices from RWE/Ardent being placed around village. Saham had one which was shared. Bradenham has now had one on the junction to Comar lane. These are not legal documents and are just RWE fishing for information. Report any signs of construction work starting before planning granted such as large amounts of gravel arriving in site locations.

Teresa suggested additional actions Sign up to alerts on the Planning Directorate website for the High Grove Solar Farm Review the Planning directorates comprehensive response to the initial scoping document. I found this informative.

Steve Parker has completed the questionnaire sent via Ardent, but no other residents of High Green received this letter.

MATTERS ARISING

Virgin Money Bank Account – Now open

Lloyds Bank Account – Now closed

CPRE – We are now members £5 per month

Dereham Meeting Point – Donation sent, this has not yet been acknowledged

Norfolk Parish Partnership – We are now members cost £80 per year

Review of Standing Orders, Code of Conduct and Policy's Still being reviewed

Letters to be send to Mill Street residents regarding Drainage issues – not yet sent

Breckland - The Clerk has requested a new street name sign for Nelson Close, this is very faded.

Highways – The Clerk asked them to, sweep the pavement on School Road.

CORRESPONDENCE

Letter received from Regener8 who are preparing plans for a new solar farm and battery energy storage system (BESS) on the former Shipdham Airfield. We will be consulting the public on this scheme in April and would like to take on board your feedback ahead of submitting a planning application to Breckland District. The PC decided that they did not need to be involved.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

PLANNING

Previous Application

Breckland Council Planning to consider erection of one and half story dwelling (Self Build) Bradenham Land adjacent to 2 Ivy Cottages IP25 7QX – Deferred awaiting further consultation

New Applications

Demolition of existing substandard garage and substandard extension, erection of two storey extensions to sides and rear with balcony to rear first floor elevation.-Bumblebee Cottage, 29 School Road by Mr & Mrs Bartlett – **No Objection**

Conversion of bungalow involving raising of roof to create first floor accommodation to create chalet style bungalow and rear extension 20 Church Street, by Mr Aron Eagle – **No Objection**

APPROVAL :- NONE

FINANCE:-

Opening Balance £ 9105.20

Virgin Account

Expenditure

Namecheap - Website name	8.00
ICO – Yearly Membership	47.00
CPRE – Monthly Membership	5.00
Dereham Meeting Point – Donation	100.00
Lloyds – Monthly Charge Feb	4.25
Lloyds - Monthly Charge March	4.25
NPTP – One year Membership	80.00
Village Hall Rent	60.00
Clerk – Wages	205.60
PAYE	51.40

£ 565.50

Income

PCC- Grass Cutting 1037.04

£ 1037.04

Balance £ 9576.74 All money now moved to Virgin Money

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

PC also confirm that the Clerk should settle the invoice for the Bradenham Footpath agreement.

Any Other Business

Steve Parker reported that the litter pick went very well. 25 residents helped. The PC thanked Steve and Lorraine for organising this.

NEXT MEETING Tuesday 13th May, 12th August and 11th November 2025

Meeting Ended: 9.12pm