

## STOW BEDON AND BRECKLES PARISH COUNCIL

Chairman: Hannah Reed  
Deer Cottage  
21 Mere Road  
Stow Bedon  
Attleborough  
Norfolk  
NR17 1DA

Clerk: Jackie Preston  
Pear Tree Cottage  
Magpie Lane  
Rockland St. Peter  
Attleborough  
Norfolk  
NR17 1UU

### Minutes of Stow Bedon and Breckles Parish Council Meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> November 2024 at Caston Village Hall.

**Present:** Councillors H Reed (Chair), L Pilkington, J White, C Allen, P Childs, J Morfoot, District Councillor P Cowen, J Preston (Parish Clerk) and four Members of the Public.

**1. To open the meeting and welcome those present.**

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed those present.

**2. To receive and approve any apologies for absence.**

There were none.

**3. To receive any declarations of pecuniary interest from members and consider requests for dispensations.**

No declarations of interest were made.

**4. To agree the minutes of the meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> September 2024.**

The minutes were agreed by all present and signed by the Chair.

**5. Matters arising from the minutes not included on the agenda.**

Councillor White requested clarification on specific items in the minutes:

Item 5: The meeting to be arranged with Simon Wood and agencies in August regarding Cherry Tree Farm had not taken place. Had this been superseded by everything?

**The Chairman replied 'yes'.**

The clerk had not written to CEO Adam H. Couch or MP George Freeman. Was this still required to be done?

**The Chairman replied 'no'.**

Item 7: Councillor White advised that he had contacted CC Fabian Eagle regarding his non-attendance at Parish Council meetings and been advised that the reason for his absence was not knowing when the meetings were taking place. He had not been receiving this information.

**The clerk apologised and advised that this error would be corrected.**

Item 12: Had Councillor Allen spoken to the resident in the village about financial assistance that was available from funds in the Fuel Allotment Charity?

**Councillor Allen advised that this was on the agenda for the following meeting.**

Item 16: Councillor White requested whether Stow Bedon and Breckles Parish Council had sent an email to Breckland Council informing them of their disagreement to car parking charges in Watton?

**The clerk replied that this had been done.**

## **6. Public Participation.**

Ann Cuthbert advised that her meeting with MP George Freeman on 25th October concerning the Pig Unit, Cherry Tree Farm had gone well. He was now aware of all the issues resulting from the unit not being built in accordance with approved plans and the involvement of previous MP Liz Truss. Ann had provided him with a lot of supporting information which he advised would require time for him to study. This included a letter from the Environmental Law Foundation sent to Simon Wood outlining the failings of Breckland Council and the Environment Agency in fulfilling their duties and suggesting that enforcement action should be initiated. There has been no reply to this letter to date.

It was suggested by George Freeman that a public meeting be held so that he could discuss with everyone in the village the impact the unit was having on different people. Ann Cuthbert requested that maybe this could be combined with a proper Parish Council meeting and the response was that, if that was agreed, the meeting itself would have to be strictly controlled to ensure it was productive. It was also mentioned that there was no guarantee how many members of the public might attend the meeting which could result in not enough support and a disappointing outcome.

There was long discussion about Breckland Council not enforcing the approved operation of the site and all the issues resulting from this as well as the genuine concern of future expansion of the unit.

It was eventually agreed by everyone at the meeting that Ann Cuthbert will write to MP George Freeman stating all the facts with supporting evidence of the unauthorised development and operation of the pig unit at Cherry Tree allowed by Breckland Council and the Environment Agency respectively. The letter will request Mr Freeman to put pressure on both agencies to initiate enforcement action so that Cranswick plc has to comply with the approved building and operational regulations. Similarly, the Parish Council will independently write to Mr Freeman requesting that as an elected representative he uses his powers to get enforcement action underway so that Cranswick plc operates lawfully with no possibility of further expansion. The Parish Council will also request County Councillor Fabian Eagle and District Councillor Phil Cowen to contact MP George Freeman in support of the Parish Council's course of action.

## **7. Report of County Councillor Fabian Eagle.**

Councillor Eagle was not present and no report had been received. Councillor White advised that he had been in contact with Councillor Eagle and the reason for his non-attendance at meetings was that he had not been receiving any notification of these from the Parish Clerk. In response the Parish Clerk advised that this will be corrected forthwith.

### **Report of District Councillor Phil Cowen.**

Councillor Cowen had forwarded a report prior to his arrival at the meeting and referred to this going into greater detail about the unprecedented financial pressures being faced by Breckland Council as it tries to set the budget for 2025-26. There are uncontrollable rising costs attributable to a significant fall off in planning income (£417k), the closure of Shipdham waste transfer site (£600k), and the cost of housing benefits and temporary housing accommodation needs which has suddenly risen (£500+k). Councillor Cowen also explained about the implications of the government introducing a revised National Planning Policy Framework and signalling that they will be changing housing targets across the country. The indications are that here in Breckland we will be seeing a 39% increase in housing numbers that Breckland will be mandated to provide which equates to approximately 917 houses year on year. The current Local Plan to which Breckland was working was for 612 houses per year which was barely being achieved by developers and individuals so a 39% increase is going to be extremely challenging. The exact mandatory increase will be known when the government produces its final report on planning legislation which is anticipated to be produced to parliament during the first quarter of next year. This ultimately means that next year the Breckland Local Plan will no longer be current and it will be difficult to defend hostile planning applications from major house builders. Overall, the challenges ahead are far worse than expected and Breckland is facing huge cost pressures.

### **Report of Chairman.**

Councillor Reed did not have anything further to report.

### **Parish Clerk including any correspondence not previously circulated.**

The clerk referred to the Local Government Services Pay Agreement 2024 which she had circulated to all councillors and requested their agreement to implement the pay increase to her salary backdated to 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 which was agreed by all present.

The clerk then referred to the HMRC advice of a credit balance on the Parish Council's PAYE account that she was requested to claim and credit to the Parish Council's bank account at the last meeting. This had not been done yet because the clerk was currently claiming a tax refund from HMRC for tax that she personally had paid in error which may alter the credit balance showing on the Parish Council's PAYE account. The clerk confirmed that she will request the outstanding credit balance be paid to the council once this issue was resolved. The VAT return for financial year ending March 2023 left outstanding by the previous locum clerk had been completed with a refund of £154.32 claimed and credited to the Parish Council's bank account on 22/10/2024. The VAT return for financial year ending March 2024 had been completed and sent to HMRC with a refund of £52.20 being awaited. The clerk also advised that Stow Bedon and Breckles Asset Register must be brought up to date and circulated copies of the current register (correct as at 14/02/2022) for everyone to examine and agree any changes that needed to be made. This process followed with discussion and queries about different entries on the register, items to be added/deleted and a request that insurance cover be checked and amended where necessary. The clerk recorded all the required changes to update the register which the internal auditor had requested be submitted at the next financial year end.

The councillors were advised by the clerk that she would be on holiday from 01/12/2024 to 09/12/2024.

### **8. To receive and discuss any planning applications.**

**3PN/2024/0036/UC** Flybarn Farm Rockland Road (application to determine if prior approval is required for Conversion of existing agricultural building into 2no. dwellings). Application Refused.

**3PL/2024/0693/VAR** Mere Farm Stow Bedon Road (re-locate approved garage Plot 4)

This application has been approved despite the council's objection.

**APP/F2605/W/24/3348723** Mere Farm Stow Bedon Road (erection of new dwelling and garage)

Objection to this Appeal was lodged 16.10.24. Awaiting decision.

**3PL/2024/0303/F** River Cottage Rockland Road (demolition of existing dwelling and erection of 2 detached, 2 storey self-build dwellings)

It was noted that there had been two notices of revised details for planning permission that the Parish Council had not responded to and that this should be corrected. The clerk was requested to forward confirmation of the council's continued objection to this planning application as the changes in the variations were minor and had little effect on their previous representation. Councillor Allen advised that parishioners were very upset that it appeared to be one person's decision, i.e., the case officer, whether this planning application would be approved/refused. Councillor White replied that it can be demanded (via District Councillor Phil Cowen) that the decision goes to Planning Committee if necessary.

**3PL/2024/0697/F** Home Farm Stow Road (change of use of an existing office outbuilding for a mixed use of holiday let and annexe) It was noted that this application to which the Parish Council had approved was now being referred to the Planning Committee.

**EPR/XP3632QE/V003EPR/XP3632QE/V003** Wayland Farms Limited: environmental permit consultation.

Having read and discussed the details of this application for a major project in Methwold with similar issues to the Pig Unit, Cherry Tree Farm, the clerk was requested to send a response on behalf of Stow Bedon and Breckles Parish Council to support the stance against the granting of the permit.

### **9. Update and handover of website.**

Councillor Pilkington advised that he was hoping to take pictures of everyone present to update the photographs of Parish Council members on the website. He also suggested displaying new pictures, getting missing Agendas and Minutes put on the site and mentioned that the information regarding the Fuel Allotment Charity was very out of date. Councillor Childs advised that he could help with this. It was agreed that time permitting these matters would be addressed and operation and management of the site would improve with experience.

**10. Defibrillator reporter update.**

The Parish Clerk advised that a meeting had taken place between the new defibrillator reporter, Graham Whitehead from Community Heartbeat Trust and herself. The required checks on the unit had been successfully explained as well as the procedure to report that this had been done on line. The clerk advised that the defibrillator was operational and being monitored correctly.

**11. Budget proposal 2025 to 2026.**

The clerk advised that she had already prepared a budget for 2025-2026 and circulated copies for everyone’s information. She requested councillors to check through this and contact her with any queries they may have before the next meeting on Monday 13<sup>th</sup> January 2025. During that meeting the budget will need to be agreed as well as the amount of the parish precept requirement.

**12. To present the financial statement and approve any expenditure.**

The clerk presented the statement of finances to date.

<b>Balance Unity Trust current account 18 Sept 24</b>		<b>£3,589.95</b>
27/09/2024 Breckland Council	£3,250.00 Cr	£6,839.95
30/09/2024 Service charge	£7.24 Dr	£6,832.71
22/10/2024 HMRC VTR	£154.32 Cr	£6,987.03
31/10/2024 Service charge	£5.40 Dr	£6,981.63
<b>Balance Unity Trust current account 31 Oct 24</b>		<b>£6,981.63</b>
<b>Invoices due for payment</b>		
30/09/2024 Clerk salary	£282.97	£6,698.66
31/10/2024 Clerk salary	£282.97	£6,415.69
30/09/2024 Clerk expenses	£83.23	£6,332.46
11/11/2024 Spanglefish	£208.00	£6,124.46
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£857.17</b>	<b>£6,124.46</b>

Payments due were agreed by all present.

**13. Any other relevant matters not included on this agenda.**

Councillor White advised that he had been in contact with a new member of staff at Norfolk County Council regarding the unfinished surface of the Pingo Trail Car Park. Having tried to resolve this issue over a long period of time he had been told that the Parish Council had not actually paid for granite chippings to be rolled into the surface of the car park and obviously that was the reason the surface had not been ‘finished’. The original contract is being sent to Councillor White and if the Parish Council would still like this to be carried out then a further payment would have to be made.

**14. To receive items for the next agenda.**

None received.

**15. To confirm the date of the next meeting as Monday 13<sup>th</sup> January 2025.**

The next Parish Council Meeting will take place on Monday 13<sup>th</sup> January at 7.30pm.

The meeting was closed by the Chairman at 9.45pm.

Signed .....Chairman Date.....

Subsequent meetings booked at Caston Village Hall: Mon 13<sup>th</sup> January 2025  
Mon 10<sup>th</sup> March 2025  
Mon 12<sup>th</sup> May 2025