

HOLME HALE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of Holme Hale Parish Council held at 7.30pm on Monday 3rd March 2025 in the Tony Evans Centre, Holme Hale Village Hall.

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

District Cllr Nigel Wilkin
Mr & Mrs MacMullen, from a local Environmental Consultants Company
Six Members of the Public
Sheryl Irving – Parish Clerk

1. Welcome and apologies for absence.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were received from County Cllr Fabian Eagle.

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

Cllr Broke declared an interest in item 7d, High Grove Solar Farm, Cllr McNeil declared an interest in item 10d, Holme Hale Playing Field Trust, Cllr McBrien declared an interest in item 10d, Norfolk Citizens Advice and Cllr Scarlett declared an interest in item 10d, St Andrew's Church PCC. None will take part in the relevant discussions/decisions.

3. To approve the minutes of the meeting held on Monday 6th January 2025.

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

4. To note the Council vacancy and consider the co-option of a new member.

The Chairman said there had been an expression of interest from a former council member and proposed that Mr Julian Pearson be co-opted to fill the one council vacancy, this was seconded by Cllr McBrien and unanimously agreed by Council. The Chairman thanked Mr Pearson and welcomed him back to Council.

5. To receive County/District Councillor reports.

D/Cllr Wilkin reported on devolution and the local government reorganisation currently ongoing, with Norfolk and Suffolk coming under the leadership of one mayor. Norfolk and Suffolk will be broken up into unitary councils and Breckland will no longer exist as an authority. Further details

are yet to be confirmed although it is inevitable that the precept for Breckland residents will increase.

The Chairman thanked the D/Cllr for his input.

County Cllr Eagle had submitted a written report:

- There will be additional hazardous waste collection weekends this Spring.
- The dangerous junction cut will now be funded by Highways and implemented across the county. There will also be a full late summer cut for all rural roads.
- There will be an extra weed kill in built up areas.
- 'High Streets Matter' is being launched.

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

The Chairman invited any comments not related to High Grove and the following issues were raised:

- The verges along Church Lane are being eroded away by builders vehicles and the road should be cleared up by the builders – Cllr McBrien will speak to the builder and if no action is taken then the matter will be reported to Highways.
- The recently repaired potholes on Browns Lane have reappeared and need repair again. The member of the public said what a waste of money the first repairs had been.
- Could the bottle banks be fenced and the rusty containers replaced or painted. The Chairman said that the bins were on the land with the agreement of the landowner and revenue raised went to the PCC, the Parish Council are not involved. However, the PCC meet again soon and this matter will be raised at that meeting.

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).

Council noted the following application remained pending a decision.

- PL/2024/0950/VAR – Bilmar, Station Road - Proposal: Removal of condition 9 (contaminated land) attached to 3PL/2023/1019/F for construction of a new 4 bedroom bungalow, garage and access – 'no comments' submitted .

c) To receive an update regarding enforcement matters.

Council noted the recent update from Breckland in that a Planning Contravention Notice is being served by Breckland.

d) To receive an update in respect of the proposed High Grove Solar Farm and related matters.

The Chairman said that the Parish Council website now had a dedicated page for Solar Farms and the notes from the Village meeting will be published.

- **Feedback from the recent Village meeting regarding High Grove**

The Chairman read the notes from the recent Village meeting and then invited further comments from members of the public. The following comments were received:

- Parish councils should corroborate and respond to consultation and the impact must be mitigated.
- Any mitigation must form part of the planning consent.
- The use of any weed control and other hazardous chemicals must form part of the planning consent.
- Traffic routes and timings must be agreed as part of the planning consent. Areas around schools should be avoided.
- RWE should contribute to any roads and footpaths repairs which were caused by the RWE traffic.
- Any increase in lighting must not impact residents and wildlife, nor should traffic movements.
- There needs to be a point of contact throughout the process.
- There is a fire risk around the battery storage and this needs to be bunded in accordance with relevant fire advice.
- The A47 is in poor condition due to the Necton site and we do not want this to happen to local roads.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their comments.

- **To consider approval of a quote for a professional mitigation report**

The Chairman introduced Mr & Mrs MacMullen from a local consultancy firm who had undertaken a study of the proposed solar farm at Bradenham, and the impact on the village and surrounding areas, and advised mitigation measures to minimise impact.

Mrs MacMullen then gave a presentation regarding the report for Bradenham which had helped Bradenham decide on suitable mitigation measures. They did not comment on traffic, biodiversity or the historic environment although these could be included in any report for Holme Hale.

The report looked at screening for the solar site with new hedges, new woodland belts and enhancement of existing hedges etc. Ponds, drainage and the River Wissey were also considered. Issues relating to the displacement of the large deer population was also included in the report as there is a need for control.

Questions and comments by Council members and members of the public included:

- Issues around any thermal incident and drainage, with water eventually leading to the River Wissey.
- Will RWE fund mitigation outside of the proposed, leased land? This will be reliant upon landowners agreement, funding, grants etc.

- There are concerns regarding the loss of agricultural land so it does not make sense for more to be used for mitigation measures.
- Why is there deer fencing around solar sites? This is to prevent damage to the solar panels.
- We need a set of standardized mitigation measures.
- Planting needs time to grow and is not an instant solution.
- We need firm plans before agreeing any decisions.
- We need to be prepared for when the next consultation commences.

The Chairman thanked Mrs MacMullen for her input and then proposed that the Parish Council engage the firm to undertake a mitigation report for Holme Hale. There was no seconder for this proposition. Council members raised the following points:

- Council needs to see how RWE have changed the plans in the next consultation before we react and we also need to consider funding.
- We had little success with Vattenfall despite numerous meetings with them, and Planning.
- Mitigation must be part of the planning process.
- It might be helpful to have mitigation measures before the next consultation.
- There is an industrialisation of the local area and mitigation measures are needed.

Cllr McBrien proposed that the Parish Council asks Mrs MacMullen to put forward a timeline and costings for a report, this can then be considered at the May Council meeting. This proposal was seconded by Cllr Joll and unanimously agreed by Council.

Mrs MacMullen advised Council to consider any other benefits the Parish Council/Village wanted, ie. public access etc.

- **To consider joining the CPRE Alliance against mega solar farms in Norfolk**

Cllr McBrien proposed the Parish Council join the CPRE at an annual cost of £60, this was seconded by Cllr McNeil and unanimously agreed by Council.

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 with steel work showing nr St Andrews Close (x2), and corner of School Road and Cook Road (x1) – reported to Highways again but no action to date.
- Overhanging trees etc, encroaching on Station Road/Church Road footpath – the landowner has dealt with this.
- Trees on large verge on Cook Road, nr St Andrews Close – Highways have been asked to look at this again but no update is available.
- A fingerpost under the bridge archway on Ashill Road/Station Road had broken and has been repaired.

- Browns Lane potholes will be reported to Highways.
- There is a water leak on Station Road which will be reported to Anglian Water.

b) To receive an update regarding the SAM II Speed Camera.

The Chairman reported that the camera is currently situated on Station Road.

c) To consider any further action in respect of speeding on Station Road.

Council noted that the Speed Camera Team are attending regularly.

d) To consider a request to Highways for a footpath on Station Road.

Council noted this was a longstanding issue but with increased traffic due to the solar farm likely, it was worth revisiting. It was agreed to request that Highways carry out a survey and provide a costing. Funding may be available from RWE.

e) To consider a proposed NCC Roadside Nature Reserve – RNR 236 Lower Road.

Council agreed there was little benefit in the proposed reserve and it is more likely to cause problems for walkers and horse riders who use the verge to get off the narrow road when traffic passes. The adjoining hedge is cut by the landowner and is of benefit to wildlife. The verge is narrow and long grass also encourages litter. The grub soil removed would also need to be disposed of elsewhere.

Cllr McBrien proposed that as there was no advantage in the RNR that we keep the status quo, this was seconded by Cllr McNeil and unanimously agreed by Council. The County Council will be informed of the decision.

9. Council Assets.

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

Cllrs Joll and West reported that no action was required and this can now be removed from the agenda.

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

Cllr McBrien reported that works will commence once the weather has improved.

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

No new issues had been reported and this item will be removed from the agenda.

d) To receive an update regarding the installation of a new dog bin at Church Lane and the related RWE grant application.

Council noted that the grant application had not been successful and agreed a new dog bin in that location was not a good use of Council funds. This item will be removed from the agenda.

e) To receive an update regarding the installation of a new bench at Red Lion Close and the related RWE grant application.

Council noted that the grant application had not been successful and agreed to look at quotes for a bench and installation at the next meeting.

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

Cllr Joll reported that works will be completed once the weather improves.

10. Finance and Governance

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

Council noted the financial report (attached).

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

Council noted that the switch to Unity Trust Bank was proceeding and online banking will soon be an option for payments.

c) To receive an updated Asset Register and consider approval of amended document.

Council noted that the Village Gates are now included and that the current insurance cover was adequate. Cllr McBrien proposed approval of the register, this was seconded by Cllr Joll and unanimously agreed by Council.

d) To consider approval of the donations listed below and consider any additional requests.

Cllr West proposed approval of the following donations, this was seconded by Cllr Broke and unanimously agreed by Council. There was no proposal to make any additional donations.

• Holme Hale Playing Field Trust	£450.00
• St Andrew's Church PCC	£600.00
• Swaffham & Litcham Hospice	£50.00
• Norfolk Citizens Advice	£50.00
• East Anglian Air Ambulance	£50.00

Cllr McBrien informed Council that a new Citizens Advice Office will be opening soon in Watton.

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

Cllr Joll proposed that the following payments be approved, this was seconded by Cllr McBrien and unanimously agreed by Council.

PAYMENTS

Clerk (Salary & Office Allowance & HMRC Refund) – Feb	£334.83 (SO & Chq)
Clerk (Salary & Office Allowance) – March	£295.83 (SO & Chq)
HMRC – PAYE	£2.20 (deducted from credit)
Clerk (Postage)	£8.50

11. To consider any correspondence received.

- Community Resilience Plan – Emergency and Civil Contingency – Council noted the Clerk will be attending a related webinar and bring back any useful information for the Holme Hale Emergency Plan.
- NALC – Voting Paper re a special resolution regarding conversion from a co-operative society to a company limited by guarantee and related legal services – no action required.
- The 10th Great British Spring Clean – no action required.

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

The notice board on Station Road needs refurbishment/repair and this will be investigated for the next meeting.

13. To confirm the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council will be held at 7.30pm on Tuesday 6th May 2025 in the Tony Evans Centre, Holme Hale Village Hall and to note the Annual Parish Meeting will be held on Monday 7th April at 7.30pm, in the Tony Evans Centre, Holme Hale Village Hall.

The dates of the Annual Council Meeting and the Annual Parish Meeting were noted and the Chairman then closed the meeting at 9.45pm.

Signed:

Date:

HOLME HALE PARISH COUNCIL					
YEAR ENDING 31ST MARCH 2025					
FINANCIAL REPORT - MARCH 2025					
BUDGET UPDATE	Budget	To	%	Balance at 01.04.2024	9,089.36
	2024/25	date	Spend	Plus Receipts at 24.01.2025	9,565.29
				Less Payments at 24.01.2025	7,181.48
PAYMENTS*				TOTAL	11,473.17
Admin	1,313	930	71%		
Salary	3,516	3,425	97%	Bank Balance at 24.01.2025	
Permissive Pathway	619	618	100%	Current Account	6,526.76
Grass Cutting	1,978	1,975	100%	Business Reserve Account	4,946.41
Street Lights	350	458	131%	TOTAL	11,473.17
Grants/Donations	1,220	1,200	98%	Less outstanding payments	-
Projects	25	-		Plus outstanding deposits	-
TOTAL	9,021	8,606	95%	TOTAL	11,473.17
			Received		
RECEIPTS					
Precept	8500	8,500	100%		
Bank Interest	25	36			
Grants	0	-			
Salary	0	7			
TOTAL	8525	8,542	100%		
SURPLUS/DEFICIT	-496	(63)			
<i>*includes payments as listed on agenda.</i>					