

**Scarning Parish Council**  
**Minutes of the Annual Parish Council Meeting**  
**held on 19 May 2025 at Scarning Village Hall**

**Councillors Present:** S Bunn (Chair) T Abel, M Blackburn, F Bradford, C Hewson, H Manning, M Steward. **In attendance:** Cllr L Turner (Breckland Council), N Hartley (Parish Clerk), three members of the public.

### **1 Election of Chair**

It was **RESOLVED** to elect Cllr Bunn as the Council's Chair. He signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

### **2 Election of Vice Chair**

It was **RESOLVED** to elect Cllr Manning as the Council's Vice Chair. She signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

### **3 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Cllrs P Hewett (Breckland Council) and W Richmond (Norfolk County Council).

In view of the fact that Councillors had only received the agenda for the meeting a day and half before it was held Cllr Bradford asked the Chair if those items not covered by Standing Order 5 (Motions Not Requiring Written Notice) could be legally undertaken at the meeting. The Clerk was unable to advise as he had neither hard copy nor computer to hand to see what Order 5 referred to. Cllr Turner advised of the procedure undertaken by Shipdham Parish Council and the Council agreed to accept all items listed on the agenda as valid.

### **4 Code of Conduct**

Councillors re-signed the Code of Conduct.

### **5 Vote of No Confidence in the Former Council Chair and Future Remedies**

At its meeting on 18 November 2024, councillors held a Vote of No Confidence in then Council Chair, Cllr Bradford. Prior to the meeting, councillors had asked Cllr Bradford to modify her behaviour toward the Council as a whole and toward the Parish Clerk.

Councillors were irritated by Cllr Bradford's insistence on trying to amend the draft minutes in the way she wanted them written. This had steadily increased over the course of the year and culminated in Cllr Bradford's insistence on making the Council sit for 30-40 minutes at its October meeting while she went through her proposed changes to the minutes.

Cllr Bradford had also made a number of unsubstantiated and untrue allegations against the Clerk. The Council did not support these allegations, nor did it approve of Cllr Bradford's attitude toward the Clerk.

The Vice Chair of the Parish Council, another councillor and its District Councillor had all spoken to Cllr Bradford about her behaviour and tried to seek a way forward.

At the same time, the Clerk, on behalf of the Council, had sought guidance from Breckland Council's Monitoring Officer, Norfolk Parish Training & Support, and a solicitor acting on behalf of Breckland Council in the administration of parish councils.

It was noted that by remaining as Chair Cllr Bradford was preventing the Council from carrying on any business.

The advice was that councillors could not insist the Chair step aside, or resign, in spite of the fact that Cllr Bradford had no support from any of her six fellow councillors.

The advice was that it was up to the ethics and morality of the Chair to decide if she would step aside or resign as Chair.

On 20 November 2024, councillors delivered the following letter to Cllr Bradford:-

Dear Fiona,

We are sorry that it has come to this point, but following the vote of no confidence at Monday's meeting, we feel that you need to be putting the interests of Scarning and Scarning Parish Council first, and that by remaining as the Council's Chair you are inhibiting us from doing this.

We would be grateful if you would let us know your intentions as to your role on the Council and would like to note the following:- That unless you are prepared to step down as Chair that for the remaining meetings until the next Chair is elected in May, we will continue to attend the start of each Council meeting, ask if you intend to chair the meeting, and if you do then we will not stay for the remainder of the meeting.

We are aware that this means that Scarning Parish Council will be unable to function and we would appeal to your sense of integrity, and do what we consider is best for the continued functioning of the Parish Council, and our work, as volunteers, on behalf of the community.

Both at the Parish Council meeting on 18 November and on subsequent occasions, Cllr Bradford took no action to address the concerns of councillors and took no responsibility for her part in what was happening.

Instead, she blamed her fellow councillors for the fact that the Council was not carrying out any business.

Councillors had made their position clear in the letter of 20 November. In consequence, councillors gathered for the December meeting and left the meeting when Cllr Bradford made it clear that she intended to chair the meeting. This was repeated at the Council's meetings in February and March.

The Council held a full meeting in January in order to agree its precept for the year for the benefit of residents, as without approval of the Precept the Council would have no additional funds for 2025/26.

Cllr Bradford continued to take no action to address the concerns of councillors and said she was remaining in post as she had been elected Chair.

As a result of the above, the new Council Chair, Cllr Bunn, called for a common sense approach to Council business and said that if a similar situation arose in the future councillors should follow an honour system and resign if a Vote of No Confidence was passed in them. This was endorsed by his fellow Council members.

## **6 Declarations of Interest**

Cllrs Hewson and Abel declared an interest in any matter relating to Scarning Playing Field Committee.

## **7 Minutes**

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 14 April 2025. The Chair signed the minutes.

## **8 Matters Arising**

None.

## **9 Breckland Councillor's Report**

A copy Cllr Turner's report is attached to the minutes.

## **10 Public Participation**

A member of the public said that he had experience of working in Government and had not witnessed anything like the remarks and 'point scoring' made under the items above. He suggested that the Parish Council was surely there to get business done on behalf of residents. Cllr Bunn said that unfortunately this was an ongoing issue, caused by the way councillors were voted in, and apologised on behalf of the Council.

Another member of the public asked how many vacancies there were on the Council and suggested that any residents keen to join the Council would most likely be deterred by the present situation.

Mrs Goldsworthy said she cannot plant the Council's flower boxes at the moment as it is too dry. She asked to be kept informed regarding the installation of the speed gates.

## 11 Planning

11.1 The Council considered the following application:-

9, the Watlings  
Installation of air source heat pump to the rear of the house

PL/2025/0550/HOU

It was **RESOLVED** that the Council had no objection to the application.

## 12 Finance

12.1 The Council approved the following payments in accordance with its Budget:-

N Hartley, clerk's salary, £1,001.73  
Dereham Meeting Point, donation toward running costs, £250 (Section 137)  
KW Services, grass cutting, £375  
Norfolk County Council, payment for Parish Partnership Scheme (gateways), £1,100  
Nurture Landscapes Ltd, grass cutting in churchyard, £814.50 (Section 137)  
Clear Councils, renewal of insurance premium, £1,083.09

12.2 The Council's bank balances were noted as:-

Community Account: £48,752.58 (includes first Precept instalment)  
Deposit Account: £22,427.45

12.3 The Internal Control Officer noted that she had carried out the checks and everything was in order.

12.4 Cllr Bradford said she wanted to be removed as a Council signatory.

## 13 Accounts and Annual Return

The Council received its unaudited accounts to 31 March 2025. It was **RESOLVED** to sign the Annual Return. The Chair and the Clerk signed the Annual Return.

## 14 Council Reserves

It was **RESOLVED** to ringfence the Council's reserves as follows:-

£7,500 to play equipment on Blackthorn Drive play area.  
£7,500 to the car park project at Shipdham Lane playing field.

## 15 Appointments

It was **RESOLVED** to make the following appointments:-

Cllr Blackburn as the Council's Internal Control Officer  
Cllr Blackburn as the Council's Social Media Officer  
Cllrs Bunn and Manning to the Council's Staff Committee

## **16 Council Representatives**

It was **RESOLVED** to appoint the following representatives:-

Cllr Bunn to Scarning Playing Field Committee  
The Clerk to the Seckar Trust  
Cllr Bradford to Scarning United Charities

## **17 Review of Policies**

The following policies had been reviewed without amendment:-

Risk Management  
Business Continuity  
Health & Safety  
Training & Development  
Tree Management

## **18 Amendments to Policies**

It was **RESOLVED** to accept amendments to the following policies:-

Press and Media  
Social Media

## **19 Adoption of Policies**

It was **RESOLVED** to adopt the following policies:-

IT policy.  
Procurement policy.

## **20 Gov.uk email**

New Audit regulations stipulate that parish councils must have an email account hosted on an authority owned domain. It was **RESOLVED** to appoint NALC to provide a gov.uk council email and gov.uk emails for councillors.

## **21 Community Award**

It was noted that the Council's Award 2025 had stated that award recipients would receive a plaque as well as a certificate. It was **RESOLVED** to amend the 2026 Award to state that recipients will only receive a certificate, but the Council will honour its commitment for 2025 and award a plaque to each of the three recipients. For the 2026 award the Council will consider presenting recipients with a badge, as well as a certificate acknowledging their contribution to the community. The Clerk was asked to source three plaques.

## **22 Shipdham Lane Car Park**

The Village Hall Trust had advised the Council that Norfolk County Council was requesting a visibility splay as a condition of the latest planning approval for a car park. The Trust asked if the Parish Council would use the £10,200 apportioned to the car park for the visibility splay and take responsibility for this phase of the project.

Cllr Abel noted that the Playing Field Committee had offered to remove the hedge to improve visibility, but had been prevented from doing so as they had been told it might be an ancient hedge. Cllr Turner asked if the planning permission stated it was an ancient hedge. Cllr Abel said it did not.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Playing Field Committee will remove the hedge and the Council will return to the Village Hall Trust's request at the Council meeting in June.

## **23 High Grove Solar Farm**

Cllr Hewson had attended a recent meeting hosted by local MPs George Freeman and Terry Jermy. He added to Cllr Turner's comments below. He said that once the panels are installed the land becomes classified as industrial land, not farmland. Cllr Turner added that many of the affected parishes, of which Scarning is one, are carrying out surveys to gauge public opinion.

## **24 Benches at Podmore Ford and Village Sign lay by**

The Council was unable to remove the benches to be shot-blasted. Cllr Hewson offered to paint these in August.

## **25 Noticeboards at Scarning Fen, Cooper Terrace and New Inn Lane**

The Council acknowledged that the noticeboards need to be replaced. It was **RESOLVED** to ask Dereham Men's Shed to produce three noticeboards for the above locations of the same size as that installed outside Scarning Church.

## **26 Staining the Council's noticeboards and benches**

The Council will see if it can find a volunteer to carry out the remaining work.

## **27 Moles on Blackthorn Drive Playing Field**

The Council's grass cutting contractor had noted the damage to his cutting blades from mole hills. The Council noted the number of mole hills on the site and had spoken to contractors about removal. The Council noted the problems in removal on a public site. It was **RESOLVED** to ask the contractor to cut around the mole hills and to make notification of this on social media so that residents are made aware of why these areas are not being cut.

## **28 Play equipment safety report**

The Council considered quotes from three contractors. It was **RESOLVED** to appoint the Play Inspection Company to carry out reports of the Blackthorn Drive and Ted Ellis play areas, and a separate report of the play equipment on Shipdham Lane Playing Field.

## **29 Blackthorn Drive play equipment**

The Council considered quotes from three contractors. It was **RESOLVED** to appoint NGF Play Ltd to provide the equipment and to apply for grants.

## **30 Water Meadows after local government reorganisation**

Councillors expressed concerns about the upcoming local government review and how this might affect the Parish Council. The suggestion was made that the Council might want to delay a decision regarding the installation of new play equipment, particularly in view of the cost of the equipment. It was noted that much of the cost will be covered by grants. It was noted that much of the existing equipment is old and needs to be replaced.

## **31 Sale of the former Highway Surveyors land at Daffy Green**

The Council noted that no further action had been taken by the purchasers of the land. It was **RESOLVED** to ask the reason for the delay.

## **32 Dog fouling**

Cllr Manning said she could provide posters for the parish noticeboards and social media. The Council will put the locations of its dog bins on its website and on social media using What3words.

## **33 Items for the next agenda**

An update on repair of the Zip Wire.

An update on the Speed Gates.

A proposal to move the Beacon from the Village Sign lay-by to Shipdham Lane Playing Field

## **34 Next Meeting**

The next Council meeting will be in the Village Hall at 7pm on June 16.

The meeting was closed at 9.15pm.

Signed ..... Chair

Date .....

## **Breckland Councillor's report**

There is a new round of Household Support grants available from Breckland Council. Please see their website for eligibility and process of application.

Please keep your eyes and ears out for consultations on the Local Plan, Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation, and the forthcoming planning applications for solar factories in our area and across much of Norfolk. Charles Hewson and I attended a recent meeting at Holme Hale for local parishes, with our two MPs, and there is a general consensus that as planning permission will be granted or not by the Secretary of State, there is no point in opposing the schemes, but instead working together to achieve the best possible mitigation for our communities. A working party is being set up to represent all sectors of the community.

Scarning will be invited along with other neighbouring parishes to a series of Local Plan meetings with Breckland, to debate and hopefully agree where (not if) new housing can be accommodated within this area. This is a result of the Government increasing housing numbers by 43% - it is vital local people have their say to ensure new housing is fit for purpose and in the right location.

We understand the Boundary Commission have now paused in their redefining of ward boundaries, until such time as LGR is finalised. Mayoral elections will take place next May, together with the postponed county elections. Final LGR submissions from Norfolk have to be with the Minister by September, Breckland is working with 5 other district councils to suggest three unitary councils ( West, East and Central) would work best for residents and delivery of services. We already work well with Kings Lynn and West Norfolk, with shared contracts etc, so this makes sense to us. The whole process is moving very rapidly and at pace, so we will keep you updated as and when we can.