

GRISTON PARISH COUNCIL

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**Minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly held on Tuesday 27th May 2025 at 7:00pm at the
St Peter and St Paul's Church, Griston**

GRISTON ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY MINUTES

In attendance – Parish Councillors L Steventon, Cllr B Park, Cllr K Mace, Cllr K Heath, Cllr P Lake, Cllr S Barber (Chair) & 5 members of the public.

Minutes – Miss L Dawson

1. Welcome and introductions

2. Minutes

The minutes from the Annual Parish Assembly held on Thursday 30th May 2024 were APPROVED as a true and correct record and signed by the Chair.

3. A report from the Parish Council Chair, Shane Barber, in Appendix 1.
4. A report from the County Councillor, not in attendance. Claire Bowes. **AWAITING REPORT**
5. A report from the District Councillor, written report provided, in Appendix 3.
6. A report from the Wayland Partnership and the proposed Digital & Creative Media Centre, Appendix 4.
7. A report from HMP Wayland's Barry Sewell, Head of Education, Skills, and Work, Appendix 5.
8. A report from the Griston Community Group, John Heath, Appendix 6.
9. A report from Griston Community Archive Group, Appendix 7.
10. Open Forum: No comments.

Meeting Closed: 19:35

Signed:

Dated:

Appendix 1, Parish Council Chair Report

I'd just like to personally review the past year, when I've been proud to serve as chair of the parish council.

Firstly, I'd like to thank my fellow councillors for electing me; I was a fairly new councillor so wasn't entirely sure what to expect, but it's been largely enjoyable and I'm happy to put myself forward for a second year if the council wishes it.

The year 2024-25 brought some ups and downs. The key negative was the ongoing planning application and subsequent appeal for the Coughtrey site, which we have already seen, heard and smelled has the potential to change the nature of Griston. We are due to hear the final outcome of the planning appeal very soon, and whatever the result, it will fall on the parish council to work to get the best outcome for the parish.

The village has been blighted by the lack of an outcome, with any house purchasing searches throwing up the outstanding application as an issue. Thus selling a house in Griston has been more difficult than usual, but a final decision should improve matters and encourage development to progress.

My second disappointment was the inability to deliver the Thompson Road trod. This eventually turned out to be unachievable but outside of our control and I remain convinced it would have been of great benefit to the village. This has allowed our reserves to recover.

On the positive side, I'm pleased to report that our adoption of a rolling two-year action plan has kept a focus on issues that we have been able to progress in a structured way. The plan has evolved continuously and the latest addition is the installation of a sensory garden on the land we own in Carbrooke Road. Reviewing it now, we have made consistent progress on issues that historically we may otherwise have allowed to slip off the agenda. We have managed to clear two aged issues this year in the Carbrooke Road dog bin and the owl box both being installed after years in councillor Park's garage.

In my opinion, perhaps our biggest achievement has been the forging of direct face-to-face relationships with key people in Breckland District Council and Norfolk Highways. We have attended multiple events at Dereham and I believe Breckland is now acutely aware of Griston's specific issues - especially around planning. It has to be positive that we are greeted by christian name by the council leader, their solicitor and planning director. Whatever the future of Breckland as a council, these relationships should continue to bear fruit in any new authority.

I'm also pleased to report that we may be in the middle of a reset of our relationship with HMP Wayland, our largest employer and a huge influence on Griston. I appreciate some of my fellow councillors still have some reservations based on past interactions, but these were before my tenure and I think it would be foolish not to grasp an opportunity to establish how much mutual benefit may be available.

We've also made progress on works around the village; the park programme has seen us install four new swing seats, a new trolley assembly on the zip line, we've refurbished our main noticeboard, the Congo Jungle Walk replaced and a replacement tunnel for the Earth mound being sourced. I'd like to thank John Ashdown for his continued weekly inspections of the play equipment.

Much of this was achieved by councillors' own efforts, and I'd like thank Councillor Lake especially for his Saturday contributions. The park programme will continue to update this valuable facility. It is likely that the bench opposite the bus stop will be replaced this summer as a contribution by the prison and we have secured matched grant funding to properly secure the Carbrooke Road gates.

We have also placed a new three year grass cutting contract based on our own detailed specification and drawings which provides predictability to a key area of spend. Further cost saving measures on key spend items will be actioned during the coming year.

Despite our turnover of clerks this year, I'm pleased to report we have now put in place a series of compliant policies and this process will be completed this year. Along with a comprehensive review of our core documents, the website is fully functional, albeit there is still quite a lot of tidying up to do behind the front page.

The website enables us to finally start the Neighbourhood Plan; we have notified Breckland - another new relationship - and the next round of central government funding is due to be announced in June. We are set up to commence formal proceedings soon after with the appointment of a consultant and issue of the initial questionnaire.

The Neighbourhood Plan will be the key activity to secure the future of Griston's moving forwards. We are under no illusions about the level of effort needed, but our team is well-balanced and capable.

Lastly, the challenges of central Government changing planning policy and the looming regional reorganisation has raised significant issues in Breckland, which will be felt by the parish council. As councillors, we will be asked to stand up and make decisions on behalf of the village, and I'm sure we will rise to the occasion.

Thank you

Shane

Appendix 3, District Councillors Philip Cowen & Sarah Suggitt Report.

Devolution and LGR

Devolution

Proposals are in train for the joint Norfolk and Suffolk mayoral elections to take place in May 2026 that would then see the formation of a combined Norfolk and Suffolk strategic authority

Local Government reorganisation

The outline proposal for a three unitary model prepared by Breckland, Kings Lynn, North Norfolk, Broadland and Great Yarmouth councils and Norwich City Council was submitted to government who have responded and requested, as anticipated, additional information to be presented with the finalised proposal in September. This model would see a west Norfolk unitary, a city unitary and an east Norfolk unitary formed with populations of between 300 and 400,000 and a geographical area for each that makes for ease of communication and service delivery. It would also provide a more representative democratic model with elected councillors being more closely aligned with the residents and businesses in the authority

Planning and Housing

The planning and infrastructure bill is still in the committee stage at Westminster and is not expected to land until the autumn but the key aspects that have been trailed are most concerning for residents here in Breckland:

- A mandatory housing delivery of 903 year on year representing an uplift of circa 40%
- Powers to debate applications at a local level being restricted and/or curtailed
- National infrastructure projects (solar and wind farms) being removed from local decision making

Breckland is lobbying to restrict the number of solar farms that are a threat to our landscape, reduce food security and puts more reliance on imported food

Waste collection services

In addition to the current waste collection services, we now collect commercial food waste. This service commenced on March 31st and we have 49 businesses signed up for the service collecting about one ton of food waste each week. We are also preparing for the introduction of residential food waste collection services commencing in April 2026 and have placed orders for a fleet of vehicles to enable us to undertake the service

Homelessness

The team continues to focus on preventing homelessness and managing those that we have in temporary accommodation (TA). Since the last update the number of households in TA has further reduced to 115. There has been good success in finding solutions for some of the families that have been 'stuck' for a considerable amount of time through intensive work with them and other agencies.

The team have also reduced the numbers in nightly paid accommodation from 54 to 50 since the previous update.

We are currently recruiting in order to expand the team, in line with the increased demand on the service. Temporary posts have also been made permanent, in order to improve retention and recruitment and in return improving the service and service out

Community support

Household Support Fund

134 HSF referrals were processed. Of these, 133 were successful, whilst 1 was unsuccessful. A total of £36,780 in funding was issued, ensuring vital financial assistance reached those in need.

VE/VJ Day Grants

Breckland awarded grants totalling £12,000 to 48 community groups in the district, marking the 80th anniversary of Victory in Europe (VE) Day and Victory over Japan (VJ) Day this year.

Early Intervention Fund

The discretionary grant scheme launched in March 2022 to award payments of up to £300 to families or individuals who are experiencing exceptional circumstances of hardship. Over the last year we have provided 27 residents with support, totalling £3960.

The Shelf Pop Up Pantry

The Shelf Pop-Up Pantry currently operates in Old Buckenham, Swanton Morley, Weeting, and The Lophams.

Shipdham Pantry site is launching on 30th April. Necton and Narborough will be the next sites launched.

146 residents are using the service across the sites.

Councillors Philip Cowen and Sarah Suggitt

May 2025

Appendix 4, Wayland Partnership and the proposed Digital & Creative Media Centre

Bridget Park reported that on the 12th May 2025, the most recent meeting, the chamber of commerce is holding a jobs fair at Greens Hall on 20th June 2025. Helen Crane, Breckland Councillor for Saham Toney has reported that the inspiring communities fund is open. The Digital and creative media centre is looking at obtaining funding from the Local Government Reorganisation, they are reviewing the set-up ready for the centre, and an additional project to reclaim the rain, to assist with the drainage problem in high street an underground storage tank may be fitted in the car park. VR companies have been contacted to create something for people to be able to view the final project. The Digital & Creative Media Centre is a new build in Watton, and they are currently looking at potential alternative names from the current "Wayland House".

Appendix 5, a report from HMP Wayland's Barry Sewell, Head of Education, Skills, and Work.

Barry Sewell thank the Council for the invitation, and reported that 18 months ago the government created a new job role in all prisons, the job title being Head of Education, Skills and Work, the applicant has to be a qualified teacher, and act as a guide to the senior leadership team within the prison to allow prisoners to gain knowledge and education to support them to be able to get jobs on release. Statistics state that 50% of offenders go back into prison after release, and skills and knowledge to move on with their lives is important.

Some important statistics to support this initiative are that of the male prison population in the UK;

- 24% have been taken into care as a child, vs 2% of the whole population.
- 40% have observed violence in family home compared to 14% of general population
- 43% have been permanently excluded from school compared to less than 1% general pop.
- 47% have no qualifications at all, hence the importance of education within the prison system.
- 50% have been diagnosed with a neurodiverse condition compared 15% of population.

Providing useful skills and knowledge helps them to find a job on release, and in turn saves next victim, and gives an opportunity for offenders to give something back to the community and economy. The education programme is funded by the government, and includes brickwork, plastering, carpentry, electrics, obtaining csc cards, and qualifications in maths, English & IT skills.

The opportunities are now linked with employers, offering interviews upon release which is a huge change to the system.

The carpentry lead is making a bench for the village, and are willing to work with the community moving forwards on more projects. HMP Wayland encourage local people to come along, and get involved, they provide skills workshops and welcome local residents to attend a workshop or a talk on a particular interest to share with prisoners. Out of the 850 convicted inmates, 500 per day are going through education system, that is 98% of those that are able to, are allocated to work.

Appendix 6, Griston Community Group – Annual Village Meeting Update

Tuesday 27 May 2025

The Griston Community Group consists of a group of local residents from Griston and Caston who are acting to safeguard the environment, amenity and health and wellbeing of their local community in Breckland.

We make environment, amenity and health & wellbeing representations on major planning applications and ongoing business operations within the Griston area, and in particular those for the Coughtrey Estate and for HMP Wayland.

We are pleased to provide the annual update from the Griston Community Group for the period June '24 to May '25.

Coughtrey Estate – Planning Application 3PL/2022/0368/F

To recap a little, on 12 March '24 Breckland Planning Committee refused permission for the main planning application by Eastern Attachments (EA) for a single heavy industry metal fabrication operation on the Coughtrey Estate.

Eastern Attachments also submitted two further planning applications which were variations to the existing conditions of use of the site, on which we objected with various representations. The applications were subsequently refused by Breckland Council on 29 July '24.

On 2 September '24 EA appealed to the Secretary of State and on 12 September '24 submitted their appeal documentation.

On 17 September '24 the Secretary of State informed EA, Breckland Council and ourselves that the proposed main development did not now require an EIA (Environmental Impact Assessment).

On 2 October '24 we were advised by Breckland Council that an appeal had been made by Eastern Attachments to the Secretary of State against the decision of Breckland Council to refuse their planning application. Further, that the appeal would be determined on the basis of a Hearing by the Government Inspectorate.

On 7 October '24 we submitted a legal letter to the Government Office of the Secretary of State providing legal argument regarding our objection to the relaxation of the requirement for an EIA and the likelihood of significant environmental effects being inescapable if an EIA was not carried out.

On 30 October '24 we submitted our 'Statement of Case' to the Inspectorate.

During November '24 EA and Breckland Council submitted their equivalent of statement of case. EA also requested the case be downgraded to just written representations. We objected to this and subsequently the Inspector decided that a Hearing should take place and she would make a determination and decision.

The Hearing was scheduled for 11 February '25 to take place at the Watton Sports & Social community centre. However the meeting was adjourned due to the inadequacies of the arrangements at the venue. It was agreed to arrange another suitable date for the Inspector to be held in Breckland Council Offices, Dereham.

The resumption of the Hearing took place on Tuesday 8th and Wednesday 9th of April '25.

This included a site visit and visits to three adjacent homes and gardens. Our thanks to Michael & Lynn, Trevor & Sarah, and John & Katrina for allowing access to their properties for the Inspector to view.

We are now awaiting the decision of the Planning Inspector.

Coughtrey Estate – Cuckoo Operation

Unfortunately, from Tuesday 27 August '24 Eastern Attachments (EA) entered the Coughtrey Estate and commenced operations in contravention of the planning application refusal.

We immediately wrote to Breckland Council Executive (5 September '24) and separately to Breckland Council Environmental Health and Enforcement management (6 September '24). We asked that appropriate and full planning law action to be undertaken by Breckland Council and that Eastern Attachments, a Class B2 industrial business, should be prohibited from moving in equipment and stock or operating from the Coughtrey site.

They advised that they would visit the site and undertake a review.

Subsequently, they informed us that they would take no further action until the Planning Inspector had made her determination and decision.

From September '24 to date we have submitted both noise and odour objection reports to Breckland Council.

On 28 February through to 4 March '25 sound measuring equipment was installed by Breckland Council in two of the adjacent gardens to the Coughtrey Estate to measure noise nuisance. A report will have been submitted to Breckland Council for determination of levels of noise nuisance.

Our thanks to the two property owners for allowing the equipment to be installed in their gardens over a number of days.

We have, as yet, received no notification of the final noise measurement and odour report or any subsequent actions to be undertaken by Breckland Council regarding EA 'illegal cuckooing operation' on the Coughtrey Estate.

HMP Wayland – Planning Application PL/2024/1193/FMAJ

On 14 November '24 the Ministry of Justice gave a presentation to Griston Parish Council of a "Pre-Application Councillors Briefing" at the Parish Council meeting.

It introduced their consultants, Mace, and consultants Cushman & Wakefield along with their contractor, Wates, and provided a full briefing on the intended development plans for the prison.

It provided an overview of -

the Scheme and Site layout, Landscape Visual Impact Assessment, Environmental Impacts & Benefits, Economic Benefits, Social Value Benefits, Potential Key Programme Dates, and Potential Mitigations.

In summary the Full Planning Application was for the demolition of existing structures and the construction of a four storey (T60) houseblock, new multi-faith/education building, new kitchen and minor extensions to and refurbishment of existing ancillary buildings, energy centre, new internal security fence, creation of an all-weather sports pitch within a secure perimeter fence together with new pedestrian footpath, relocation of horticultural polytunnels, car parking and associated landscaping.

The intention is to commence the main construction work July '25 with completion by October '27 and housing prisoners by November '27. The accommodation will house around a further 250 persons, an increase of approximately 25%.

On 3 December '24 the Ministry of Justice and Wates held an open day event for the local community to view the development plans and to discuss with the applicant any views that they wished to share with HMP Wayland.

On Tuesday 13 May '25 the planning application was heard by Breckland Council planning committee, and the development was approved subject to final agreement with the Lead

Local Flood Authority (LLFA). The Griston Community Group provided a 3 minute submission representation on matters that had been voiced by the local community. On balance, we were supportive of the planning application. We have provided a report to the community on 15 May '25 regarding the outcome of those concerns and requests that we made at that meeting.

We are pleased to report that the Applicant is supportive of providing some social benefits to the Griston community and we are hopeful that this will be managed between Griston Parish Council and the Ministry of Justice contractors, Wates.

Thank you.

The Griston Community Group

(Safeguarding environment, amenity and health & wellbeing)

Appendix 7, A report from Griston Community Archive Group.

Bridget Park reported that the VE Day exhibition was very successful and well-attended, the event was held in the church with some displays of the local history. It was a good fundraising event for the Church and archive group, and important to remember the past of the village.