

HOLME HALE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of Holme Hale Parish Council held at 7.30pm on Monday 4th November 2024 in the Tony Evans Centre, Holme Hale Village Hall.

Present: Cllr Andy Scarlett (Chair)
Cllr Neville McBrien (Vice Chair)
Cllr Andy West
Cllr Simon Broke
Cllr Simon Joll
Cllr Wendy McNeil

Three Members of the Public
Sheryl Irving (Clerk)

1. Welcome and apologies for absence.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked the members of the public for attending. There were no apologies for absence.

2. To receive any declarations of interest and consider any dispensations.

Cllrs Broke and Joll both declared an interest in item 7f.

3. To approve the minutes of the meeting held on Monday 2nd September 2024.

Cllr Joll proposed that the minutes be accepted as a true record of the meeting, this was seconded by Cllr West and unanimously agreed by Council. The Chairman duly signed the minutes.

4. To receive an update regarding the vacancy for a parish councillor and consider the co-option of a new member.

The Chairman reported there had been two expressions of interest but with just one of those two, Mrs Johnson, attending the meeting. Mrs Johnson presented a brief CV to Council and the Chairman said the item would be revisited at the end of the meeting, if at that time Mrs Johnson wished to be considered for co-option. It was hoped the other person who had expressed an interest, but was not currently eligible, would continue to have an interest in the event of a further vacancy.

5. To receive County/District Councillor reports.

In the absence of both councillors, there were no reports.

6. Open Forum for Public Participation (max 15 minutes).

There were no matters raised by the members of the public.

7. Planning Matters

a) To consider any new planning applications.

There were no new applications to consider.

b) To note any planning decisions (information only).

There were no decisions to note.

c) To receive an update regarding enforcement matters.

Council noted there was nothing to report in respect of the ongoing enforcement issue and that it would likely be some time before it was resolved.

d) To receive an update in respect of the Breckland Local Plan.

Council noted that the Plan had been paused, due to the increased housing targets set by the new Government. Council also noted that Breckland has submitted an objection to Government. This item will now be removed from the agenda until further notice.

e) To receive an update in respect of Norfolk Offshore Wind Zone and the site at Necton and note comments submitted in respect of Planning Application 3DC/2024/0155/DCO - Vanguard Sub-Station Necton.

The Chairman said this application related to the 18m tall buildings being erected on the Necton site and Council noted the comments submitted re visual mitigation, both on and off site.

f) To consider the proposed Drovers Solar Farm and High Grove Solar Farm and the CPRE/George Freeman Alliance re mega solar farms.

Cllr Broke left the meeting whilst this matter was discussed. The Chairman said that, in consultation with the Clerk, Cllr Joll did not have a pecuniary interest and it may be helpful if he stayed and joined the conversation, which he did.

The Chairman said there were two proposed developments in the local area, one of which will directly affect Holme Hale.

The Drovers solar farm is north-west of Swaffham, covering approx. 2700 acres of which approx. 1900 acres will house solar panels. Island Green Power are pursuing the development. They currently have 17 other ongoing schemes in the UK and the Republic of Ireland. The plan is for a 60-year lease, with the land being returned to agricultural use at the end of life.

The second solar farm is High Grove, submitted by RWE, who are now responsible for the Norfolk Vanguard and Boreas offshore wind farms. This solar farm will cover a total of 4000 acres, on numerous sites around Swaffham, on the Swaffham-Wendling A47 corridor and as far south as Saham Hills, using agricultural land put forward by local farmers. This proposal is for a 40 year site lease. There will be cable corridors between the various sites, which could potentially lead to solar farm infill in the future. A new sub-station will be required, potentially at Fransham, to provide connection to the National Grid. It is planned to site smaller sub-stations and battery storage facilities on each of the (distributed) zones (blocks of land). Part of one of the zones falls within Holme Hale Parish and will be visible from public roads and permissive footpaths. The non-statutory consultation has taken place and this feedback is

<https://holmehaleparishcouncil.norfolkparishes.gov.uk/>

currently being reviewed by RWE. A formal application to the Planning Inspectorate is expected in early-2025 and will be followed by the statutory consultation.

George Freeman, the local MP, has put together a steering committee to review and organise interaction with developers to achieve the best outcome for affected communities and Norfolk generally and Holme Hale are part of that activity.

The following points were made by council members:

- In the current climate, the application is likely to be approved.
- The farms will bring no benefit to Breckland as they do not have to pay local rates, being national infrastructure.
- Will the sites have an impact on wildlife, water quality and soil erosion?
- Two local parish councils have held public meetings where there was much opposition to the proposals and RWE did not have representatives present who were able to adequately answer questions.
- The High Grove proposed sites are yet to have their land surveyed and graded.
- There was little the Parish Council were able to do to stop the Necton site and this will be much the same.
- It is not the case that the solar farms are here because of the proposed/approved Norfolk Offshore Windfarm sub-station site at Necton site: an additional sub-station will be required for the High Grove development. Rather this area is being targeted because of the proximity to potential connections to the National Grid.
- We want to minimise the impact of this proposed development on the local area and obtain meaningful and realise compensation for parishioners for that impact.
- Enrichment plans for locality has been discussed at seminars.

Cllr McBrien proposed that a meeting be held early next year to determine the views of local residents, and before the statutory consultation commences; and that Council continues to be a member of the George Freeman steering committee; joins the CPRE Alliance to oppose the solar farms; and investigate what the Swaffham group is doing. This was seconded by Cllr West and unanimously agreed by Council. Council agreed that a representative of RWE should be invited to attend the meeting.

Cllr Broke then rejoined the meeting.

g) To consider the Norfolk Minerals and Waste Local Plan: Publication of proposed Main Modifications and Additional Modifications – closing date 13th December 2024.

Council had no comment as it did not impact on Holme Hale.

8. Highway Matters

a) To receive updates on highway faults previously reported and to receive any new reports.

Council noted the following updates:

- Road drains, asphalt surround too high following repairs nr St Andrews Close (2), and corner of School Road and Cook Road (1) – now reported to the Highway Rangers to deal.

- Overhanging trees etc, encroaching on Station Road/Church Road footpath – the landowner has been asked to investigate and deal.
- Lower Road 3 x potholes – reported to Highways and now repaired.
- Browns Lane, speed signage faded – reported to Highways and works completed.
- 30mph speed activated sign Station Road (west) – now repaired.
- Large verge on Cook Road, nr St Andrews Close - large trees need maintenance works, the pavement is covered by low branches and the roots are lifting the pavement – works had supposedly been carried out by Highways but there was no evidence of this. A second report will be submitted.
- Holme Hale Village Sign, Cook Road – damaged, reported to Highways and now resolved.
- 30mph sign, Cook Road – facing wrong way – reported to Highways and now resolved.
- Four potholes on Necton Road, outside Holmleigh – these will be reported to Highways.

b) To receive an update in respect of the Village Gates signage and incorrectly fitted bracing.

Council noted that it was hoped NCC Highways will carry out the remedial work soon.

c) To note the Parish Partnership Scheme and to consider any projects for 50/50 grant funding.

There were no new projects proposed for an application.

d) To receive an update regarding parking on the pavements in the village.

Council noted that it had been a challenge to speak to anyone prepared to take responsibility for enforcement action regarding this matter, neither the Police nor the District Parking Team were prepared to deal with it. Any individual instances where the pavement is blocked and there is no pavement on the opposite side of the road should be reported to the Police. However, the Chairman will put an advisory article in Moonraker and on the Parish Council Facebook page.

9. Council Assets.

a) To consider any action re the loose post at footpath bridge.

Cllrs West and Joll will investigate the location of the loose post.

b) To receive an update re maintenance of the Phone Box.

Cllr McBrien reported that the local resident had kindly removed the damaged glass and has purchased paint and other materials for the renovation. They have also spoken to the people responsible for the recent vandalism. Council expressed their gratitude to the volunteer.

c) To receive an update re action in respect of graffiti and other vandalism.

The Chairman reported that new graffiti had appeared on a telegraph pole on the Cook Road corner, near to St Andrew's Close, on a nearby Openreach junction box and on the Red Lion Parish Council notice board.

Council noted that the police were investigating a similar issue in Necton and any information should be reported.

d) To receive an update regarding the installation of a new dog bin at Church Lane.

Council noted that permission for a dog bin at this location has been approved by Highways and Breckland has agreed to empty a new bin. Costs for a new bin will be considered at the next meeting.

e) To receive an update regarding the installation of new benches at Red Line Close and the Station Road crossroads.

Council agreed that a bench at the Station Road crossroads was unlikely to be used and agreed not to proceed with this option. However, a bench at Red Lion Close would be useful as many local residents were elderly and easy access to outdoors welcomed. Additionally, it would be somewhere for all local residents to sit whilst out walking: something that was currently in short supply in the village. However, as Red Lion Close is Breckland-owned land, Breckland will charge an annual licence fee of £25 to permit a bench to be sited there. Alternatively, the Parish Council could consider the purchase of the land on which the bench would sit, with an initial valuation cost of between £200 and £300.

Council agreed that this was not a satisfactory situation, particularly as a public bench had been sited on Red Lion Close for many decades until approx.2011. Council agreed to ask District Councillor Wilkin to intervene and ask Breckland to review their policy, as a number of Red Lion Close residents are elderly and not necessarily very mobile. Access to outdoors is important for everyone and Breckland should be encouraging this rather than imposing financial barriers. The County Cllr, Fabian Eagle, will also be asked to support this request.

f) To receive an update in respect of the School Road Bus Shelter renovation.

Cllr Joll reported that the ivy has been removed and one coat of paint applied. The bench needs stripping and moss removed from the roof. Council thanked Cllr Joll and the volunteers.

10. To consider an application to the RWE Community Fund.

Council agreed to go ahead and submit an application for the bench to be sited at Red Lion Close and a dog bin for Church Lane, as the closing date for applications was the end of November.

11. To consider an extension of the grass cutting contract for 2025.

Council noted the quote for 2025, with a 4% increase on 2024. Cllr Joll proposed approval of the quote, this was seconded by Cllr McBrien and unanimously agreed by Council. Council also agreed to go to tender in 2026, which will be the end of a three year period.

12. Finance and Governance

a) To receive a financial report for the year ending 31st March 2025.

The financial report (attached) was noted.

b) To consider the draft budget and set the precept for the year ending 31st March 2026.

Given the length and lateness of the meeting, Council agreed to defer this item to the January agenda.

c) To receive an update regarding the change of Council banking providers.

Council noted that the Parish Council are not eligible for the Co-op Community Account and agreed to consider other banking options at the January meeting.

d) To review the Media policy.

Council agreed there had been no issues with the Council Facebook group and it was another useful tool in communicating council issues to residents. That being the case, no changes to the policy were required.

e) To consider approval of the following payments and note any receipts.

Cllr Broke proposed approval of the following payments, this was seconded by Cllr West and unanimously agreed by Council. The receipts were noted.

PAYMENTS

Clerk (Salary & Office Allowance) – October	£281.80 (SO)
HMRC – PAYE	£4.20 (deducted from credit)
Clerk (Salary & Office Allowance) – November	£281.80 (SO)
HMRC – PAYE	£4.20 (deducted from credit)
Grass Contractor (4 of 4)	£567.00
SLCC Membership	£31.96
Holme Hale PCC – Village Green Grass Cutting	£42.52

RECEIPTS

Bank Interest	£6.44
Bank Interest	£5.86

13. To consider any correspondence received.

Rural England Prosperity Funding – Briefing Note – Cllr McNeil noted that this could be a source of funding for the Village Hall.

NALC Executive Matters – Council noted the issues appeared to be being resolved.

14. To receive any new items for the next agenda.

There were no new items for the next agenda.

The Chairman then asked Council to revisit **item 4, co-option of a new member**. Mrs Johnson said she would be willing to stand and Cllr Scarlett proposed that Mrs Johnson be co-opted onto the Council, this was seconded by Cllr Joll and unanimously agreed by Council. Mrs Johnson signed her declaration of acceptance of office.

15. To confirm the next meeting will be held at 7.30pm on Monday 6th January 2025 in the Tony Evans Centre, Holme Hale Village Hall.

Council noted the date of the next meeting and the Chairman then closed the meeting at 9.25pm.

Signed:

Date:

HOLME HALE PARISH COUNCIL					
YEAR ENDING 31ST MARCH 2025					
FINANCIAL REPORT - NOVEMBER 2024					
BUDGET UPDATE	Budget	To	%	Balance at 01.04.2024	9,089.36
	2024/25	date	Spend	Plus Receipts at 25.09.2024	5,292.22
				Less Payments at 25.09.2024	5,288.10
PAYMENTS*				TOTAL	9,093.48
Admin	1,313	846	64%		
Salary	3,516	2,181	62%	Bank Balance at 25.09.2024	
Permissive Pathway	619	618	100%	Current Account	4,170.14
Grass Cutting	1,978	1,933	98%	Business Reserve Account	4,923.34
Street Lights	350	458	131%	TOTAL	9,093.48
Grants/Donations	1,220	-	0%	Less outstanding payments	-
Projects**	25	-		Plus outstanding deposits	-
TOTAL	9,021	6,036	67%	TOTAL	9,093.48
			Received		
RECEIPTS					
Precept	8500	8,500	100%		
Bank Interest	25	36			
Grants	0	-			
Salary	0	7			
TOTAL	8525	8,542	100%		
SURPLUS/DEFICIT	-496	2,507			
<i>*includes payments as listed on agenda.</i>					