



MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 19TH OF MAY 2026 FROM 7.00PM AT THE VILLAGE HALL

PRESENT: Cllrs Kevin Hobart (KH) Chair, Alexis Brun (AB), Peter James (PB), Pete Harries (PH), Oliver Locke (OL), Robin Arbenz (RB), and Kim Frazer (KF) Clerk, and 7 members of the public

1. Welcome from the Chair

2. **APOLOGIES** – Cllrs Nash, West and Borough Councillor Beales

3. MINUTES of the Annual Parish Meeting held on the 19th of May 2025 were proposed by Cllr James, seconded by Cllr Frazer with all in favour who attended that meeting.

REPORTS FROM:

4. **CHAIRMANS ANNUAL REPORT**

Chairs Report – Cllr Kevin Hobart

I would like to firstly thank my fellow Councillors for their hard work and commitment to our beautiful village over the past year.

This meeting concludes my second year as Chair and when I look back we have achieved a lot especially with the loss of our Clerk – Sarah Harvey at the end of 2025. This was very disruptive to the smooth running of the council and with the temporary help of Amy Heart – Castle Acre Clerk we managed to function and mostly keep on track. As you may know we have appointed a new Clerk – Caroline Boyden who has taken great steps in getting the PC through the financial year end and various changes agreed with the council.

What have we as a Council achieved in the last year;

- Thank you to Jess Cunningham and all the NDP volunteers for their continued hard work on the public consultations and very soon the first draft document for the PC to approve and take forward.
- The village news magazine "The Mallard" came under the PC control, as we had nobody interested to continue editing & production. Sarah our Clerk took this on until she resigned. We will tonight form a new Sub Group which I'm hoping can continue to produce and manage the Mallard for the benefit of the village.
- The Under 5s playground – is completed and looking fabulous, thanks to generous donations and the hard work of Cllr Harries who has driven this process. The older Children's playground is due to be completed by 1st August 2026

- Helped to fund the resurfacing of the allotment road
- Grass cutting of the village greens has been a great success with our new supplier. We have now signed a three year fixed price deal.
- Addition of Lynn Lane village gates and signage to try and lessen speeding in this road.
- We finally managed to get new Christmas lights installed after many hurdles were put in the way. We then had a very successful Christmas carol event with the Harpley Community Choir. This is something that we are talking to the DD about for this year.

New sub working groups –

- ☐ Village Greens – rising to the challenges of protecting our Village Greens from car parking and damage.
- ☐ Land Development – looking at development options for the land owned by the parish.

Challenges

- Dabbling Duck Car Parking – planning permission was granted for the second time. We as a PC supported this project as it will help to alleviate parking issues in the village.
- Street Lighting – we still have unmetered street lighting from our supplier. We are still looking at replacing sodium lights with led to save costs and to be more energy efficient.
- Volunteer fishing warden – recruitment
- Loss of the Parish Clerk & Mallard Editor

Tonight is the start of a new year for the PC and the last few months have really highlighted that ALL councillors need to be involved and active as much as possible. The success of the sub groups and the PC as a whole relies on ALL councillors taking ownership of their role. I understand that some of us work full time or part time or are retired but the more we work together the easier and better the outcomes for the village. Communication is key.

Thank you

5. BOROUGH COUNCILLORS REPORT

Cllr. Alistair Beales Report to Great Massingham PC (20th May 2026)

In the last civic year, I have attended as many Parish Council meetings as possible and have represented the PC view to planners and assisted with questions and issues as they arise. Having been a district councillor since 2007 (with a break between 2019 and 2023) I have been Leader of The Council since May 2024, and I thought I would write from that perspective.

I was fortunate when first elected to be mentored by Cllr. Nick Daubney the long time Leader of the Council from 2007 to 2016, and former councillors Mike Tilbury (now sadly deceased) and Ian Mack who were also significant influences. With that mentoring and having been Deputy Leader to two Leaders including Nick, I thought I was pretty well prepared for becoming Leader in May 2024. And so I was in terms of process and the workings of the

Council, but I was less prepared for the all consuming nature of the role and hours required. But I enjoy it hugely, particularly the strategic nature of the role and the contrasting grass roots aspects of meeting people and being able to deal with local issues and problems with the heft of the Leaders office. A joy.

Obviously, the biggest issue in my time as Leader started in December 2024 when the Government fired the starting gun on Local Government Reorganisation. Essentially all the district councils in Norfolk and the County Council will be abolished and the services split between county and districts will all be delivered by so call unitary councils. The Borough Council was one of six district councils which put a proposal to Government for three new unitary councils, one in the West, one in the East and one around Greater Norwich. That proposal was accepted by Government and my time will be dominated by setting up the new unitaries particularly the new West Norfolk Council which is essentially the King's Lynn & West Norfolk Borough Council area plus the area of Breckland Council and 9 parishes from South Norfolk (which means all of the Mid Norfolk parliamentary constituency will be in West Norfolk unitary instead of split with Greater Norwich). An area of just over 1,000 square miles with a population of roughly 310,000 people. There will 72 new unitary councillors representing an electorate of roughly 3,300 electors each as compared to Borough wards of circa 2,500 electors now and County Council divisions of circa 8,000 electors. The rough timetable is existing county and district councillors to get on with unitary set up to May 2027 when new unitary councillors are elected and take over with the new unitaries going live in April 2028 at which point the districts and county are abolished.

In terms of business as usual at the Borough, I am delighted that the Council has been nominated in two categories in the annual Local Government Chronicle (LGC) awards, the Oscars of the Local Government world. In the words of the LGC editor "We received more than 1,000 entries to the LGC Awards 2026, making it another record breaking year, it's a huge achievement to make the shortlist."

The first category is Housing, and the Borough Council has been nominated for the positive intervention in the market of the Major Housing Scheme. This nomination reflects the hard work of officers and councillors across many years and multiple administrations, and my thanks to all involved for their hard work. As the Portfolio Holder who proposed and initiated the Major Housing Scheme, the nomination gives me a great deal of personal pride whatever the outcome at the awards ceremony.

The second category is Most Improved Council, and this nomination can be attributed to the fresh perspective, energy and sheer hard work of our CEO and the wider officer team backed up by the support of the elected membership and their willingness to consider and take tough decisions. Our council was the subject of a Peer Review in the first year of this council term (an independent review of the council by officers and elected members of other councils to evaluate the effectiveness of both process and policy). Peers were present at a Joint Panels meeting which frankly was a tetchy and highly adversarial car crash. The Peer Review initial report on improvements required was not particularly enjoyable reading. So, from a personal perspective, it was amusing and satisfying in equal part to be present at the final Peer Review meeting when virtually all of their recommendations and targets had been surpassed. They were almost bemused shall we say. But whilst that gives me some pleasure, it's far from enough, the council is much improved (and I hope LGC Most Improved!) but there is more to do to prepare the council., staff and elected membership for the brave new unitary world.

of Borough Councillors for our three unitary solution was a demonstration of what can be achieved when all pull in the same direction, and I have pushed for more of the same. It may sound trite, but I have made clear to my elected colleagues on many occasions, that political divisions between us are small compared to the duty to do our best for our community, a duty that binds us all.

I hope this report is useful and my apologies for being unable to attend your Annual Meeting. I will be in America with my wife Christa for our elder daughter Poppy's graduation from Yale University. Poppy played field hockey for Yale (Americans are looking for ice if you simply talk about hockey) and she was the first English captain of the team in their history and finished her career in the top 10 players for points and goals scored since Yale Field Hockey started. So, we are off to be proud parents

6. Neighbourhood Development Plan Report Steering Group's Annual Report 2025-2026

Firstly, I'd like to thank everyone who has and continued to be involved in the NDP work, so Thank You.

During the past year, much work has taken place and activity continued towards the development of a draft Neighbourhood Development Plan supported by a range of external organisations and the local community through its Steering group and other volunteers. Key activities and events during 2025-26 include:

Community Conversations – The Steering group continued with the Community Conversations, which have been successful in bringing community members together to discuss specific topics highlighted in the more general consultations and surveys. Topics for this year include finalising the landscape views, development boundary both of which included a village walk about, community conversations and online survey. In March this year we held the final community conversation and online survey regarding renewable energy.

Local and National Planning – There has been much activity both nationally and locally regarding planning and the steering group members have been keeping a close eye on these events to ensure activities of the NDP do not duplicate existing policy. In addition to ensure the updated from the local plan (which was formally adopted last year), there have been changes to the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) and a new policy regarding Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIP).

A meeting was held with the local planning authority to seek their views on both the work done to date and on the changes to local and national policy and how to ensure our NDP document reflects these.

Specialist Work – The NDP Steering Group supported by the Parish Council contracted an independent consultant and between January and March this year, a "Health Check" was undertaken on the work so far, and the draft framework NDP document. The output from this "Health Check" was a report which was circulated to the Parish Council in April. Overall the health check provided a positive response to the work undertaken to date with a number of suggestions for enhancing the draft report and ensuring our evidence and record of engagement were robust to support the next stage of the process.

Funding – Unfortunately, government funding to NDP groups ceased in April 25 and therefore direct funding was not available to support the NDP activities. However, the Parish Council provided welcome financial support for aspects such as the consultants' support, community conversations and website hosting.

The DRAFT Document – Following the feedback from the Health Check, the steering group is currently updating the draft NDP document and has started to create a more formal document which will be shared with the Parish Council for comment.

NDP Volunteers and Supporters – The NDP Steering Group includes Jess Cunningham, Gary Alexander, Clare Carroll and Phil Ward from the community and Peter James, Oliver Locke and Kevin Hobart from the Parish Council. Supported by a number of key volunteers supporting with aspects such as the website, information gathering, technical advice and much more.

Thanks to everyone involved.

The Year Ahead – we will continue following the process of updating the draft document, and this will be presented to the Parish Council, following which the Parish Council will advise how and when they wish to go to public consultation and subsequently start the formal process of statutory consultation and referendum.

Author: Jess Cunningham (Chair, Steering Group) May 2026

Presented to the Parish Council on the 18th of May 2026

7. Great Massingham Community Car Scheme Report

John Horsfield. Treasurer

Thank you for your donation of £700.

PURPOSE

The scheme exists to provide transport for those without their own cars or find difficulty using them, also for those suffering from sparse public transport, which in some villages means none at all. We take passengers to all forms of medical appointments and treatments as well as shopping and other socially inclusive needs e.g. visiting partners in care homes.

FINANCE

Our costs to maintain the scheme rise year on year and our grant funding remains fixed. We are now in a position where we are losing money every year. Following a 140% rise in our office rent, we have now asked our coordinators to work from home, additionally and very unfortunately we have stopped our Medical Support Fund which paid the costs of travel for those receiving certain benefits and this is particularly painful for me as I proposed the scheme following the pandemic after being told by a passenger that she could not afford to go to her next hospital appointment. The scheme cost us around £2000 per year.

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Last year we lost £5618 but these actions will save us some £3200 going forward. Even with these savings we still have a shortfall of around £2000 a year. We

currently have reserves of some £12000 but with rising annual costs and without additional funding, the scheme has a lifespan of only 5 years.

JOURNEYS

In the last financial year, we carried out a total of 1171 journeys which, without weekends, equates to between 4 and 5 trips a day. Of these 196 were passengers from Massingham which is 4 every week.

CONCLUSION

I understand that as a council you value the service we provide and once again may I thank you for your donations over the years, it is truly valued. The committee are exploring ways of increasing our income. In fact, we had a meeting with the head of transport for Norfolk Council last week, which is hopeful.

8. PARISHIONERS OPEN FORUM

None

Meeting ended at 19.28

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Signed

Date