

Blofield Parish Council

Minutes of the Meeting of Blofield Parish Council on Monday 23rd June 2025 from 7.30pm – 11.00pm in Blofield Courthouse.

PRESENT

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

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION TO THE MEETING BY THE CHAIR

2. TO CONSIDER APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Joseph Scholes and Will Crane and accepted by the Council.

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

Paul Culley-Barber declared a pecuniary interest in items 10, 11, and 38.

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

No Parishioners were present. County Councillor Andrew Proctor sent his apologies and circulated a report to the Council. He updated the Council on the community fund grant opening up shortly.

5. TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 22ND MAY 2025

The Parish Council minutes were approved by the Council and they were duly signed by the chair of the Council.

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

Footpath FP4 – (parallel with the A47) – a proposal has been put forward by NCC Highways Access Officer to ensure parishioners are walking the correct side of the fencing. Areas of the path need clearing and a trod style surface could be installed along a section. Improvements to enable clear access to Plantation Road and the new school are also proposed. Access permission will be required from the landowners for this aspect of the path. This will be sought by the Access Officer with NCC, and they are liaising with National Highways to repair the fencing where needed. It was agreed to approach Galliford Try to see if they were able to assist in creating the path, and contact BADCOG to see if they are able to help with a working party to clear the brambles and improve the path access.

Eleanor Bannister provided a written update on the energy providers funding webinar she attended earlier in the month.

7. PLANNING

Application: 2025/1366

Proposal: Loft conversion, first floor side extension, single storey rear extension and reroofing of existing roofs – amended plans

Location: 4 Mill Close, Blofield, NR13 4QT

This application had been approved by BDC before the council meeting.

Application: 2025/1164

Proposal: Two rear extensions, a front porch extension and some minor internal Reconfiguration – amended plan

Location: Woods End, 9 Church Road, Blofield, NR13 4NA

This application had been approved by BDC before the council meeting.

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

Planning application 2024/2451 for 3 self-build homes on Woodbastwick Road received planning approval on the 22nd May 2025.

9. TO NOTE A TRAFFIC ORDER FOR A 20MPH ZONE ON SHREEVE ROAD AND ADJACENT ROADS AND AGREE ANY COMMENTS

The Council unanimously resolved to support this traffic order. Clerk (EB) to feedback.

10. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE FROM OUR SOLICITORS / NCC CHILDREN'S SERVICES REGARDING THE BLOFIELD PARK LAND TRANSFER TO THE PARISH COUNCIL, APPROVE THE UKPN LEASE AND AGREE ANY NECESSARY ACTIONS

NCC has sent through a draft UK Power Network lease for the Council to review. The Council resolved to make alterations to the lease to allow for only vehicular access north of the power supply area with no digging etc. The Council resolved to approve these adjustments and allow the clerks to sign and progress the lease before the next council meeting. Clerk (EB) to liaise with the solicitor.

The Council noted that signage is required on the Blofield Park land to inform the public that it is currently not open to the public. Clerk (EB) to contact NCC Children's Services as current owners. The Council resolved to note interest in completing on the 22nd August 2025 with NCC.

With regards to the fencing on north & south side of the playground. The solicitor has noted that normally fencing would be referred to in the Covenants. She could not see a covenant in relation to the fencing (only in relation to the main (current) access way on to Plantation Road). This means the PC is not obliged to maintain the fencing, but practically speaking (as NCC have done) would probably need to do so.

11. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON THE TENDER PROCESS FOR RIBA STAGES 3-6 AND AGREE NEXT ACTIONS

The Parish Council has received extraordinary interest in the tender process.

The clerks have created a scoring criteria in order to assess the tenders when they are received.

The deadline for tender submissions is Monday 30th June 2025 at 5pm and the working group is to meet on Wednesday 2nd July to begin reviewing the tenders.

The Council agreed to book in an additional meeting in August in case this is required – date to be agreed and circulated.

12. TO NOTE RECEIPT OF THE LETTER OF INTENT FROM BLOFIELD PRESCHOOL AND AGREE NEXT STEPS

The Council noted receipt of a letter from the Blofield Preschool of their intention to move to the altered year six classroom, and the Council continue to work with them regarding the detail.

A meeting will take place with the preschool to look at the site on Tuesday 1st July followed by a meeting to review further documentation regarding responsibilities.

13. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE FROM THE WORKING GROUP MEETING ON THE PRESCHOOL DRAFT HEADS OF TERMS AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE PRESCHOOL AND AGREE NEXT ACTIONS

The working group met and progressed the draft heads of terms and responsibilities documents for the preschool. These were shared with the Council. Further work is required, especially on the heads of terms document. The Council unanimously resolved to spend up to £1,000 on legal costs with solicitors when reviewing and completing this documentation.

14. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON THE MEETING WITH BDC REGARDING A FUNDING APPLICATION TO THE GREATER NORWICH GROWTH BOARD (GNGB) AND AGREE NEXT ACTIONS

15. A seminar with further detail will be taking place on Wednesday with BDC. The Council agreed to apply for £450,000 from the GNGB towards the community hub project.

16. The Council have obtained letters of support from Cllr Andrew Proctor and MP Jerome Mayhew. Clerk (EB) to contact the Library and Blofield Surgery and Brundall Parish Council to request they consider letters of support too.

The Council also discussed the possible need and benefit to having some volunteers with specialist skills who could be called upon to seek advice and guidance on an adhoc basis to help inform the Council on matters such as tenders / surveyors / architects / planning etc. Stuart Smith and Paul Newstead agreed to explore contacts initially, before the clerks reach out through other methods.

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

The Council reviewed the payments for June, #31 - #45 totalling £9,093.22 (Appendix A) and unanimously resolved to approve the payments.

18. TO NOTE THE INTERNAL AUDITORS REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS AND AGREE ANY NECESSARY ACTIONS

The Council noted the internal auditors report and the clerk (SO) reported recommendations for the Council from the Internal Auditors Report:

- It is advised to speak to a specific VAT expert to obtain advice regarding Blofield Hub – see item 20.
- The detailed budget document has now been added to the website.
- Playground - The new playground equipment will require regular inspections – frequency will depend on use but must include a detailed annual inspection by an independent inspector approved by a professional body. For the regular inspections training is required. Recommended to include in the inspection non-playing aspects such as fencing, signs and the grass etc – see item 31.
- Accounting basis – this will go over the £200,000 level so annual reporting will need to change to an income and expenditure basis which can be actioned within Scribe.

19. TO CONSIDER QUOTATIONS FOR FOREST SCHOOL FENCING AND GATE, AND ENTRANCE GATES TO BLOFIELD PARK

The Council reviewed quotations for fencing and gate to the forest school area and unanimously resolved to appoint G&G fencing Ltd to conduct the works using dark green Dulok Lite Panel System at a total cost of £3,280+VAT for the works. It is hoped this work will take place in August. Clerk (EB) to action.

The Council unanimously resolved to approve up to £10,000 to install fencing and entrance gates to Blofield Park. Quotations are being obtained. It was agreed that this work would be delayed until the entrance had been completed by NCC Highways when aspects, including the ground works required and space on the site, will be clearer.

20. TO RATIFY THE APPOINTMENT OF A VAT CONSULTANT TO PROVIDE ADVICE TO THE PARISH COUNCIL REGARDING VAT ON THE COMMUNITY HUB BLOFIELD PARK PROJECT

The Council unanimously ratified the decision to appoint a VAT consultant to provide advice to the Parish Council regarding VAT on the community hub Blofield Park project. Clerk (SO) to arrange a meeting.

21. TO APPROVE AN IT POLICY FOR THE PARISH COUNCIL

The Council unanimously resolved to approve the IT policy. Clerk (EB) to add to the website.

22. TO CONSIDER A QUOTATION FOR MICROSOFT SERVICES, EMAILS, DATA STORAGE AND ONGOING TECHNICAL SUPPORT

Following a brief discussion, Stuart Smith proposed that the Council approve the quotation for technical support and Microsoft services etc from Anglian Internet. This will be a total annual cost of £1032. In addition, the Council approved the initial set up / transfer of the data at a cost of £255. The Council could also have Cloud to Cloud back up the four accounts. This will cost a further £14 per month. (Clerks to understand more detail on this, is it for SharePoint or emails?) Clerks to progress with the changes.

23. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON THE MEETING WITH NORFOLK WILDLIFE TRUST REGARDING FARMAN FIELD AND AGREE NEXT ACTIONS

Yvonne Burton reported that Norfolk Wildlife Trust found 35 species of plant on the site. This can be taken as a baseline and surveyed annually to monitor progress. Key points are detailed below. It was recommended to keep cutting the thistles and perhaps have a patch where these could be left. Parishioners can be consulted on what they would like to see on the site. It was recommended to plant native shrubs in groups along school boundary fence, to break up the line. The Woodland Trust, Tree Warden Network should be able to help with this. Hawthorn, black thorn, cherry plum, willow are possible options. Yvonne Burton to liaise with the tree wardens and apply for free trees. It may be worth visiting other sites to see what has been done in other parishes.

24. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE FROM THE MEETING WITH CLLR. ANDREW PROCTOR

Stuart Smith reported that Andrew Proctor is fully supportive of the Council's Blofield Park community hub project and will write a letter of support.

25. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE FROM THE LOCAL AUTHORITY CLUSTER MEETING ON THE 10TH JUNE 2025

Stuart Smith provided a brief update from the meeting. Information was shared across the group. It now has a larger number of parishes in the area attending and reports from each parish have been circulated.

26. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE FROM THE MARTY'S MARSH OPEN DAY, APPROVE A NEW PICNIC BENCH AND AGREE ANY NECESSARY ACTIONS

Yvonne Burton reported that the open day event was successful with nice weather and a few families / parishioners attended.

Yvonne Burton proposed the Council install a Released Future Company picnic bench near the church path gate for use by parishioners. The Council unanimously resolved to approve this proposal. The majority of the cost will be covered by the district councillor bench grant held in the council reserves. Clerk (EB) to order the bench, arrange to install a concrete pad and the bench.

The Council unanimously resolved to extend the meeting beyond 10pm in order to complete the agenda and suspended standing order item 3w.

27. TO CONSIDER A PRE-MEETING AND WORKING PARTY FOR THE FOREST SCHOOL SITE AT BLOFIELD PARK IN SEPTEMBER AND AGREE NEXT ACTIONS

The Council agreed that a working party for the whole site would be valuable to review health and safety across the whole site and carry out any health and safety works required at the forest school too. Clerk to provisionally book in 2 days in September, request support from the Community Pay Back Team and Marty's Marsh volunteers, and involve the tree wardens. Stuart Smith to lead. Clerk (EB) to action.

28. TO NOTE DETAIL ON BUSINESS RATES & INSURANCE FOR A COMMUNITY HUB FACILITY FOR THE PARISH

BDC have provided some information regarding possible business rates for a new community hub facility. Clerk (SO) still awaiting insurance detail from the insurers.

29. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON THE A47 DUALLING WORKS IN RELATION TO THE ALLOTMENTS AND MINI ALLOTMENT INSPECTION

Sarah Dhesi provided an update following the mini allotment inspection. A couple of plots require some tidying, and the Clerk (EB) will send reminders to the plot holders.

With regards to the A47 dualling, it looks like only approximately half a plot will be returned to the Council. Discussions are taking place around the fencing height that is going to be installed.

Stella Shackle left the meeting at 10:10pm.

30. TO RECEIVE THE PLAYGROUND ANNUAL INSPECTION REPORT AND AGREE ANY NECESSARY ACTIONS

Eleanor Bannister reported detail from the playground annual inspection report. The gym equipment signage is in German. Clerk (EB) to contact eibe to change this, and for Heathlands too. A sign for the site will need to be installed before the site is opened. The whole site was reviewed including the old trim trail and forest school area – some health and safety improvements will be required before the site is open to the public.

31. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE FROM THE BLOFIELD COURTHOUSE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING, AND MEETING WITH THE SOLICITOR'S ROOM CONTRACTOR

Stuart Smith reported that Greystone & Mason advised that the taping of the rooms (done by the Courthouse) to stop the dust spreading was insufficient. Council to consider paying for this to be done by the contractor next time to avoid the dust mess.

Clerk (EB) to liaise with the contractor and Courthouse to book the replastering work and review the quotation to establish the cost of extra wood, as required. (Has the edged wood gone missing?) The Courthouse Management Committee are retreating / sanding the wooden floor in the main hall. The Council unanimously resolved to pay for this work.

32. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE FROM THE RECENT HEATHLANDS MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING

Yvonne Burton provided an update from the recent Heathlands Management Committee meeting. They are progressing the changes to their constitution.

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

Sarah Dhesi reported that the new chair has set funding priorities for the hall. There are now eight trustees in place. Things are progressing with various actions and fund raising planned.

34. TO REVIEW A DRAFT NEWSLETTER FOR THE PARISH

Stuart Smith will work on the next newsletter. Please can articles / photographs be sent to him as soon as possible.

35. TO CONSIDER SUPPORTING THE ANTI MEGA SOLAR ALLIANCE

After a detailed discussion the Council decided not to support the Anti Mega Solar Alliance.

36. TO RECEIVE THE CLERK'S REPORT AND CORRESPONDENCE

The outcome of the speeding study that has been taking place on Woodbastwick Road will be finalised in a report in July.

The hedging on the corner between Garden Road and The Street in Blofield is overgrown and this has been reported to NCC Highways to raise with the property owner.

Unitary council proposals have been considered and the conclusion of the options appraisal is that the recommended preferred option is one unitary council, covering all of Norfolk. Cabinet will decide whether to proceed with this option at their meeting on 23rd June.

The Reve Educational Foundation and Blofield Relief-In-Need Charity now has a new secretary. CAN Norfolk has offered to visit to review Blofield Park site safety if required. Council to consider this at a later date.

A business has been in touch with a proposal to repurpose the former school pool into an inclusive aquatic & SEN support hub for Blofield. This has been forwarded to NCC as they own the land and swimming pool.

37. ITEMS FOR THE NEXT AGENDA

Standard ongoing project items

Discussion of a new logo - EB

Consider a bench on Doctors Road - SS

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

Monday 21st July 2025 at 7:30pm at Blofield Courthouse.

39. 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 resolution.

40. TO DISCUSS LEGAL MATTERS REGARDING THE BLOFIELD PARK LAND TRANSFER

Legal matters regarding Blofield Park were discussed and agreed.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 11pm.

Signed.....

Dated.....