

Blofield Parish Council

Minutes of the meeting of Blofield Parish Council on Monday 16th March 2026 at 7:30pm at Blofield Courthouse.

PRESENT

Stuart Smith (Chair), Sarah Dhesi (Vice-Chair), Stella Shackle, Paul Culley-Barber, Eleanor Bannister (Clerk) and Sarah Osbaldeston (Clerk)

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION TO THE MEETING BY THE CHAIR

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. TO CONSIDER APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Joseph Scholes, Yvonne Burton, Will Crane and Paul Newstead. These apologies were accepted by the Council.

3. TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATION ON ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

No interests were declared.

4. OPEN FORUM – FOR PARISHIONERS TO RAISE QUESTIONS ON AND/OR MAKE STATEMENTS ABOUT MATTERS ON THE AGENDA AND TO RECEIVE A REPORT FROM THE DISTRICT COUNCILLOR AND COUNTY COUNCILLOR

Two parishioners were present. County Cllr Andrew Proctor sent apologies and provided a written update which was shared with the councillors. District Councillor Paul Newstead also sent his apologies.

5. TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 9TH FEBRUARY 2026

The minutes of the meeting held on 9th February 2026 were approved as a true and accurate record and duly signed by the Chair.

6. TO REPORT ON MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES NOT ON THE AGENDA

ITEM 17 - The SAM 2 post - Clerk (EB) has arranged for the missing SAM 2 post to be reinstated on The Street.

ITEM 22 – Life ring post - the Clerk (EB) has contacted Brundall Parish Council to see if they are happy to move the Cremer's Meadow life ring.

7. PLANNING

Application: 2026/0365

Proposal: Proposed solar park and EV charging station in substation and battery storage with associated roadside services including a drive through café and 2 no. cafes (use class E(b), the erection of a retail unit, use class E(a), and associated accesses, parking, circulation spaces, landscaping, ecological enhancements and drainage infrastructure.

Location: Land Adj McDonald's, Yarmouth Road, Blofield

The Parish Council agreed to submit all previous comments submitted under 20211493, these regularly reiterate the need for a footpath from Blofield along the north side of the Yarmouth Road - to the site and Brundall Sports Hub.

The Parish Council agreed to endorse the statements submitted by Postwick with Witton Parish Council in relation to 2026/0365, following their Parish Council meeting on 5th March. Blofield Parish Council requests the key details below:

- *Wording suggests the development will be connected to the wider footpath network but no plans show this to be the case. Request: This proposal is conditioned to provide a footpath / cycle way that connects the site to the path at Frogs Hole i.e. to the Blofield Motor Company garage – where it would meet the existing footpath.*

- *Double yellow lines are implemented on both sides of Yarmouth Road for the entire length - from the McDonald's roundabout down to Frogs Hole. (Rational being that assuming the Sainsbury store and Costa become popular stops, parking on the road could become a major issue, particularly in the summer months. Image submitted to planning with highways support too.*
- *The foot / cycle path is bollarded to prevent cars and trucks parking across it. (This is already happening on the verges.)*
- *The speed limit is reduced to 30mph along Yarmouth Road - down to Frogs Hole / the entry into Blofield where the 30mph limit is enforced.*
- *Request: Meeting with the developer, NCC Highways and councillors to discuss the resulting loss of the Blofield village gateway sign and possible options to demarcate the village boundary.*
- *A pedestrian crossing point on Yarmouth Road has been added to the plan; request that this is conditioned to ensure there is safe pedestrian access to the proposed development from Brundall.*
- *That lighting schemes are sympathetic to the Blofield NP dark skies policy.*
- *Request: All works are carefully co-ordinated - given the amount of works being planned for Yarmouth Road / Cucumber Road / McDonald's roundabout.*
- *Given above; signage should make clear that the site is not suitable for HGVs to stop at services, given parking at the services is not suitable.*

8. TO CONSIDER FEEDBACK ON ANY PLANNING APPLICATIONS RECEIVED SUBSEQUENT TO THE PUBLICATION OF THIS AGENDA

Planning application 20211844 erection of 21 dwellings has been approved on land south of Newstead Gardens.

No further applications were received.

9. TO REVIEW COMMUNITY HUB PROJECT UPDATES AND PROGRESS REPORTS AND AGREE NECESSARY ACTIONS

a. UK Power Network lease and land transfer from NCC

- The UKPN Lease has been signed. The Parish Council do not have to wait until the UKPN lease has been registered at the Land Registry following a proposal of a side letter for the variation of the contract.
- The Land transfer will take place within the next week. A completion date and onsite handover meeting will need to be arranged. Clerk (EB) to action. The Council unanimously resolved to agree the land should be called Blofield Park on the Land Registry documentation. The Clerk (EB) to contact BDC regarding registering a postal address for the site of Blofield Park Community Centre.

b. Design Team Meetings

It was noted that the playground location needs changing on the draft planning application site plan. The Design and Access Statement has been reviewed by the Parish Council and comments fed back to the design team. The Council noted that the redline boundary for the planning application can be made smaller for the planning application reducing planning application costs. The next design team meeting is on the 24th March 2026.

c. Programme / Timings & Risk Register

The planning application should be submitted w/c 23rd March. Once the application is submitted the project risk register will be updated.

d. GNGB Funding

The land transfer will take place before the 31st March 2026, as required for the grant funding.

e. Other funding applications

The Parish Council has been successful in obtaining a NCC Early Years Funding Grant towards renovating the YR6 classroom so it is adapted for Preschool use. The Blofield Preschool Management Committee and the Parish Council need to provide confirmation of acceptance of various conditions as set out by NCC Early Years. Clerk (EB) to action and request a copy of the minutes from the Preschool Committee meeting confirming the detail.

f. Additional Costs / Finances

- i. It was noted that a revision to the acoustics report is required now the detailed planning has been developed. The Council noted the unbudgeted cost of £785+VAT approved by the clerks under delegated powers.
- ii. The Council discussed the forecast / budget figures provided by the project team. These are still very high level but still show an overspend of £56,638.07 (Appendix A). More detailed figures will be available when the cost plan is updated following the planning application submission. This will give the Council a closer idea of costs, however, things will remain unclear until quotes are available from the build contractors.
- iii. The Council reviewed the breakdown of the reserve spend to date from the Community Hub Project Reserve. As at the 16 March 2026 a total of £43,797.47 (Appendix B&C) has been spent.

g. Planning Application

The planning application should be submitted w/c 23rd March.

h. Preschool

Once the Preschool has provided confirmation of acceptance of the grant conditions the Council will arrange a meeting with the Preschool Management Committee to discuss the draft 'agreement for a lease and lease' documentation reflecting the 10-year lease request by NCC Early Years grant.

i. Site Security and H&S

Once the Council owns the land, a handover meeting will take place and keys, padlocks and fencing security can be reviewed. In addition, security of the site should be considered and how this will be maintained.

It was agreed to carry out a site visit with Gary Waterton to review the damage to the site from the ground survey team. There are large muddy tracks, stuck track mats and possible damage to the wet pour. Clerk (EB) to action.

j. Community Engagement

The display boards were available for parishioners to view at the Annual Meeting of the Parish on Thursday 12th March 2026.

k. Play Park and Grounds

See item i above.

l. Kitchens

No update.

m. Insurance

The cost of insuring the year six classroom once it is in the Council's ownership is £112.25. This will be paid with effect from 20 March 2026. There are restrictions on what is insured as the property is empty. Bi-weekly checks must take place as an insurance requirement and a checklist has been created for use.

10. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON THE FARMAN FIELD PLAY TRIM TRAIL ORDER AND AGREE DEPOSIT PAYMENT

The Council approved the design and this has been confirmed to Sovereign and the 30% deposit has been paid. Installation will take place in May 2026.

Clerk (SO) to establish the cost of insuring the trim trail equipment.

11. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON THE TOWN PIT WORKS CARRIED OUT RECENTLY

The clearance work has been carried out successfully; the pond looks much clearer with ducks swimming on it! The group said they would be pleased to come back next year.

12. TO APPROVE INVOICES FOR PAYMENT, NOTE COUNCIL FUNDS AND REVIEW INTERNAL MONTHLY CHECKS

The Council reviewed the proposed payments #157 to #181 totalling £35,998.44 and the Council unanimously resolved to approve these payments (Appendix D). The Council noted #155 - #156 invoices totalling £3895.50 (Appendix E) were missed invoices that were paid in February following the last meeting. The Parish Council noted the bank balance at 2 February 2026 of £1,146,509.46 (Appendix F). In addition, the Council noted receipts #27 to #38 were received between 1 September 2025 and 31 December 2026 totalling £76,090.70. This includes a VAT refund of £9,322.58.

13. TO NOTE THE SUCCESSFUL AWARD OF TWO PARISH PARTNERSHIP SCHEMES FOR 2026/27 AND DISCUSS THE BALANCE FUNDING

The Parish Council are delighted to have been successful with securing 50% for both its 2026/27 Parish Partnership Schemes funding requests, a total grant of £16,341.73. The first project is working towards upgrading the Public Right of Way FP4 running parallel to the A47 between the new Blofield Primary School and the A47 to assist in school children walking to school, and these improvements have also received £4,884.97 Green Infrastructure Funding. The second is to upgrade a pathway within Marty's Marsh which has also received a further £1,000 funding from County Councillor Andrew Proctor's members fund. Clerk (EB) to accept the quotation from the contractor to carry out both projects as soon as possible.

The Parish Council unanimously resolved to complete an agreement with NCC Corporate Properties services for a permissive footpath across the small stretch of their land making it possible to access the school site from FP4. Clerk (EB) to action.

14. TO DISCUSS SECTION 106 FUNDING

The clerk (SO) confirmed to the Parish Council the Section 106 funds that are earmarked for the community hub. Clerk to confirm this detail again with Broadland District Council Section 106 Officer. The Section 106 funds from The Manse, planning application 20171081 totalling £13,066.80, has been committed to the new trim trail on Farman Field as required by the specific Section 106 agreement.

Some Green Infrastructure funds are available for Public Right of Way FP2. This path has been visited by the Green Infrastructure officer and councillor Sarah Dhesi to review work that is required and a quotation for this work is being obtained.

15. TO NOTE THE SUCCESSFUL AWARD OF A NCC EARLY YEARS FUNDING GRANT TOWARDS THE PRESCHOOL RENOVATION AND AGREE TO THE TERMS OF THE CONTRACT

See agenda Item 9(e).

16. TO CONSIDER AN APPLICATION TO THE NATIONAL HIGHWAYS LEGACY FUND

The Council agreed to make an application for this National Highways Legacy Fund as soon as possible. Councillor Sarah Dhesi to progress.

17. TO CONSIDER TWO SMALL GRANT FUNDING REQUESTS FROM KEEP BLOFIELD SPECIAL AND THE MARGARET HARKER HALL

- i. The Parish Council has received a small grant funding request from the Keep Blofield Special Group for litter pickers, fluorescent jackets and black plastic litter bags at a cost of approximately £50. The Council unanimously resolved to approve this request. Clerk (SO) to action. The group have also requested if a litter bin can be placed in the Woodbastwick Road layby. Clerk (SO) to ask BDC.
- ii. The Parish Council has received a funding request from the Margaret Harker Hall for £300 towards printed boards for their Norfolk Heritage Open Day in September 2026. They plan to produce large display boards showing historical documents about the history of the hall and village. These can then be reused afterwards on display in the hall. The Council unanimously resolved to approve this proposal. Clerk (SO) to action.

- 18. TO AGREE THE INSURANCE COST FOR THE YEAR 6 EMPTY CLASSROOM**
See item 9 (m).
- 19. TO NOTE THE NORFOLK PENSION FUND VALUATION RATES FOR THE NEXT 3 YEARS**
The Parish Council approved the employer pension rates contributions for the next 3 years of 19.5% from 1 April 2026 to 31st March 2029.
- 20. TO NOTE VAT REGISTRATION CONFIRMATION**
The Parish Council noted that the Council has now been registered for VAT with a VAT number 511 9010 38 with effect from 1 December 2025. Returns will be done on a quarterly basis, with the first return due after the 31st March 2026.
- 21. TO NOTE THE SCRIBE FINANCE HEALTH CHECK AND VAT CHANGES**
The Clerk (SO) advised that the Scribe health check had taken place, the document has been reviewed and all actions taken to ensure Scribe is up to date. Updates have been made to ensure the Council's new VAT position is incorporated and VAT returns will be made on the Scribe system. In addition, the Scribe team will list all the council assets separately onto Scribe. All noted changes made.
- 22. TO CONSIDER EMPLOYING ADDITIONAL HELP FOR THE PARISH COUNCIL**
The Parish Council agreed more resource is needed to support the clerks. Sarah Dhesi proposed (seconded by Stuart Smith) that the Parish Council advertise for further parish resource to help the clerks. This will likely be for a short-term agreement with the individual being self-employed.
- 23. TO APPROVE THE FOLLOWING REVISED DOCUMENTS AND ANY ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTS DRAFTED BY THE FINANCE WORKING PARTY**
The Finance Working Party reviewed the following annual governance documents for approval by the Parish Council. The Council unanimously resolved to approve the following documents:
- Standing Orders
 - Finance Regulations
 - Scheme of delegation and terms of reference document
 - LGA Code of Conduct
 - IT Policy
 - Risk Assessment
 - Freedom of Information Scheme
 - Annual Review of the Effectiveness of Internal Control
 - Annual Review of the Effectiveness of Internal Audit
 - Duties of the Responsible Financial Officer
 - Investment Policy
 - Business Continuity Plan
 - Communications Policy
 - Co-option Policy
 - Complaints Policy
 - Grievance Policy
 - Disciplinary Policy
 - Equality and Diversity Policy
 - Filming and Recording Policy
 - Dark Skies Policy
 - Equal Opportunities Policy
 - Bullying and Harassment Policy
 - Grant Policy and application form
- 24. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON MARTY'S MARSH, DITCH CLEARANCE AND CONSIDER PARTICIPATION IN THE ORCHID DAY AND AGREE ANY NECESSARY ACTIONS**

Sarah Dhesi reported that the ditch clearance has been very successful. The next working party will be run by Rob Christie on Saturday 21st March 2026. The Council agreed to consider taking part in the orchid day at the April meeting of the Parish Council.

25. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE FROM THE ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION / PARISH COUNCIL WORKING GROUP MEETING AND AGREE ANY NECESSARY ACTIONS

- i. Sarah Dhesi and Eleanor Bannister shared detailed notes from the working group meeting.
- ii. Sarah Dhesi noted that the allotments were tidier than September 2025 and just a few will be sent an email requesting further work.
- iii. All plot holders will be reminded to have any bonfires before 31st March 2026.
- iv. Clerk (EB) will review the Statement of Common Grounds document and confirm if a new allotment noticeboard was part of the agreement with National Highways and advise Galliford Try. It was agreed to install it just inside the gate to the carpark for security reasons. On the external part of the noticeboard it will note 'Blofield Allotments'.
- v. Galliford Try are providing a picnic bench with built in seating and one hundred fence posts free of charge to the allotments site.

26. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON BLOFIELD CHURCHYARD AND CONSIDER A QUOTATION FOR WORK FOR VARIOUS STONEMASON WORKS

- i. The Churchyard Gravestone inspection is due and the Council unanimously resolved to approve this inspection at a cost of £375+VAT and the repair to the Peter Eade Memorial Cross at cost of £225+VAT. Clerk (EB) to advise the contractor.
- ii. The Council agreed not to carry out any cleaning of the Peter Eade Cross or the War Memorial.
- iii. The Parish Council would like to thank the Brundall and Blofield Men's Shed who have released and laid down a dangerous and damaged headstone.

27. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE FROM THE NCC HIGHWAYS ENGINEER

Sarah Dhesi provided a detailed report from the meeting with the NCC Highways Engineer on Tuesday 11th February 2026. Sarah Dhesi has contacted the engineer to understand the cost, process and resultant actions from obtaining speed checks on roads with measuring markers. Blofield Surgery has contacted the Parish Council requesting support for yellow lines on Plantation Road near their entrance. This is not the responsibility of the Parish Council but Clerk (EB) to raise a query with NCC Children's Services as an outstanding matter following the school build.

28. TO CONSIDER A LIFE RING AT TOWN PIT AND LIFE RING RELOCATION AT MARTY'S MARSH

The Council unanimously resolved to install a life ring at the Town Pit and investigate further the relocation of the ring near Marty's Marsh. Clerks (SO/EB) to action.

29. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE FROM THE HEATHLANDS MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING

Heathlands thanked the Parish Council for the increase in the Heathlands Grounds Maintenance Grant to £3,000 for 2026/27.

30. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE FROM THE MARGARET HARKER HALL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING

The Margaret Harker Hall Management Committee are working hard to fund raise, organise events and make the most of the facility. The committee room is being upgraded and a Historical Norfolk Open Day is planned for September.

31. TO NOTE THE LOCAL AUTHORITY CLUSTER MEETING AT 7PM ON 28TH APRIL 2026 AT CANTLEY AND AGREE ANY ACTIONS

No councillors are able to attend unfortunately. Clerk (EB) to send the Council's apologies.

32. TO RECEIVE THE CLERK'S REPORT AND CORRESPONDENCE

- i. The Ash tree with 'Ash Die Back' has been removed from the Churchyard.

- ii. On 16 February 2026, The Broads Authority submitted the Local Plan for the Broads to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government for independent examination in accordance with regulation 22 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended) and Section 20 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended).
- iii. The National Highways survey will be open from 2 February – 3 March 2026. The questions cover how you find the experience of working with National Highways, how we listen and communicate, as well as letting us know what is working well, and where we could improve. The survey is conducted via National Highways' citizen space platform. Link to survey overview can be found here: <https://nationalhighways.citizenspace.com/he/stakeholder-sentiment-survey-2026>
- iv. A Small Fallen Tree across FP10 has been reported to NCC Highways on 19 March 2026.
- v. The next Town & Parish Forum is on 14th April between 3.00pm to 4.00pm.

33. ITEMS FOR THE NEXT AGENDA

Bus shelter maintenance
 Courthouse Constitution
 Speed checker update

34. TO CONFIRM THE DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL

Monday 20th April 2026 at 7:30pm at Blofield Courthouse

35. TO RESOLVE TO PASS A FORMAL RESOLUTION (UNDER THE PUBLIC BODIES AND ADMISSION TO MEETINGS ACT 1960) TO EXCLUDE THE PRESS AND THE PUBLIC FOR THE REMAINING AGENDA ITEMS

The Council unanimously resolved to approve this proposal and all members of the public left the meeting.

36. TO REVIEW THE PARISH CLERK ANNUAL REVIEWS, AGREE OVERTIME PAYMENT AND SALARY BAND INCREASE

The Chair and Vice Chair conducted the Clerks Annual reviews in March 2026 and reported that both Clerks remain comfortable in their roles even though currently they are both still over stretched with the involvement and time spent on current major projects, especially but not limited to Blofield Park. The consequence of extra working hours expended over and above contract hours will be addressed in the main within this financial year. The Council approved this action.

The Chair, as last year, requested that all Councillors who would be willing, and feel able, take on responsibility for some of the smaller and routine activities and projects in order to release the Clerks' time for the more major and complex projects/issues going forward. The Chair extends his gratitude that this has been adopted by some Councillors and has relieved some of the burden on both Clerks. The Council agreed, where and when appropriate, to endeavour to seek extra paid resource to supplement the Clerks activities. This is ongoing.

As it was agreed that both Clerks had performed above and beyond in the past year, the Chair had no hesitation in proposing and it was agreed by the Council, that Eleanor Bannister receive a one increment rise effective from April 2026 putting both Clerks at the same grading level. Whilst the Council would be happy to apply a similar increase to Sarah Osbaldeston, she has reached the upper limit of the current pay bandings. These increases are built into the budget for 2026/27 as well as some minor provision for extra resource.

37. TO DISCUSS COMMERCIALY SENSITIVE MATTERS RELATING TO THE COMMUNITY HUB AND APPOINTMENT OF CONTRACTORS

No matters were discussed.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 10:15pm.

Signed.....

Dated.....