

**PARISH MEETING FOR THE PARISH OF SAHAM TONEY
TUESDAY THE 16th APRIL 2024 AT THE WELLS-COLE COMMUNITY CENTRE, BELL
LANE AT 7.30 P.M.**

AGENDA

1. Minutes of the Parish Meeting held on the 18th April 2023
2. Report from the County Councillor – Mr. Ed Connolly
3. Reports from the District Councillors – Ms H. Crane and Mr. T. Birt
4. Report of the Parish Council – Mr. J. Baldwin
5. Report on the Wells-Cole Trust Fund
6. Report & Accounts of the Saham Toney Fuel Allotment & Perkins Charity
7. Report on the Ella Roberts Memorial Trust

The Meeting will be followed by the Annual Meetings of the Wells-Cole Community Centre and the Saham Toney Playing Field.

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON THE 18th APRIL 2023

Mr. N. Creek, Chairman of the Parish Council, presided over an assembly of 8 councillors and 20 parishioners. Mr. E. Connolly (County Councillor) and Ms. H. Crane and Mr. T. Birt (District Councillors) were also present.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. Minutes of the Meeting held on the 19th April 2022: Copies of the Minutes had been circulated to all those attending the meeting and the adoption of the Minutes was proposed by Mr. J. Baldwin, seconded by Mr. D. Freeman and unanimously agreed.

2. Report of the County Councillor: Mr. E. Connolly said that his full Report will be available on the Parish Council's website. He will continue to respond to requests for information and help from the Parish Council and residents.

3. Report from the District Councillors: Ms. H. Crane said it had been a pleasure to work with the Parish Council and the residents of Saham. Ms. Crane's Report had been circulated to all those attending and the full Report is attached to these Minutes and will be on the website.

Mr. T. Birt gave his Report which is attached to these Minutes. For family reasons Mr. Birt is not standing again for election which is a pity because there is still a great deal to do at Breckland in terms of openness and transparency. I am seriously worried that the Breckland 2035 climate policy will not be met due to lack of support from certain influential members of the Council.

Mr. B. Mitchell asked if there was another Green Party councillor standing and Mr. Birt replied that there is a Green candidate and two Conservatives.

Mr. R. Baldwin asked about Barnham Broom. Ms. H. Crane said it is not on the market and Mr. Birt said it has never been on the open market but Breckland accepted an unsolicited offer.

4. Report of the Parish Council: The Chairman read the Report for the Parish Council and this is attached to these minutes.

5. Report on the Wells-Cole Trust Fund: - Mr. R. Harrold, Chair of the Trust said the Fund had been left to the Parish Council by a resident of Saham Toney to benefit the Village Hall and the Playing Field and other property. The Investment portfolio changed last year and is now handled by Novia under the direction of Overbury's. The car park at the Community Centre was in a very bad state of repair and as the grant of £10,000 from the NCC had to be utilised within the financial year ending March 2023, approximately £30,000 of the Fund's capital investment had been used towards the resurfacing and drainage work. This money had been provided with advice from the Trust's Financial Adviser. The Charity is now registered as a CIO with the Charity Commission as if the income is over £5000, you have to become a charity. Projects in the pipeline are – near doors and windows at the Community Centre as the existing ones are nearly 30 years' old. The current balance on the Trust Fund's account is £32684.38 with another payment due in May.

Mr. R. Walker asked if the Trust knew how much this payment would be but this was not known.

6. Report and Accounts of the Saham Toney Fuel Allotment and Perkins Charity – Mrs. J. Glenn, the Clerk to the Trustees presented the Accounts which were proposed by Mr. J. Baldwin and seconded by Ms. K. Avery and unanimously agreed. A total of 26 grants totalling £3390 had been awarded during 2022.

7. Report on the Ella Roberts Memorial Trust: Mrs. J. Glenn, Chair of the Trust, said that for those that don't know about this Charity, it was set up in 1993 by the Reverend Roberts in memory of his wife Ella with an initial deposit of £25,000. Unfortunately, during the course of the past year, the company in which the capital was invested went into liquidation and the sum of £24,472.02 was returned to the Bank account. Although interest rates are increasing there is no investment that would pay the income that the Charity was getting previously. The Trustees met and decided to approach the Charity Commission to find out if the capital could be used to provide grants. Fortunately, there is no restriction of the capital and this can be spent until there is no money left at which point, the Charity can be wound up. There is still a balance of approximately £26,000 in the Charity's bank account and so this will last for many years. The Charity is open for applications from anyone living in the parish of Saham for grants towards any health costs that are not covered by the NHS e.g. dentist, optician and physio.

Margery Buttle report: Mrs. B. Harrold is the representative on this Charity. The money was left by a resident of Saham Toney to provide flowers for the war memorial in the Church. Mrs. Harrold said the flowers only cost around £70 a year and asked that the Parish Council look to see if the money could be used for anything else. The Clerk said the Council would need to see the Governing Document for the Charity to see if this was possible. Mrs. Harrold will ask the Diocese for this. The present balance on the COIF account is £4443.96.

Mrs. B. Harrold thanked the Parish Council for all the work they do on behalf of the village to make sure everything is run properly.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 8.30 p.m.

DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S REPORTS– Ms. H. Crane

Saham Toney Ward including Bradenham, Carbrooke, Ovington and Saham Toney.

It has been an honour and a pleasure to serve this ward over the last 4 years and I hope to be able to continue to do so after the local elections. The ward covers a large geographical area stretching from Bradenham through to Scoulton with over 2,500 households. I have been proactive in attending parish council meetings and other committee meetings of community groups. I have been able to get to know many residents and community groups who I have helped along the way. I have successfully supported many grants in the ward including Jubilee celebrations, green grant funding at both Saham Toney allotments and Carbrooke millennium Green and match fund grants at

Bradenham Cricket club, Saham Toney Sports pavilion, Carbrooke Community Hub, Carbrooke Millennium Green, The Wayland partnership, and most recently the Kings Coronation grants for community celebrations.

Here are a few key Breckland Council achievements from 2022-2023

Thriving Places

750k has been invested in our 5 market towns to support the local high street. We are supporting economic growth in the district by project managing and funding a new electric sub-station in Snetterton. 4.2 million allocated to help businesses bounce back from Covid. Refurbished the Queen Mothers Garden in Dereham. Supported over 45 new enterprises and created over 65 jobs with a successful start-up programme. Secured 1.6million national funding to for local projects to boost local skills and training, reduce carbon emissions and support our most vulnerable residents. Started to plan how we will help people in Breckland access better homes through a new strategic housing plan.

Inspiring communities

Providing accommodation for our residents by investing over 4.6million in emergency housing. We have supported the Daisy programme with 100k over 3 years to help the survivors of domestic abuse. Supported local communities by introducing a local food store and a mobile food bus. Along with MIND and YANA have trained over 200 mental health first aiders throughout the district. Our new social prescribers are easing pressures on the national health service. We have piloted a new handyperson scheme to help people stay in their own homes and avoid admission to care homes. We have awarded over 120k to local community projects. Over 12k given in grants for the Platinum Jubilee celebrations and launched a 10k educational bursary. We welcomed almost 100 Ukrainians into the district and have worked with partners and families to provide temporary accommodation.

Sustainability and the local environment.

We have reduced our CO2 emissions by 437T since 2019/20 and invested in £850k in LED street lights, reduced emissions at Elizabeth House. Along with SERCO we have been trialling alternatives to chemical weed treatment. New pool covers and LED lights have been installed at our 2 leisure centres.

We have taken action against 100 offenders for fly tipping or littering.

We have distributed 100k in grants to enable communities to further their own green agenda.

Contracts have been awarded in Swaffham and Watton for EV charging points.

Planted 700 trees in Attleborough and Swaffham and a further 3000 trees will be planted at Oxburgh Hall in partnership with the National Trust.

Supported more businesses by providing cost effective trade waste collections which will generate an income to be ploughed back into other Council services.

Alongside our normal waste collections, we have introduced battery collections and small electrical items.

Increased the protection of our natural environment by employing a forestry officer.

Working Smarter

Made our website more user friendly and accessible for our residents, particularly those with a disability. Breckland is in the top 10 councils for website accessibility.

Enabled residents to get answers to their queries 24/7 through our new Chatbot 'Bobbie' and soon residents will be able to get answers to their queries through Alexa.

Generated nearly 3.4 million from commercial property which enables us to do far more than statutory services for our residents.

Made £344k efficiencies this financial year.

Processed over 5million£ of government money in council tax rebate payments.

High levels of trust from residents with 79% telling us so in a recent survey.

We have the lowest council tax for any District Council in Norfolk. A band D property saw an increase of £4.95 per year for all statutory services. 75% of our residents live in Bands A-C and the increase will be much less.

This report shows that Breckland Council is not a 'Lights on only' Council we do so much more to enhance the lives of our residents and make Breckland a good and safe place to live, work and thrive.

Mr. T. Birt

It's been an interesting year to say the least. For family reasons I'm not standing for re-election this time, which is a pity because there is still a great deal to do at Breckland in terms of openness and transparency. I am seriously worried that the Breckland 2035 climate policy will not be met due to lack of support from certain influential members of the Council. But there is a Green candidate as well as two Conservatives, so there is a choice!

Our communities have shown great resilience following Covid, Brexit and the cost-of-living crisis, however there are some who have really struggled and we need to be aware that some people are in desperate need and may not be immediately obvious.

Breckland Council can help, there are crisis grants of a few hundred pounds and help with Council Tax, but they are only available to those who make the struggle known and apply. Breckland has been quite effective at processing Disabled Facilities Grant, a central Govt fund that pays for adaptation to home to allow people to stay at home rather than go into care, however it is significantly oversubscribed.

There is so much I could mention but I'll just focus on a few subjects:

NP / LP

Saham's NP has been a triumph, but I can't say the same for Breckland's Local Plan refresh. Breckland failed to action a requirement set by the inspector when the plan was approved in 2019, they have messed up Reg 18 and Reg 19 consultations, re-opened a call-for-sites and generally kept much of it secret until required to publish. The old Local Plan working group which opposition member were initially not even allowed to attend was disbanded and instead 'all member briefings' introduced, but these were few and far between, didn't have a formal agenda nor are there any minutes and you've guessed it they were held in secret!

Council Tax

In February the Council held its budget setting meeting at which opposition groups made five separate proposals, all costed and checked, those amendments included:

- pause the sale of green spaces,
- creating startup shops in our towns for small business,
- adding to the DFG funding (which I mentioned is oversubscribed),
- invest in Temporary Housing Accommodation, which would have been self-funding by reduced costs in the longer term.
- and finally, to use just a part of a windfall income to have a zero Council Tax rise.

However, each was defeated by unanimous vote from the ruling group.

Despite a narrative which attempts to suggest our Council Tax is the cheapest in the Country, remember that this is only one particular element, and comparison made in made in the budget documentation do not compare like with like. For example, Yarmouth is a borough council and therefore doesn't have separate parish precept, it is all combined into one, so if you wanted to compare fairly you need to add Breckland tax to the parish precept.

So, in Norfolk, where the police and County taxes are identical you might think living in Breckland would be the cheapest overall, but it isn't – Yarmouth is, Breckland isn't second either, that accolade goes to Kings Lynn & West Norfolk, Breckland are third just in Norfolk.

I think this is a reminder to be careful how stories are spun.

Barham Broom

While a fair bit more information about Barnham Broom has been released, ultimately the Council won its appeal against the ICO decision and it doesn't have to publish the full meeting minutes or disclose the income from the asset.

What is interesting is that the Council employed the services of a London barrister to fight its case and almost the first thing was to apply to the court to stop me attending the whole hearing. Why? As a Councillor I'm supposed to be fully antiquated with the details. The case was all held in closed session but I was able to attend more than half, but basically, I could only hear what I already knew, what I was not permitted to hear was the evidence given by Breckland Officers – there is only one reason I can think of for being excluded when a Council officer gave evidence, I invite you to speculate.

In November last year Breckland announced it was selling Barnham Broom and it invoked a “rule 12” to override all normal scrutiny from the decision. In fact, nobody will hear anything until well after the sale is completed. Rule 12 is designed for emergencies, but this wasn't one. I can be certain of that because at my own expense I employed a specialist barrister to advise me. I presented a report to Cabinet which clearly showed the serious risk of *Misconduct in Public Office*.

Parish Council Chairman's Annual Report 2023

LAST YEAR (2022) WAS BETTER THAN 2021. COVID-19 IS STILL AROUND BUT THERE ARE LESS THAN THREE CASES IN OUR SAMPLE AREA OF ASHILL, BRADENHAM AND SAHAM.

THE WELLS-COLE CAR PARK HAS BEEN RESURFACED THANKS TO A GRANT BUT THERE IS STILL SOME WORK TO BE COMPLETED.

TREE WORK AT THE WELLS-COLE WAS CARRIED OUT TO REMOVE SELF-SET SAPLINGS, DANGEROUS TREES AND THE CULLING OF ASH TREES WITH DIE BACK. WORK WILL RESUME IN THE AUTUMN AFTER THE NESTING SEASON.

THE VILLAGE RESILIENCE PLAN IS ALMOST COMPLETED.

RISK ASSESSMENTS AND VALUATIONS FOR THE WELLS-COLE AND THE PLAYING FIELDS WERE CARRIED OUT AND RECOMMENDATIONS ARE BEING IMPLEMENTED.

THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE ORCHARD WERE TRANSFERRED TO THE PARISH COUNCIL FOR INSURANCE REASONS. THEIR MONEY IS RING- FENCED.

THE FETE WAS HELD FOR THE FIRST TIME IN SOME YEARS AND WAS HUGEY SUCCESSFUL. THANKS ARE DUE TO THE FETE COMMITTEE AND ALL WHO WERE INVOLVED.

TO THE COMING YEAR

THE COUNCIL ELECTIONS WILL BE HELD ON 4 MAY. THE POLLING STATION WILL BE AT THE WELLS-COLE. YOU WILL NEED SOME FORM OF PHOTO IDENTITY TO VOTE. THERE WILL BE NO PARISH COUNCIL ELECTION AS THERE ARE SUFFICIENT PEOPLE STANDING TO MAKE UP THE NUMBERS REQUIRED, 8 PEOPLE ARE STANDING LEAVING 3 VACANCIES FOR CO-OPTION.

THE CORONATION OF KING CHARLES III AND THE QUEEN CONSORT WILL BE ON 6 MAY. TO MARK THE OCCASION WE HOPE TO INSTALL A “STONEHENGE” SEAT AT THE BOTTOM OF HILLS ROAD TO REPLACE THE EXISTING SEAT WHICH IS NOT IN THE BEST CONDITION. A PICTURE OF THE NEW SEAT IS ON DISPLAY, PLEASE HAVE A LOOK AT IT AND LET US KNOW IF YOU HAVE ANY COMMENTS.

THERE WILL BE A BIG LUNCH AT THE WELLS-COLE ON SUNDAY 7 MAY. THERE IS TO BE A FREE BBQ BUT YOU MUST LET THE ORGANISERS KNOW IF YOU WISH TO ATTEND BY FILLING IN THE FORM IN THE SAGA. IF ANYONE WISHES TO DONATE ANYTHING TOWARDS THE BIG LUNCH PLEASE LET THE ORGANISERS KNOW.

THE DOG BIN AT THE WELLS-COLE HAS BEEN REPLACED BY A LARGER MODEL. THE OLD BIN WILL BE RECYCLED TO HILL'S ROAD, SUBJECT TO NCC APPROVAL.

3 NEW NOTICE BOARDS HAVE BEEN ORDERED AND SHOULD BE DELIVERED SOON. THE NOTICE BOARD AT THE RICHMOND ROAD BUS STOP WILL BE RECYCLED TO THE ORCHARD.

AS YOU WILL KNOW, THE LATE NEVILLE WELLS-COLE HAS, IN HIS WILL, LEFT THE PARISH COUNCIL ONE MILLION TWO HUNDRED THOUSAND POUNDS. THE TERMS OF THE WILL ARE FAIRLY STRICT IN THAT THE INTEREST IS TO BE USED FOR THE MAINTENANCE AND IMPROVEMENT OF THE WELLS-COLE AND ITS GROUNDS AND THE PAVILION AND THE CRICKET FIELD. THE FUND IS ADMINISTERED BY 5 TRUSTEES WHO MUST BE PARISH COUNCILLORS. HOW THE MONEY IS SPENT IS DECIDED BY THE PARISH COUNCIL.

THE WELLS-COLE IS TO HAVE NEW WINDOWS DUE TO ROT IN THE OLD ONES AT A OF COST OF £23,000.

THE FETE COMMITTEE ARE UNABLE TO HOLD A FETE THIS YEAR DUE TO THE LACK OF VOLUNTEERS. IT IS HOPED TO HOLD AN EVENT IN THE AUTUMN.

ON THE SUBJECT OF FLOOD DEFENCE. IT IS BETTER TO PREVENT WATER FLOWING INTO THE VILLAGE THAN TRYING TO DRAIN IT OUT AFTER THE DAMAGE HAS BEEN DONE. AS YOU WILL KNOW, THE DITCH IN PAGES LANE HAS BEEN PIPED AND SOME 40 LEAKY DAMS HAVE OR ARE BEING BUILT BETWEEN ASHILL AND SAHAM. AN AREA OF LAND NEAR LODGE FARM HAS BEEN LEFT UNCULTIVATED TO ACT AS A SPONGE AND THE CLAY PITS (PARISH LAGOON) IS TO BE DEVELOPED AS AN ATTENUATION AREA. THERE A SET OF PLANS OF THE ATTENUATION SYSTEM ON DISPLAY. THE LLFA ARE NEGOTIATING WITH A LAND OWNER IN THE HOPE ANOTHER WATER HOLDING AREA CAN BE AGREED. IT HAS BEEN REPORTED THAT THE FLOW IN THE STREAM FROM HILLS ROAD TO THE ALLOTMENTS HAS ALREADY SLOWED. A PIPE FROM THE DITCH AT WARWICK FARM TO THE BIRD SANCTUARY TO DRAIN THE VILLAGE CENTRE IS BEING LOOKED INTO. WE WON'T KNOW HOW SUCCESSFUL ALL THIS WORK WILL BE UNTIL WE HAVE ANOTHER CLOUD BURST (NEVER, IT IS HOPED). ALL RIPARIAN OWNERS ARE ASKED TO KEEP THE DITCHES FOR WHICH THEY ARE RESPONSIBLE, CLEAR OF BLOCKAGES.

MY THANKS, AND THOSE OF THE WHOLE PARISH, GO

TO ALL THE COUNCILLORS AND THE CLERK FOR THEIR HELP AND WORK THROUGHOUT THE YEAR.

TO OUR COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCILLORS FOR THEIR ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS AND HELP THROUGHOUT THE YEAR.

TO CLIVE MILLAN FOR CHECKING THE PLAY-EQUIPMENT AT THE COMMUNITY CENTRE AND MAKING SURE THE EQUIPMENT IS SAFE FOR THE CHILDREN TO USE.

