

Foxley Parish Council

Minutes of the **Annual Parish Council** meeting of Foxley Parish Council held on **Thursday 11th May 2023** at **7:30 pm** in Foxley Village Hall

Present: N. Mears (NM), M Watson (MW), G Blyth (GB), G Blatchford (GWB), Mrs L Rose (LR), Bill Borrett, County Councillor (BB). Ali Blatchford (Clerk)

Members of the public: 0

1. **Apologies for Absence:** Gordon Bambridge, Linda Rose arrived during Chairs report

2. **Election of Officers:**

Chairman: N Mears - Proposed by GB, seconded by MW, unanimously re-elected

Vice Chairman: M Watson - Proposed by GWB, seconded by GB, unanimously re-elected

3. **Minutes** of the previous Annual Foxley Parish Council Meeting dated 12th May 2022 were accepted. Proposed GWB Seconded GB

4. **Chairman's report for 2022 – 23**

The past year has seen a new Clerk take on the onerous role of running our council. I do not know if the enormous amount and complexity of the paperwork involved has surprised her but with a little guidance and help from our former Clerk, she has made an impressive start and I thank her for taking on the task and her efforts.

The year has seen the removal of the old timber Bus Shelter from the top The Street, forced upon us by the Winter Gales. It had served us well but now looks tidier and the new Bus Stop arrangements and Shelters seem to be working well.

We have also seen a new much needed Litter Bin and Dog Bin installed, although there are still instances of people failing to make use of them! Getting them emptied is also a problem at times.

A new filing cabinet has also been purchased for Council Documents.

Litter remains a problem in the village. Well attended village Litter Picks, organised by the Clerk have yielded many bags of rubbish and a wide range of items. A request to Breckland to install a camera in the A1067 lay by seems to have fallen on deaf ears and the dumping of an old caravan full of rubbish in the lay-by has to me exposed a lack of competency and failed communication systems within Breckland Council in that it took 33 days to get it removed, and little if any attempt made to trace the perpetrator as far as I know.

The year has seen the resurgence of the proposal for a New Town of 5000 people at N. Elmham, virtually bordering Foxley and the main access road joining the A1067 at Bintree. It is hoped that with a united front this will be rejected by Breckland at the first hurdle.

It has been good to finally get our Council up to the full quota of 5 members after many years of operating below this number. I now feel we have a strong council with many talents, and I thank all Councillors for their efforts and contributions in the last year.

Also, thanks to our District Councillor, Gordon Bambridge, who attends our meetings when he can and is always available for help and guidance.

Nicholas Mears
Chairman – Foxley Parish Council

A discussion was held with BB regarding the situation with the Caravan in the lay-by and BB will investigate the systems that are put in place for such items being dumped, but he did advise that the broken tow bar was likely to be an exception, which could have caused a delay in getting it removed.

5. Clerk's Financial Report:

Financial Report for the year April 2022 – March 2023

Current account

Opening balance 1st April 2022	£2,560	
Closing balance 31st March 2023		£3,668

Business saver account

Opening balance 1st April 2022	£2,480	
Closing balance 31st March 2023		£2,485

Overall total for both accounts

TOTAL at end of March 2022	£5,040	
TOTAL at end of March 2023	£6,153	

2020 -21	Receipts for the year	£4,701
	Total expenditure for the year	£3,803
2021-22	Receipts for the year	£4,700
	Total expenditure for the year	£8,681
2022-23	Receipts for the year	£5,580
	Total expenditure for the year	£4,467

Our overall bank balance of £6,153 is at acceptable amount for a Parish Council of our size and precept. Within this balance we have set aside £1,000 for C.A.N.T., if we need to assist the other parishes in opposing the New Town. There is also funds available to go towards a playground if the parish can find land to put one on.

Our main receipts came from the Precept and the VAT that was reclaimed last year from the Village Hall Car Park upgrade and new Litter and Dog bins.

Our main payments this year have been due to an increase in the Parish Community Insurance and Clerks Wages.

Ali Blatchford
Clerk to Foxley Parish Council and RFO

6. Village Hall Committee's report:

The year from May 2022 until May 2023 has seen Foxley Village Hall hosting two of the biggest events we have put on for years; the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations and the King's Coronation Party, were both very successful, attended and enjoyed by residents from

both Foxley and Bawdeswell. Quiz Nights and Bingo Sessions are back, and both have been popular. On a smaller scale the coffee mornings continue to be well attended although we have moved the coffee morning from the third to the first Wednesday of the month and we hope this will be an easier time to remember. With the closure of the only pub in Bawdeswell and Foxley the committee decided to instigate the community evening on the first Saturday of the month, the numbers vary but it attracts different clientele to the coffee mornings.

The finances of Foxley remain in very healthy state with a total of £8,298.39 in all accounts. And that is despite purchasing a new microwave and coffee machine We would like to put a hearing loop into the hall and have plans for further improvements.

Helen Mears has been very efficiently dealing with bookings to the hall. There has been a recent flurry of bookings as some of the events scheduled for Bawdeswell have had to be moved because of the repairs to their roof. There has been more cooperation between the two halls this year to try to avoid events clashing.

After many years of service to Foxley Village Hall Frank Moore and Betty Beresford both resigned from the committee, we thank them both for their support and help over the years. Bonnie Shingfield has kindly agreed to take over as chair of the committee, with Gillian Blyth continuing in the role of treasurer and Linda Rose as secretary. We are delighted to welcome Giles to the committee. We are fortunate that we can count on the support of residents to help with the catering setting up the hall and running the bar etc. but we would still like to attract more members on to the committee.

Linda Rose

Secretary Village Hall Committee

7. District Councillors report

Having represented this ward or its earlier incarnation for some 20 years and this being an election year I have decided to stand for another 4 years if the people of Upper Wensum continue to support me.

The past year in Breckland has been very positive despite the whole community still feeling the effects of the tail end of the covid pandemic, we will probably have some fall out from that for a few years. Breckland remains a council producing a balanced budget and still levies a low council tax.

With 15 villages in the ward attending parish meetings has been less regular than I would have hoped, and for this I am sorry, but I am always willing to attend village meetings at other times or arrange to meet with parish clerks or councillors, or indeed members or groups of the public between meetings. These can be in the parish or in the Breckland offices. Inevitably we often get two or more parish council meetings on the same evening, nobody is at fault it just happens, but I will normally attend if asked.

Planning within the ward has ground to a stop on housing applications because of nutrient neutrality limitations, although planners from across the county are hopeful, we will have some better ideas of mitigation by the end of this year.

Two things have arisen in this area.

- 1) The proposed new town, which is the biggest public issue in our area, I am opposed to the principle of it on this site and have recorded that at Breckland, plus if it goes any further I will oppose the fact of it on two wide ranging grounds - infrastructure matters and environmental matters - if re-elected I will be speaking to all parishes about these.
- 2) The introduction of Exception Sites policies. That is 'Local homes for Local people' two villages in the ward are already going down the road of considering these and any village could talk to Breckland about this form of housing provision.

Breckland are still able to provide some grants and match funding, so please raise any questions or place bids if needed.

The big project funding is still mainly coming from the lottery as that is how it is set up nationally, but except for things like new halls this is not often needed in villages. I am normally supportive of community efforts and willing to write support letters for your applications.

During the election I have been publishing a daily blog of almost 100 promises Breckland have kept in the past year. I believe Breckland administration has fulfilled its manifesto promises.

I continue to support all the villages of Upper Wensum in practical ways and by promoting them within the council wherever possible.

Gordon Bambridge
District Councillor

Meeting Closed at 8pm

Signed  Dated09 May 2024.....