SAHAM TONEY PARISH COUNCIL
MINUTES A MEETING HELD ON THE 2nd JUNE 2025

A Meeting of the Parish Council was held at the Wells-Cole Community Centre, Bell Lane on the 2nd June 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, Ms. M. Baldwin, Mr. P. Bate and Ms. H. Crane (District Councillors).

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

1. To Consider Apologies for Absence: No apologies for absence 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 12th May 2025: The Minutes of the meeting held on the 12th May 2025 were proposed by Ms. K. Avery and seconded by S. Rees-Murphy and unanimously agreed.

4. To Report Matters Arising from the Minutes:

- Sports Pavilion – a planning application has been submitted for the flood lights
- Street/speeding/passing bay name plates – work has been programmed for the passing bay signs
- Fabric of the WCCC – work has started and is ongoing
- WASFAG – next meeting 9th June 2025
- Risk Assessments – work has started on the cleaning of the village street furniture

5. Reports from District/County Councillors: - A report was received from District Councillor P. Bate as follows:-
During the council meeting on 22nd May the council leader commenced the meeting with an address, reiterating the commendable performance of Breckland and the Conservative party, this is the usual start to all the main council meetings. The opposition raised inquiries regarding the proposals for the Abbey estate, which are currently disorganized. Although a response was provided, it lacked complete coherence. The Reform Party criticized the planning process in general, specifically highlighting issues related to plans for a pig farm. The response indicated that these processes are proceeding correctly, albeit with a substantial amount of information to be reviewed.
A question was posed about the proposed traveller site on Dereham Road. Development has been halted, and its future is now under review within the planning process. Additionally, there was an inquiry regarding the Breckland homes allowance and its coverage. This fund is designated for purchasing items that enable individuals to remain in their homes.
I became a councillor because of an interest in local government as well as some political ideals. At the midway point of my term, with two years to go, I reflect on my experience as a councillor. It is consistently engaging to observe the mechanisms of local government and

understand the factors that contribute to its functionality. The dedicated and diligent staff in the offices play an integral role in ensuring the smooth operation of our local government. They are always ready to provide answers to any questions I may have. The councillors themselves demonstrate commitment, though their actions are often constrained by party governance structures. I t surprises me how few councillors control the business of the council with most just voting as they are told. As I look forward to the remaining two years of my term, please feel free to reach out if there is anything you believe I can assist with.

The following report was received from District Councillor Ms. H. Crane:-
On the 20th May Breckland Council arranged an in person and teams meeting with Town and Parishes to start the engagement on the New Local plan. I was pleased that a member of the Saham Toney Neighbourhood plan group attended. This meeting set out the process and how the Council needs strong involvement from all Towns and parishes. Villages will be invited in clusters to come to Elizabeth House and look at the sites that have been brought forward by landowners through the call for sites process. It is really important to engage, as I know Saham will, with this process. The amount of housing that has to be delivered through the plan period has increased by 45% and we need to do this with input from our Town and parish Councils.
The 3 parishes that neighbour the site of Otterwood Kennels at Watton Road Ovington will have received a copy of both the 'Stop' notice and the enforcement notice. The landowner has brought the site forward as a gypsy & traveller site in the Local Plan. This will be processed the same as any other site and be based on criteria as set out in the NPPF.

6. Time Allocated for Members of the Public to Speak:

Margaret Robins, Cley Lane. I would like to highlight a few observations on behalf of my friends and neighbours regarding an application made under FMIN guidance.
Breckland Council says it has specific guidance and procedures for planning consultations, ensuring transparency and community involvement in the planning process.
Applications designated F M I N are for less complicated projects, described by Breckland as follows:

- An FMIN application is used for simpler developments, such as minor extensions or changes of use within a dwelling. It may require less detailed plans and supporting information compared to a FULL planning application.
- FMIN applications are often used for developments that don't significantly alter the existing landscape or impact neighbouring properties. As an example: adding a conservatory to an existing house or changing the use of a bedroom to a home office fits within the scope of FMIN.

The recent planning application for 7 bungalows was made under an FMIN application even though it WOULD impact on neighbours, the existing landscape, the wider community and appeared to have ignored our Neighbourhood Plan. I would suggest that this led to a breakdown in local community engagement, consultation, information and achievable routes to object. Rightly or wrongly, there was a sense that this application had been submitted covertly with the intention of sidelining the local community and due process. In the background, the well-known habit of a developer cutting down trees had already taken place prior to the preparation and submission of an Ecological report and application. Attractive profits outweigh any fine that might be imposed.
Planning Letters were restricted to some, but not all close neighbours.

- The Notification letter from Breckland was dated 3rd April

- One resident's letter arrived on 16th April and using their tablet, they were unable to access the application on the portal.
- The following day(17th), they asked me whether I could access the application on their behalf. Armed with the latest kit, the portal search repeatedly reported "**not found**". I found it eventually by scrolling down the weekly lists.
- Closing date noted as 24th April ….. the clock is ticking.

Remember:

You must register on the portal to submit an objection BUT if you were working off a tablet, smart phone or basic phone, you stood little chance of even finding the application.

With time running short, Cley Lane residents heard about the application by "word of mouth" resulting in sketchy information. None were officially notified. They too struggled with submitting objections and there were many requests for information and help. Many had no access to the portal and struggled to email on their phones. Some had no IT at all, reliant entirely on a letter with a stamp – works, but only if you have been given the time!

So, a template setting out the basics was made available. We agree with Parish Councillors this is not ideal. Individual residents should create a response in their own words but given these circumstances, SOMETHING was better than NOTHING.

A community affected by flooding and inadequate sewer capacity will be risk averse and sensitive to any development that adds pressure to our struggling village system. It is SO important that planning applications are submitted under their correct heading, subject to the full range of transparent reporting with statutory and public consultation. The local community should NOT be excluded in this process, nor should they be obstructed by a troubled IT maze that currently does not work for many - even the IT savvy ones.

The Parish Council are our ever-vigilant Gatekeepers.

We are all THANKFUL that that they requested more time to allow for due diligence, underpinned by our valuable Neighbourhood Plan.

We APPLAUD the Planning Officer who gave the application the full weight of his professional expertise.

Finally, we THANK those kind residents who responded to multiple requests from their neighbours for help in submitting objections – **you all know who you are**.

Thank you for listening

Neighbourhood Watch – Trevor Bunce reported that £20 has been donated to the Methodist Church to advertise Neighbourhood Watch. Another £20 was donated towards a function at the WCCC. Mr Bunce has agreed to pay £16 to another area co-ordinator for hall hire as local funding has now dried up. Funds are depleting due to the purchase of seven Neighbourhood Watch signs which are being placed at various locations around the village.

Mr Bunce also mentioned that he has been invited to spend two days at the Royal Norfolk Show on the Police stand to promote Neighbourhood Watch.

There is also the Wayland Show coming up on Sunday 3rd August where Wayland House will also be present.

A parishioner asked if the following comments could be fed back to Breckland Council:-

When uploading an objection to the Warwick Farm proposal, personal details on Breckland's Planning Portal were not redacted initially which is a breach of Data Protection. An objection to the Coburg Lane application was also sent to Breckland Planning but not uploaded onto the website. There appears to be a communication problem within Breckland Council.

It was also reported that the Main Planning Committee Meeting and the Local Plan Update, in terms of recruitment that interviews for a Principal Planning Officer and Policy Officer would be taking place back in April. Other appointments would be taking place soon. There are concerns that the Local Plan has a huge amount of work to deliver in a ridiculously short

timescale with little resource. The parishioner asked for an update for the next meeting. Concerns were raised about the recent call for sites being mapped out by an apprentice planner which doesn't give a lot of confidence. Ms. H. Crane stated that the Planning Department is under resourced and the fact that there is such a tight timescale is that the Local Plan had to be paused. She also asked that the parishioner put all concerns into an email to Mr Simon Wood of the Breckland Planning Department. Ms. Crane also stated that she doesn't have any concerns at the moment

Mark Aitken gave an update on the High Grove Solar Farm saying that he has negotiated an extension with RWE so now all Parish Councils have until 10th July to respond to the stage 2 consultation.

A parishioner informed the PC that he attended the Call for Sites meeting via Teams and reported that Breckland intend to gather clusters of Parish Councils together to discuss the raw data for the Call for Sites as a lot of sites have been put in but it doesn't mean that they will be approved. There are a lot of sites around Saham and if approved, there will be an additional 411 houses. Also a lot of sites that have been put in the call for sites are in the Neighbourhood Plan.

7. Correspondence:

- Email from County Councillor NCC – Parish Report – no action
- Email from NCC – Coburg Lane Rights of Way - ongoing
- Email from NALC – Weekly Update – no action
- Email from Rospa – Play Park – annual inspection due
- Email from District Councillor – Helping Nature Recover – no action
- Email from parishioner – Local Plan Update - ongoing
- Email from BC – Local Plan Update – New Call For Sites – meeting due to take place 10th June from 18:00 – 20:00

Further emails received since the Agenda was issued:

- Email from Planning Enforcement case ENF/064/25 – Otterwood Kennels – ongoing
- Email from Mark Aitken with an update on the RWE project - ongoing

8. To approve Accounts for payment:

The following accounts are due for payment:

• Nest Pension	£ 57.31
• Watton Town Council – website contribution	£ 129.00
• Mrs G Christian – wages	£1199.92
• Mr D Johnson – work on Orchard	£ 288.00 (from Orchard funds)
• Mr C Millan – work on Orchard	£ 288.00 (from Orchard funds)
• WCCC – Hire of Hall	£ 95.00

A charge of £12.50 had been charged by Barclays for stopping a cheque. The payment of these accounts was proposed by M. Baldwin, seconded by A. Wilson and unanimously agreed.

9. To Consider Planning Matters:

- PL/2024/0801/FMIN – Erection of 4 no. floodlights on rugby pitch, Saham Toney Society Club, Pages, Lane, Saham Toney – no objection.

10. To discuss High Grove Solar Farm: The Chair has produced a report on behalf of the Parish Council with the help of Mark Aitken. The report has been sent to all councillors for any further comments. Mr Aitken has several meetings over the coming weeks with action groups including being at the Renerner8 Power site just outside of Ipswich doing a sound and visual survey of their solar and battery site. Further information to follow.
A. Wilson asked the question about fire safety. Mr Aitken reported that at present there is no provision for standing water and that negotiations are ongoing. A parishioner asked why the need for water storage. Mr Aitken replied saying that BYD, the battery supplier, had indicated there has to be quarter of a million litres of water just in case vegetation around the battery units set fire, especially during the summer months. The Chair thanked Mr Aitken for all his hard work towards the RWE project.

11. To receive Reports from: -
11.1 Wayland Partnership – Mr. R. Harrold reported that there is a team of people now to help produce the village history book. Copies will be available in hard and soft back including a WW1 book. Workshops are still happening at Dragonfly and are being advertised. With regard to the redevelopment of the site, a PR company has now been employed who are working on the publicity and a logo.
11.2 Wells-Cole Community Centre – The electricity bill is currently £22,629.06. Balance at the bank is £6,148.10 and the balance in the reserve account is £410.70. The first car boot sale took place last Sunday which was well attended. Future car boot sales will take place on the last Sunday of the month until around October.
11.3 Playing Field – L. Rees Murphy reported that he hadn't received a response to an email he had sent to the Playing Field Committee with regard to the risk assessments, fire risk assessment and work on the Pavilion. This was discussed and agreed that another stronger email be sent as there is a timescale attached to various aspects of the fire risk assessment report.
11.4 Wells-Cole Trust Fund – Current balance on the bank account is £94,401.04 after £2,500 that was paid in on the 15th May and £15,609.15 has been paid out towards the new play park equipment. The next payment due will be for the floodlights at the playing field.
11.5 Play Park Inspector – It was reported that one of the adult exercise bikes is a little loose so needs some attention. R. Harrold agreed to look at it. It was also reported that there is a lot of litter and dog mess around the play park and car park. It was agreed to put another notice in the Saga. R. Harrold reported that in North Norfolk dogs were now only allowed on green field sites on leads. Already a lot of dogs have been banned.
11.6 Bird Sanctuary – Saturday 7th June from 10-12 is the day volunteers are needed to clear the Himalayan Balsam in the Bird Sanctuary, weather dependant. Any help would be greatly appreciated.
11.7 Other reports - Mr. R. Harrold reported that various organisations i.e. Church of England and various other youth groups have had to shut down because they don't have a Safeguarding Policy advertised. Anyone who has a disability should be able to access to a Safeguarding Officer within an organisation. Someone within the Parish Council needs to be nominated as the Safeguarding Officer and it has to be published on a notice board within the organisation. Clerk to look into adopting a Safeguarding Policy.
Problems have arisen again at the Church with the residents of the Old Rectory turning off the water and an event had to be cancelled. There have been problems trying to contact the residents. AWA have been out and tested their pipework, everything appears to be ok. If the Church can't resolve the problem with the present owners of the Old Rectory then it will have to be put in the hands of a Solicitor. It may be that the Church will have to apply for their own

water supply to the Church. AWA will run a pipe to the boundary of the site but the Church would be responsible to run a pipe from the boundary to the kitchen.

12. Items for the next agenda (not for discussion):

- Action Plan
- Urgent Business Policy
- High Grove Solar Farm
- WCCC kitchen replacement
- Village Gateways
- To discuss re-advertising for a new Clerk

13. To confirm the date and time of the next Parish Council Meeting – Monday 7th July 2025 at 7.30 p.m.at the Wells-Cole Community Centre, Bell Lane.

The meeting closed at 8.30p.m.

Parish Matters:

N. Creek reported that flooding work has started on the back pond. There has been a delay on the work due to take place on the Cley Pit as the owner of the nearby field will not give access.
D. Freeman inquired about the completion of the Village Gateway work, and the Clerk confirmed that it had been finished. However, Mr. Freeman suggested adding signs to the gateways, it was therefore agreed to include this matter for discussion in the next agenda.
D. Freeman asked whether the grass around the WCCC had been cut as it is looking overgrown, particularly around the play area. Clerk to contact Groundscape.
A. Wilson offered to have a look at the water problem at the Church if a solution couldn't be made.
K. Avery requested signs to be erected on the sheds at the WCCC as teenagers have been climbing on the roofs.

To propose a motion for the exclusion of public and press for the discussion of a confidential matter.