SAHAM TONEY PARISH COUNCIL
MINUTES A MEETING HELD ON THE 7TH APRIL 2025

A Meeting of the Parish Council was held at the Wells-Cole Community Centre, Bell Lane on the 7th April at 7.30 p.m.

Present: Messrs. J. Baldwin (Chair), Ms. K. Avery, N. Creek, D. Freeman, R, Harrold, C. Millan, A. Wilson, L. Rees-Murphy, S. Rees-Murphy, G. Morton, Ms. M. Baldwin, and Ms. H. Crane (District Councillor).

10 parishioners and the Clerk, G. Christian were also present.

The Chair added an item to the Agenda 15.1. – To discuss the Fabric of the WCCC.

1. To Consider Apologies for Absence: No apologies were received.

2. To receive Declarations of Interest from Members on Items on the Agenda: No declarations were received.

3. To Confirm and approve the Minutes of the Meeting held on the 3rd March 2025: The minutes of the meeting held on the 3rd March 2025 were proposed by Mr. C. Millan, seconded by Ms. K. Avery and unanimously agreed.

4. To Report Matters Arising from the Minutes and Action List:

- Sports Pavillion – fire risk assessment received and will be discussed at their next meeting. Vent tiles have been fitted to the roof for the extractor fans. Still awaiting quote for new flooring
- Passing bay signs repositioning – reported to NCC – Ongoing
- Meeting between WCCC and PC – on Agenda
- Parish Partnership Scheme – New gateways have now been delivered, work should start within the next two weeks
- Play Park – new equipment has been ordered, site inspection has taken place, now waiting for Caloo to install
- WASFAG – three councillors have agreed to be on the committee, meeting to take place at the end of April

5. Reports from District/County Councillors: - Ms. H. Crane reported as follows:
Local plan update- At cabinet on the 24th March it was agreed to do another 'Call for sites'. The reason is that with the new government figures of 905 houses per year compared with the previous 625 we simply do not have enough suitable land coming forward. And because of these new figures we had to pause the plan. This increase is mandatory and if we do not have in place an up-to-date plan and housing the government will step in and place houses where they think they should be. It is therefore really important that we engage now with Town and parish councils and residents and businesses to find where this land can be. The parish Council will get a village checklist to complete, this is so that we have up to date information about every village in Breckland. The focus will be to bring parish councils together in clusters to see where new homes can be put and where a smaller village could possibly take a few houses

supported by the facilities in another village. We cannot and should not dismiss out of hand a small amount of houses in every village. The location will have to meet criteria and be deliverable. I have asked that Saham Toney should be protected through its Neighbourhood plan and provided it is up to date this should be the case.

Devolution-Cabinet agreed the consultation responses to the government regarding its plans on Devolution. We either disagreed or strongly disagreed to each question and you can find the questions and reasons why on pages 18 -20 of the cabinet report. I remain unsupportive of devolution of an area as vast and as rural as Norfolk and Suffolk. I do not believe there will be any money savings as has been shown in other areas where this simply has not worked. We are rural and although it may work in big cities such as Manchester it is not a suitable model for Norfolk and especially Breckland. Breckland has no debt and has the lowest Council tax which will be swept away when council tax is levelled with the other authorities we join. We also have vast assets again which will be amalgamated with any new authority.

Local Government Reform-Again our response along with all but one Norfolk authority has been for 3 unitary authorities for Norfolk. Breckland joining up with Kings Lynn and West Norfolk and a part of North Norfolk. We do already have shared services with all 3 of these authorities. Norwich standing alone and East and South Norfolk with the remaining part of North Norfolk another.

Car parks-We paused the car park consultation process because of devolution and what that would mean for our 5 market towns. We continue to work with Town Councils to see if there is a way of them taking on the car parks, leasing at a peppercorn rent, buying etc. The consultation process and data is not lost and will be given to whoever takes on the car parks in the future. If it is the Towns then it will save having to run the process again at expense to them.

Barnham Broom-The sale of Barnham Broom has completed. The site was bought in 2006 for 7million£ as a revenue stream and has been sold for 6.9million£. During the 19 year ownership of this site the Council invested a further 1.95million£ in the asset. The total income from the Golf club including its sale figure and rental figure was £11.68million£. This means the overall profit made by the council is 2.73million£. To be clear and although I was not a member at the time, this asset was bought because Breckland was cash rich at the time and the then government's devolution plans were to take any money back from a council that was not using it, hence Barnham Broom was bought. I accept that this has been a hugely controversial investment but it did make a good return. In anticipation of the sale of Barnham Broom Breckland has used some of the money to purchase temporary housing accommodation. This money, because it is capital sale money cannot be used to support services. Whilst on the subject of investments Breckland Council has assets that bring more in in rent than council tax, this is the money we can use for service delivery and support for residents and businesses.

The Chair indicated that the planning portal on the Breckland website isn't user friendly. Ms. H. Crane explained that it had to be updated, agreed it wasn't user friendly but it was in line with other Councils. The Chair also asked what does Devolution actually mean for everyone. Ms. H. Crane indicated that Breckland will become an authority with Norfolk and Suffolk combined with a Mayor. The Mayor elections will take place in 2026. The Mayor will have authority over planning/highways etc. There will be either one, two or three unitories and the best scenario for Breckland would be to amalgamate with King's Lynn and West Norfolk Council and part of North Norfolk, sharing all services. Ms. H. Crane urges all parishioners to complete the questionnaire during the consultation process as Breckland require proof from residents that they disapprove.

Mr. R. Harrold asked if impact assessments have been carried out. Ms. H. Crane explained that there are a number of assessments taking place at present. Mr. D. Freeman stated that all

houses in Norfolk had a leaflet delivered by NCC stating that if devolution didn't take place the cost of providing services would be more expensive. Ms. H. Crane agreed but no details were available at present. She stated that where devolution and LGR had taken place in other parts of the country there have been no savings. In urban areas this may be the way forward but in a rural county such as Norfolk and Suffolk it is not a good model.

6. Time Allocated for Members of the Public to Speak: Mr. M. Aitken reported as follows:
April 11th 3-7pm Shipdham PC meeting with Reneger8 Power at WI Hall, Shipdham
Battery Storage and Solar proposal Shipdham Airfield via Breckland Planning.
April 15th, Ashil AGM, Ashil CC, Special Guest Terry Jermy MP to talk about the Highgrove Solar Proposal.
April 24th Stage 2 Consultation for RWE Highgrove Solar
Online https://uk.rwe.com/project-proposals/high-grove-solar-farm/
In-person May 22nd at Bradenham Village Hall from 12noon to 4pm. Also at Sporle CC, Wendling CC, Ashil CC, Swaffham Town Hall between April 24th to June 12th (dates at venues to be confirmed)
This will show where all the solar panels, substations, inverters, battery storage, accommodation, and access will be located. Also, the potential water usage and fire safety provisions.
April 25th Group PC meeting with George Freeman MP and the 4 PCs he covers under the Highgrove proposal.
Later in April:
Ashil Action Group will be meeting to discuss how best to help residents in regard to Stage 2 Highgrove plans.
Ashil PC will be arranging another meeting to discuss the plans with the other 13 PCs included in the Highgrove proposal.
MA will be meeting and discussing Stage 2 plans with residents in Hillside Mews, Hunts Farm, Coberg Lane, Hills Road to do site surveys to examine any potential visual or audio impact of the plans on their properties. MA will then assist with direct contact with RWE to arrange survey / discussions to address any concerns.
MA detailed an understanding of working times per day, and over the year for this type of solar farm site, and fire safety precautions and advice from local and nation fire services. All this advice will be checked against the information released by RWE, and form the start of discussions for both the individual resident and the Saham Parish Council prior to the company presenting plans to the Planning Inspectorate in the Autumn/Winter.
On April 24th MA will print out the RWE plans, and place a copy on the noticeboard outside the Wells Coles Centre. MA will contact RWE to ask them to see if they could print waterproof plans and distribute to the other PCs who are not having open days between April and June 2025.
If any residents are approached offering a cash sum for use of their land for residential building access or solar farm access, please get legal advice before agreeing anything. No developer has a legal right across your property without your permission, and any such agreement will require changes to your deeds, and more legal fees on your part, and mean said developer has an open access agreement to your property for up to 60 years.
Ms. H. Crane also wanted to clarify that Mr. George Freeman is only allowed to cover Parish Council's in his area, he is not legally allowed to work within other MP's areas. Mr Freeman has written to Terry Jermy to clarify his position.
Mr. T. Bunce reported the following on Neighbourhood Watch:

The £80.00 of the £100 Grant has now been paid into the PC Account and will be used at local events to publicise the Saham Toney Group and listen to residents that have concerns about crime issues. The £20 Voucher could only be used at the Neighbourhood Shop and has been exchanged for 9 @ £2 dustbin stickers, these will be issued to the Group Members.
Our first public event is on Saturday 12th April with the WI in the WCCC, followed on the 12th May at the Plant Sale in the Methodist Chapel.
Although crime in this area is relatively low compared to other parts of the UK, we should not get complacent. Norfolk Police have recently issued a warning about handing over money to scammers and people that do not know, a resident in Attleborough gave a large amount of cash to someone impersonating a Policeman recently, so please be careful , stay safe, do not pass on money or bank details.
A parishioner asked why Saham Toney Parish Council had not held any consultations with regard to the RWE project. The Chair indicated that it is a very time consuming process and not all Councillors had the time. Not all Councillors were opposed to the project. Mr. M. Aitken agreed to provide some plans for parishioners which will be advertised soon. Mr. Aitken has now also agreed to be a representative for the Saham Toney Parish Council.
Another parishioner expressed concern that RWE were taking over good farmland. There will be a problem in the future with food production. There are six battens programmed in the RWE project to be erected, where three would suffice. The solar panels are fixed into the ground with spikes. The concern is that with these spikes will pierce pipes and cause further flooding in the village. The parishioner also commented on the WCCC electricity bill, he had heard that it hasn't been paid for years but councillors stated that this was incorrect information. He also asked why there were six strip lights on in the room when three would do to save costs – it was explained that the tubes have been changed to LED's.

7. Correspondence:

- Letter from Saham Toney Fuel Trust – Tenancy Agreement for Allotments in Cley Lane – this was agreed to renew
- Email from Dowager St. Clare regarding the Community Orchard – asking if a PC Member is willing to have their name in the Saga as a contact for the villagers – Mr. C. Millan agreed to be a contact
- Email from parishioner – Rugby Club Score Board – all sorted
- Email from County Officer at NALC – restructuring of NALC – a new finance officer and IT officer have now been appointed
- Email from NALC – Devolution Consultation closes 13th April 2025 - ongoing
- Email from Breckland Council – Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation - ongoing
- Email from Councillor Ed Connolly – Parish Report and Members briefing note - noted
- Email from Mark Aitken – RWE Notice on Coburg Lane/Ashill Meeting - ongoing
- Email from Andrew Walmsley – Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan Review - noted
- Email from Breckland Council – Local Government Review and Devolution - ongoing
- Email from Norfolk County Council – Local Government Review - ongoing
- Email from Breckland Council – Village Checklist – ongoing. Ms. K. Avery stated that the Bird Sanctuary now needs to be added to the list -
- Email from NALC – Devolution Update - ongoing
- Email from Breckland Council – Land East of Saham Hills, Croft Field, Saham Toney

– being considered by Planning Committee on Tuesday 1st April 2025 – email from Breckland received after the meeting confirming approval
- Email from Steve Halls, NCC - Saham Toney FAS - Project Update March 2025 - ongoing
- Email from parishioner – tree down at The Community Orchard – Chair to organise removal/cut back
- Email from parishioner – RWE update – ongoing

Emails received since issuing the Agenda:
- Email from Breckland Planning Policy Team – Call for Sites – ongoing
- Email from Breckland – Local Government Reorganisation Update – ongoing

8. To approve Accounts for payment:

The following accounts are due for payment:

- Trell Contractors (Watton) Ltd. - £1445.10 – car park remedial works at the Playing Field
- NALC – £391.50 – Annual Subscription
- Saham Toney Fuel Trust - £250 – rent for Allotment Site
- G. Christian - £842.90 – salary
- Glasdon UK Ltd. - £3377.18 – village gateways
- Saham Toney Sports & Social Club - £1500.00 – Grant
- Mr. J. Baldwin - £250 – Maintenance work in the parish
- M. Jackson Electrical - £386.56 – Electrical safety report for playing field
- Saham Toney W.I. - £20 – Neighbourhood Watch grant
- HMRC - £149.89 – Tax
- Nest Pension – £16.03

The payment of these accounts was proposed by D. Freeman, seconded by L. Rees-Murphy and unanimously agreed.

The balance on the Accounts as at 28th March 2025 was
Business Current Account - £29,019.76
Business Savings Account - £23,507.49

9. To Consider Planning Matters:
- PL/2024/1153/FMIN - Saham Grove Farm Mill Lane, Saham Toney – Ground mounted solar pv comprising 138 solar panels on a screw anchored mounting system, site measure 81m long x 3.5m deep – no objection
- PL/2025/0344/HOU - Sunnydale, 2, Hillside Mews, Saham Toney, IP25 7FB – Proposed Greenhouse, Garden Shed and Summerhouse within garden – no objection
- PL/2025/0205/HOU - 1 Hunts Farm Close, IP25 7GE – Amendments – no objection

The following plan was received after the Agenda was issued:
- PL/2025/0432/FMIN – Land Off Ladybird Lane, Saham Toney – Proposed residential development of 7No. specialist housing – this was discussed and agreed that the Clerk request an extension of time

10. To discuss the Tender for the Clay Pit: This was discussed and as no Tenders had been received it was agreed to readvertise.

11. To confirm the date for the Internal Audit Meeting: Wednesday 23rd April 2025 at 7pm.

12. To discuss Speedwatch: Mr. E. Robinson, Speedwatch Co-ordinator reported the following: January saw the start of the Saham Toney Speedwatch group. The aim of Speedwatch is to monitor vehicles and make them aware, not to actually catch people speeding. Details of speeding vehicles are recorded and passed onto Police admin for processing, who would then send an initial letter. A letter with and guidelines state **'Stronger wording'** is sent when recorded a second time . Persistent offenders will be added to a tasking list.
We have 6 sites which myself and Mr. D. Freeman visited and chose upon before the police checked and agreed them with a few minor 'tweeks'. Chequers Lane, Cley Lane, 2 in Richmond Road, Hills Road and Ovington Road.
Other sites can be added, if necessary, but must meet the police requirements and have an official visit before it can be used. (The volunteers are not covered by insurance if they don't stand at the authorised site) which is a what3words location.
Each site has to have a safe place to stand for the volunteers and with their equipment, **Guidelines state: "Good visibility to motorists to maximise educational impact and reduce the risk of sudden reactions"**
Sudden reactions is what we usually see!
The police recommend starting a group with a minimum of 6 people which we did. Unfortunately, 2 dropped out. In January a police special came to give 4 of us the initial training. Luckily, these 4 initially trained people can now train others who want to join (But those trained after can't train anyone else)
There needs to be 3 people at each Speedwatch session, One will be writing down the details of the vehicles, one will be holding the detection device and a second verifying and getting car details.
Sessions are quite clear, there are 'Speedwatch in operation' signs 100m before the Speedwatch team. All members wear hi-vis jackets, one will be holding a device pointing at the cars (a little like a gun, which does tend to slow people down.
At present there are 4 of us, unfortunately 1 has now had to go back to 5 day working for the summer so can only do weekends. There are a married couple and myself as the 4th member and co-ordinator.
To date we have done 3 Speedwatch sessions, Richmond Road, Cley Lane and Hills Road. Excluding admin and setup times we have done 10hrs 33mins of monitoring between us.
The device has not detected anyone over the speed limits. (all of our sites are 30mph and there is a small leeway given before recording). The device checks cars over a set distance and gives an average reading. Whilst we have not recorded anyone on the device, it is very obvious when the cars suddenly slow down, which brings the average speed down. So, it is achieving what it should.

During the Speedwatch sessions we have had many positive comments, nods, smiles and waves from people. Many pedestrians have stopped and have commented that people are always speeding along their road. In Cley Lane we even had one asking if we are going to dig the road up again!

Obviously we need more people. Once the training and admin are completed it can just be turn up and go.
Each person needs to be Police Vetted, the training needs to be completed (which I can do in about 1.5hrs) and that's it.
I think a nice first goal would be to have one session per week, but the same people can't keep doing it. Usually the sessions last about an hour, the more people we have even if only doing one session per month the more the message gets out.
We have a poster to go up in the WCCC. Our Next Speedwatch session is arranged for this Wednesday.

13. To discuss Risk Assessments: Risk assessments have been carried out for the Street Furniture and the WCCC grounds. A date is to be arranged for the assessment at the Playing Field. Clerk to update the Financial assessment.

Street Furniture

- Bush shelters require cleaning – Clerk to contact cleaning company
- Dog/litter bins – all require cleaning – Clerk to contact cleaning company
- Wooden seats on the Church Green – wood split

WCCC Grounds

- External sheds – need painting and some repairs – to be arranged
- Area around sheds – old tyres, tables etc. need clearing – to discuss hiring a skip with WCCC
- Boundary fence around gas compound – needs repair – to discuss with WCCC
- Dog waste bin/dispenser – not used, needs removing – Chairman will do this.
- Hall pathways – broken flagstone need replacing – Chair to look into this.
- Play area equipment – one machine loose. Wooden step ways need jet washing – Chair to look into this.

It was agreed to get a skip to clear items around the sheds.

14. To discuss the joint meeting between the Parish Council and the WCCC:
This was discussed and the Chair read out the Minutes of the Meeting. A parishioner queried the accounts, saying that there wasn't an opening and closing balance and they weren't on the Charity Commission's website. The Chair stated that they cannot be uploaded until approved at the Annual Parish Meeting. Mr. G. Morton asked whether it would be more beneficial for the WCCC to have a bottle bank. The Chair said this was being looked into by the WCCC committee.
Mr. N. Creek stated that there is a new rule about waste disposal but Mr. D. Freeman said this didn't affect the WCCC as there are less than ten employees.

15. To discuss the WCCC Solar Panels Finances/Heating: The Chair is still awaiting paperwork from J-mac, he will chase this up. Mr. N. Creek reported that the electricity bill should be less due to the fact that the cellar cooler has been temporarily switched off to see if it helps to reduce electric consumption. With regard to the solar panels, 3,000 kws has been exported to the grid.

15.1 To discuss the Fabric of the Wells Cole Community Centre: Mr. N. Creek has had a walk around the interior of the building and produced a report which has shown up various faults that need attention, some urgently. This will be discussed with the WCCC committee.

16. To receive Reports from: -

16.1 Wayland Partnership – All rentable offices within the building have now been taken. There are regular casual bookings for meeting rooms. Watton take up is poor by local youth which is of concern as we know there is a need but are reluctant to engage. CAB starts on Wednesday and will be taking appointments for each week. We have taken on the bookings and organisation of the Shopping village at the Wayland Show. It will be good for the Partnership to have a presence again. Funding continues to be something to watch and BT is writing a bid to Garfield Weston. EB has identified some other funders who might assist with care costs. Winter bills need monitoring. There is a need to reach winter without the worry about costs because we have established a core amount of money to meet them. Donations from partners do come in from time to time which are much appreciated. We are a charity but not automatically viewed as one.

16.2 Wells-Cole Community Centre – Busy couple of months with parties, quiz's and Bingo for the hall. Many thanks to Jono for his hard work with Bingo, he really has done a great job organising it all and calculating the prizes and the profits. Thank you Jono.

Neville has finalised the accounts and got all the last little bits in the right places. I will share the copy with you when Neville sends me one. Once approved by the village I will upload to the Charity Commissions page.

We have been monitoring the usage of the electric with the solar panels and are experimenting with turning the cellar cooling unit off, whilst it's still cool outside, and it's has made a definite difference, what we don't know yet is how it will affect the ale, and if it affects the longevity of the barrel once it's open. If it doesn't spoil we will certainly leave it off until the much warmer weather comes.

I'm also hoping the heating can be turned off soon too if this good weather continues.

We are preparing for our AGM and we will have our reports for the village and accounts to share. See you in a few weeks.

16.3 Playing Field – No report - Next meeting is in April. Erection of the new fence was discussed and although acceptable, there was no communication from the playing field to indicate this and it wasn't replaced like for like, concrete posts had been installed. In future, any work to be carried out needs to be agreed with the Parish Council. L.Rees-Murphy/S.Rees-Murphy to discuss the Fire risk assessment at the next playing field meeting.

16.4 Wells-Cole Trust Fund – The current bank balance now stands at £105,010.19 as agreed as an appropriate figure at the annual review meeting with the financial advisor in February. This was based on anticipated project expenditure over the next few months. Further details will be announced next Tuesday at the Annual Parish Meeting. It has been agreed that new tables for the WCCC can be purchased but there is a technical issue with paying for them which hopefully will be sorted soon. New equipment for the Play Park has been ordered and should be installed soon.

16.5 Play Park Inspector – It was reported there were no major issues.

16.6 Bird Sanctuary – No report this month. A meeting still to be arranged to discuss future plans. A date has been set for Himalayan balsam picking which will take place on the 7th June 2025 between 10-12noon. See website under Notices for further details.

17. Items for the next agenda (not for discussion):
The following items will be on the May Agenda: WCCC Solar/Heating, To Approve Accounts for the year ending 31st March 2025; To Approve the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2024/2025 Section 1 and Section 2 and all the standing items for the Annual Parish Meeting.
18. To confirm the date and time of the next Parish Council Meeting – Monday 12th May 2025 at 7.30 p.m.at the Wells-Cole Community Centre, Bell Lane. This is the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council.

The meeting closed at 9.10p.m.

Parish Matters:

Mr. R. Harrold asked who owns the piece of green outside the church and wondered whether the Parish Council would consider acquiring it. It is currently being used as a car park and the ground is being eroded, it needs tidying up. Clerk to contact NCC about ownership.
Mr. G. Morton asked what is happening on the Ovington Road at Otterwood Kennels as a big fence has been installed and a lot of caravans have appeared. A planning order has been put on the property and is being monitored.
Ms. M. Baldwin reported there are still a lot of glass bottles and dog faeces around the village.
Mr. D. Freeman has received an email from Mr & Mrs Impey from Littleton Farm inviting Councillors to visit to see the work completed since their last visit – Clerk to email Mr & Mrs Impey to arrange.
Ovington Road, Saham Toney is in very poor condition, the edge of the highway has worn away. There are also a lot of pot holes and ruts. Clerk to report to Highways.
Cley Lane – Lorries and buses are using this road and are destroying the trees.
It was also noted that item 18 on the Agenda stated the Annual Parish Council Meeting and this should read the Annual Parish Meeting.