

# Caston Parish Council

CHAIRMAN: Mr Chris Cook    VICE CHAIRMAN: Mrs Mary Howell

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF CASTON PARISH COUNCIL  
MONDAY 6 JANUARY 2025  
AT CASTON VILLAGE HALL AT 7.30 PM**

Councillor's present:    Chris Cook, Mary Howell, Simon Spanyol, Sarah Fletcher, Rob Trown

Also present:             Six members of the public.

**1. Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr Graham Moss.

**2. To approve the Minutes of the Meeting held on 9 December 2024.**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 9 December 2024 were approved and signed by the Chairman, Chris Cook.

**The Chairman closed the Council Meeting to permit public discussion.**

**3. Participation and questions from the public, session 1.**

A member of public raised the hedge at Coronation Terrace as it still does not appear to have been cut. The Clerk will follow up.

A resident raised the recent flooding events near Bridge Farm. Emails have been sent by the resident to District Councillor Phil Cowen and he has been copied in to documentation. DC Cowen advised that the resident needs to write to Claire Bowes, County Councillor as Norfolk County Council are the ones responsible for these issues together with the Chief Executive, Tom McCabe.

The resident stressed frustration as the flooding is on a main bus route and affects the whole village. Councillors Spanyol and Howell advised that they have both written to Grahame Bygrave to investigate the ownership of the brick culvert and to reinforce to the flood team to apply pressure to sort this out.

George Freeman MP drafted a reform to try and resolve issues re riparian ownership and responsibilities. He acknowledged how difficult it is to deal with numerous authorities when none of them will take responsibility and pass matters to the next department.

Another member of the public enquired whether the camera inspection, previously discussed, is still an option. Cllr Cook advised that this has not been ruled out.

Another member of the public spoke regarding planning application PL/2024/1056/FMIN for a further property (3 bedroom) at Land to the North of School View. This is discussed further at 7A. However, it should be noted that the only reason that planning permission was permitted at this site was when the original four properties were dropped to three (on Appeal).

CHAIRMAN.....

DATED: .....

CLERK: Joanne Blackman, Daisy Barn, 42 Long Lane, Feltwell, Norfolk, IP26 4BJ

Tel: 01842 829821    Email: parish.clerk@castonparishcouncil.gov.uk    www.castonparishcouncil.gov.uk

Concern was also shown as to the time for people to respond to the application as the original notice stated 9<sup>th</sup> January but on the 3<sup>rd</sup> January a site notice was put in place stating comments were accepted 21 days from the date of the notice, which is correct? The Clerk will make enquiries in this regard.

Concerns were also raised regarding the new Planning Portal which is not functioning properly, some documents cannot be downloaded and comments made by members of the public are not showing at all.

Cllr Cowen advised that the District Council are aware of flooding at this site. An unconsented works letter has been sent in relation to the culvert which is not as per the original plans. They are working with the developer in this regard.

Another member of the public asked DC Cowen regarding the new portal not functioning properly. DC Cowen advised that the reason the new portal has been put in place is because the previous one did not comply with GDPR and that it was no longer being supported by the developer. The DC has transitioned to I-DOCS but they have been experiencing serious teething troubles.

It is recognised that although people can see comments made by statutory consultees, comments of the general public cannot be viewed so nobody knows if anyone has commented or not. DC Sarah Suggitt was having a meeting this very afternoon to discuss these issues. There is grave concern that matters are time limited when the system is not working properly. DC Cowen acknowledged that this is totally unsatisfactory and he will raise this again with DC Suggitt.

#### 4. **Guest Speakers**

DC Cowen submitted his January report which can be seen below.

DC Cowen advised that the Boundary Commission are conducting a boundary review. The consultation is live for four weeks and there is a link in the report to submit comments. The net result will be that the All Saints and Wayland ward will get smaller and there will be one district councillor looking after a smaller area. There will be change which is predicted to take effect in 2027.

Planning – the new government are implementing a new mandatory housing requirement and will impose a 40% increase in the number of properties required for Breckland. Breckland currently averages 631 properties per annum. Previously the number required has been advisory but it will now be mandatory. If the mandatory numbers are not reached, the Inspectorate will get involved and approve everything. The numbers ignores fundamentals such as flooding, nutrient neutrality and sustainability. This creates a perfect storm of how the construction industry works. There is a lack of people able to obtain credit for mortgages, building costs have gone up considerably and there is a shortage of materials to complete projects.

This means that Breckland Council no longer has a five year housing supply. Without this, the Planning Authority have little authority to refuse applications and strategic housing locations are required.

The amended National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) imposes more restrictions. There is a link to follow in the report below.

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The draft budget was presented today and Breckland Council have been able to deliver a balanced budget for 2025/26 and 2026/27 and this still includes all essential and discretionary services currently provided.

Funding has decreased from central Government.

Breckland Council have managed to avoid change to the refuse collections as previously reported but they will be introducing a food waste collection costing in the region of £1m to implement.

DC Cowen spoke about devolution and the amalgamation of Councils. Unfortunately, Breckland Council is not included in these discussions, and it only applies to the top tier of local government. Norfolk County Council is acting in isolation in this regard and are suggesting a Norfolk Unitary Authority. Norfolk CC are meeting this week to discuss this and it is expected that they will be writing to central Government to request a postponement to the District Council elections due in May.

A member of the public asked whether there has been any progress made in the sale of Barnham Broom Golf Club. There is no update in this regard.

#### **“District Councillors’ report January 2025**

A Happy New Year to you all from us both, hopefully January finds everyone much rejuvenated after the festive holiday season.

At Breckland’s cabinet on the 6<sup>th</sup> January there was one substantive item on the agenda, namely the presentation of the Draft Budget, Medium Term Financial Plan and Capital Strategy for the coming years and in particular the year 2025-2026. In addition, the leader of the council updated members on the current state of the Government’s Devolution White Paper and the potential for Local Government Reorganisation, much of which has been trailed in the press over the past months.

The potential for Devolution is real and it is our understanding, although the County has had no dialogue with any of the Districts in Norfolk, that the leader of Norfolk County Council intends to seek a postponement of the county elections in May and is likely to propose this week that Norfolk County would seek to become a single Unitary authority taking on board all of the functions of the seven district and borough councils within the county, the net result being the dissolution of the seven at some time before or at the next district council election cycle in 2027.

Government has indicated that if the counties wish to seek a devolution deal that government will only discuss the opportunity with the County concerned; the effect being that the districts that provide the local knowledge and widespread service provision at the local level are excluded from any discussion to shape and guide a restructured local government model. This is regrettable and a position that the District Councils Network and Breckland Council deplores.

At a local level, the draft budget for the coming year proposed at cabinet is balanced for the next two years despite the challenging arena in which it is presented. This includes:

- A lack of clarity regarding the national funding environment
- A business rate reset,
- The fair funding review,
- Significant funding cuts,

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- Demographic changes
- Reduced income
- Demand pressures in services such as
  - temporary accommodation
  - revenues and benefits
  - waste services

This means that not only will Breckland maintain all of its core services but also provides discretionary services across the district to support the vulnerable, meet our temporary housing obligations and provide grants and the like to community groups, residents and businesses.

However, in order to maintain all of the above the draft budget does recommend an increase in the Breckland Band D Council Tax of £4.95 per annum that would see the Breckland portion of the Band D Council Tax increase from £113.58 to £118.53 per year equivalent to £2.28 per week. Of all the homes in the Breckland area, 75% are in Bands A-C and 53% are in Bands A and B and therefore the majority of homes in Breckland will pay less than £2.03 per week towards the cost of the services that Breckland provides across its 500 square miles of Norfolk.

The proposed draft budget is out for consultation until 23<sup>rd</sup> January and will be debated at Council in February.

Other matters of interest to our villages and towns will be

1. the proposed changes to the planning system that are proposed by government. In brief the new and amended national Planning Policy Framework found here

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>

advises that Government has Reinstated compulsory housing targets, reversing previous policies that allowed for flexibility. This change aims to ensure local authorities meet specific housing needs. The target for Breckland has increased from **625 to 903** houses to be delivered per year.

*The current local plan seeks to deliver 612 houses per year and the current review document is based on 661 houses per year. On average over the last 11 years Breckland has delivered 631 homes per year.*

#### **5 Year housing land supply:**

As of the 12th December 2024 Breckland Council no longer has a 5 year housing land supply and as such the presumption in favour of sustainable development, the tilted balance, applies.

And

2. The proposed boundary commission review for Breckland that will see changes made to the ward boundaries as a result of population changes in certain wards in the district.

The LGBCE are now consulting on the draft recommendations for a 12-week period, from 3 December 2024 to 24 February 2025.

The council's working group will be considering the latest proposals in due course and a response to the LGBCE. There is also an opportunity for you – as residents of the district to have a say. The LGBCE is keen to hear whether you agree with their

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recommendations, and if you don't please consider submitting alternative proposals for a different pattern of wards.

More information about the review is at <https://www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/breckland>

Councillors Sarah Suggitt and Philip Cowen  
January 2025"

5. **Speedwatch and SAM2 Report**

"The Caston Speedwatch Team will resume in February as the peak traffic times are currently in partial darkness. (The most effective speedwatch sessions are at peak times as the signs and volunteers in high vis are believed to act as a reminder to drivers to obey the speed limits and those who choose not to are report to the Constabulary).

There is increasing evidence from the data that at lower traffic volumes, both times and days of the week, the % of speeders is higher".

There is an issue with one of the SAM2 signs. This is the newest of the two signs. The Clerk advised that it will cost £45 to have an assessment carried out to establish what is wrong with it. Cllr Fletcher offered to deliver the same to Westcotec. It was therefore agreed that an assessment would be carried out and Cllr Fletcher would deliver the same on Monday 13 January.

The latest SAM2 data has been uploaded to the website.

6. **To record any Declarations of Interest and to consider any requests for Dispensations from Council Members.**

None.

7. **Planning Applications**

A. **PL/2024/1056/FMIN** – Land to the North of School View, The Street, Attleborough, NR17 1FP. Proposed 3No bedroom detached house & garage.

It was noted that the application states there have been no flooding at this location. DC Cowen stated this is an enormous frustration to everyone. If a planning refusal goes to Appeal, the Inspectorate will look at the flood maps and if they say there is no flooding (ie maps are out of date), they are duty bound to say there has been no flooding, even when there is local evidence to the contrary.

The only reason that the original application was approved, at Appeal, was because the original four houses requested was reduced to three houses. The plan for this new application is a mirror of the previous four bedroomed house but now shows a study instead of a fourth bedroom.

The Parish Council discussed the matter and object to this application for the following reasons:-

- Flooding
- Misleading floor plan
- Fourth house originally refused by Breckland, three approved on Appeal
- Support of Highways

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- B. **PL/2024/1077/FMIN** – Land Adjacent to School View, The Street, Caston, NR17 1PF – Proposed change of use from paddock land to garden amenity. *No objections.*
- C. **PL/2024/0894/CLOPUD** - Development Site At 595205 298086 The Street, Caston, Norfolk - Erection of 5 residential dwellings and a car park, implemented under pp 3PL/2017/1267/O and 3PL/2021/0223/D (Certificate of Lawfulness for Proposed Development). *Comments previously submitted.*
- D. **PL/2024/0880/DCA** - Field View Caston Road, Stow Bedon, Attleborough, Norfolk, NR17 1BS - Discharge of Condition 4 on planning permission 3PL/2024/0068/F. *No comments.*
- E. **3DC/2024/0154/DOC** - Land adjacent to Caston Primary School, The Street NR17 1DD - Discharge of condition 5 on 3PL/2021/0223/D. *DOC-COMplete.*
- F. **3DC/2023/0322/DOC** - Land to the North of School View NR17 1DD - Discharge of Conditions 5,6,7,8,12 on 3PL/2020/0262/O. This application relates to Condition 5 – Drainage, Condition 6 – Construction Management, Condition 7 – Biodiversity and Ecology, Condition 8 – Trees in Countryside and Condition 12 – Access to site. *DOC-COMplete.*
- G. **3DC/2024/0049/DOC** – Land adj School View, The Street, NR17 1FP – Discharge of Conditions 5, 6, 7 & 8 on 3PL/2024/0180/VAR. *DOC-COMplete.*
- H. **3DC/2024/0174/DOC** - Land adjacent to School View, The Street NR17 1FP - Discharge of Conditions 4 & 5 on 3PL/2024/0067/D. *Undecided.*  
(FGH) DC Cowen advised that the Planning Department rely on eyes and ears of residents to be told when something is not right. They cannot fine developers for non-compliance and the Planning Enforcement Team is very small. They have to prioritise. If something may have been approved anyway, it becomes a mute point. It is considered unsatisfactory but there is not a lot we can do. The condition re the culvert is wholly inadequate and we need to keep an eye on it.
- I. **3PL/2021/0932/VAR** - Cherry Tree Farm Cherry Tree Lane Stow Bedon - Variation of Condition No2 on 3PL/2017/0878/F : Variation to reflect the as-built appearance and layout of the pig sheds, feed silos and manure store cover and proposed amendments including revised external materials and the addition of chimneys. Stow Bedon application. *Undecided.*
- J. **APP/F2605/W/24/3351737** – Appeal on application number 3PL/2022/0368/FGRISTON - Coughtrey Industrial Estates (Units 1 - 17) Church Road - The demolition of Units 1-6 (whole block Western boundary) and Units 7-13 (part of North Block), extensions to units 14 and 15 (large extension to North block), extension to unit 16 (small extension to South Block), external fascia changes, refurbishment to Unit 17. Change of use of whole site to mixed B2 and Class E (offices). *This is to be considered fully at the February meeting. To be placed on Agenda.*

8. **Finance – to approve and report the following expenditure.**

- A. To approve salary payment including holiday allowance to the Clerk, Mrs Joanne Blackman, for the month of December 2024 in the sum of £263.47.
- B. To approve payment to J Fencing/Groundscape for grass cutting and hedge cutting for the financial year 2024/25 in the sum of £2,290.00.
- D. To approve payment to BT for broadband at the Village Hall in the sum of £30.38 (incl VAT) – paid by Direct Debit.

All items were approved for payment.

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**The Chairman opened the meeting for public participation ahead of the discussion on the budget, to allow attendees to leave, should they so wish.**

A member of the public asked who was responsible for the hedge at the top of Dukes Lane. Dukes Lane is unadopted and as such, it would normally fall to the residents. It is unknown who the owner is however, a member of the public advised that it was planted by Mr Lond-Caulk and it was suggested that he is approached in the first instance. The Parish Council has no responsibility for this hedge.

**9. To consider budget and agree Precept for the financial year 2025/26.**

The draft budget had previously been supplied to all Councillors ahead of the meeting.

Each item was taken in turn and discussed. Following the discussions it was agreed that the Precept requirement would remain the same as last year £11,600 resulting in a 0% increase.

Proposed by Cllr Spanyol, seconded by Cllr Trown. All voted in favour.

**10. Matters to report.**

**A. Village Planters**

It was agreed, following the budget discussions, that we would budget for four planters to be replaced in the next financial year. Cllr Fletcher will send pictures and dimensions for future discussion.

**B. Financial Balances.**

Caston Parish Council £14,234.00/Highway Surveyors £15,477.77

**C. Playground.**

Nothing to report.

**D. County Broadband.**

No update available.

**E. Liaison with School.**

Cllr Howell will speak to the school before the next meeting.

**F. Litterpick.**

The next litterpick is scheduled for this coming Wednesday (8<sup>th</sup> January) and no further volunteers have come forward to date.

**G. Highways – making good the damage caused in Northacre.**

This work has not been carried out.

**H. Mid Norfolk Flood Partnership.**

No updates available.

**I. Riparian ownership letters /culvert – update**

Cllr Howell advised that following a walk around the village, she can see that the large majority of the required works have been carried out, including the building site. With this in mind, follow up letters will not be sent at the present time. However, Cllr Howell will check the comments made re the building area and will write to the developer if necessary.

**J. Car Park Workshop**

Cllr Spanyol attending the Car Park Workshop. The three main issues were raised. There are over 30 car parks in Breckland. Breckland does not receive rental income from these sites, the money goes into a pot on which they have to bid. CC Claire Bowes was at the meeting and suggested that charging should not be put in place for Watton. A possible permit system was suggested and/or different rates. The consultation has now been completed, and results should be known by the end of the month.

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DC Cowen wished to address some points which he believes have been misunderstood. Car parks are a large expense and they cannot afford to maintain them at the expense of other services. Business Rates are payable on all car parks. A fairly substantial survey was carried out which showed that, on average, a car only stays in a car park for one hour. This is not across the board but a large percentage.

Market Towns are struggling currently, and this has nothing to do with parking charges. They are generally struggling to survive.

DC Cowen advised that he would rather there be a nominal charge for car parking which will enable Breckland Council to support vulnerable people in Breckland. Whilst this is not mandatory, Breckland Council feel this is the right thing to do.

Nationally, market towns have changed since the pandemic when people were pushed to online shopping. The shops are changing and whilst the Council understands the concerns, car parking is not the reason as to why market towns are failing.

There is lots of misinformation which has been spread around in this regard.

DC Cowen was asked about his preference for the way charges may be made. DC Cowen said that cash is not preferable due to the expense involved in handling it. Further, apps are not really an option as mobile signals are still problematic in lots of areas. The preference would be a system called 'Tap n' Go' which would require tapping a card on entry and exit to a car park.

11. **Correspondence**

None.

12. **To agree the next meeting date: 3 February 2024.**

Agreed

**The Chairman closed the Council Meeting to permit public discussion.**

13. **Participation and questions from the public – session 2.**

A member of the public asked why we were advertising (in the Waylander) why the Speedwatch team are not carrying out checks for the month of January. Point noted.

A member of the public asked whether the budget included grass cutting at the churchyard. The Clerk confirmed that it did.

14. **Matters for future discussion to be noted**

A suggested has been made by neighbouring Parishes that we share resources across the Parishes.

For information – there will be a power cut at the top end of Northacre on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2025.

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The Clerk advised that the Council printed has broken and requires replacing. Approved £59.99 for the Clerk to purchase a new one.

Meeting closed at 9.50pm

Joanne Blackman  
Parish Clerk

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