

Rocklands Parish Council (RPC)
Minutes of Annual Parish Meeting (Annual Assembly) held on
on Monday 11 May 2026 at 7.00pm
Immediately before the Annual Parish Council Meeting (AGM)

Present: Philip Leslie Chair
Amanda-Jayne Buckland Vice Chair
Phil Dingle
Tim Ford
Bryan Swaddling
Martyn Edwardson-White
Kim Austin Clerk

Also present: 6 members of the public

The meeting started at 7:01pm

The Chair, Cllr. Philip Leslie thanked everybody for coming.

1. To consider accepting apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllr. Anne Jones who had other commitments.

2. To agree Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting (Annual Assembly) held on Monday 12 May 2025.

The minutes had been circulated to all councillors prior to the meeting. Cllr. Buckland proposed they be accepted, Cllr. Ford seconded the proposal and councillors voted with a show of hands. The minutes were duly signed by the Chair, Cllr. Philip Leslie.

3. To discuss any matters arising from the minutes, not on the agenda

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

4. To hear Chairman's Annual Report. Cllr. Philip Leslie delivered his report.

I would like to start my annual report by noting the departure of Richard Harrison as a parish councillor at the end of last year following seven and a half years of service, in which time he fulfilled roles within planning, operating the parish's speed sign, leading our local flood group, and as vice chair. I am especially grateful for his technical expertise when consulting residents on Breckland Council's local plan and his comprehensive responses to our local authority.

I am also grateful to our newest councillor, Martyn, for being willing to join our council and for assuming Richard's mantle in taking on planning matters, as well as to Amanda for accepting a nomination as vice chair. Being a councillor can be a thankless task, and we are blessed with selfless councillors and a great clerk - thank you.

Breckland Council ended its Local Plan regulation 18 public consultation in December, and they are now progressing the plan to regulation 19 by early summer 2026, with submission for examination by the end of the year. We acknowledge this amended plan is improved from the previous version, particularly for our parish, but we continue to have reservations about the removal of settlement boundaries and the potential for unrestricted and unsustainable growth.

Towards the end of March, the Government confirmed its decision on Local Government Reorganisation in Norfolk. They have opted to reorganise Norfolk's county and district councils into three new unitary councils. Subject to the required statutory and parliamentary steps, which would mean that Breckland Council will close on 31 March 2028 and become part of a newly formed West Norfolk Council.

Last year, our parishes' flood group met with a Norfolk County Council senior flood risk officer when a drone fitted with a LiDAR module 3D mapped the area. This data was then used to produce concept drawings showing sites suitable for Natural Flood Management opportunities, together with

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recommended actions. We are now in the process of working with Breckland Council to acquire several sites owned by the authority, which they have kindly offered to the parish council free of charge. One of these sites, located to the east of Wayland Road, was identified within these drawings as playing a significant part in improving our flood risk mitigation and may also open other opportunities beyond flood management.

In addition to our usual duties, we've been working to bring our council operations into compliance with updated statutory regulations. This has included ongoing work to develop a new 'gov.uk' website and councillor emails, update our policies and procedures, and make preparations in the hope of forming a new committee, which will explore opportunities for improving parish facilities.

In closing, I would like to thank every group and individual who helps build and support our community.

5. **To receive Annual Reports by County & District Councillors** - No reports received.

6. **To receive annual reports from village organisations**

6.1 **Village Shop and Post Office (David McNeill)**. David delivered his report.

- **Operations:** The Shop maintained **seven-day opening** (including Sundays) and continued to trade strongly.
- **Stock and local suppliers:** Core grocery lines remained well stocked, with an increased range of locally sourced goods (including meats from Barnard's and Folgate's; bread from Hingham Bakery; ice cream and lollies from Dann's Farm; cakes from Ruth; and other Norfolk-produced items where possible). The shop also has some of its own products branded 'Rocklands Community Shop'.
- **Services:** The Post Office counter continued to provide a high level of usage (including parcel services, foreign currency and cash withdrawals). National Lottery services and the café continued to attract customers and provide an important community facility.
- **Communications:** Magic Marketing was engaged to strengthen communications, and a redesign of the Shop's website commenced. Funded by NCC 'Go Digital' funding programme.
- **Governance:** Policies were reviewed/updated for safety; the Business Plan and strategic objectives were rewritten; and key performance indicators were agreed and are reviewed regularly. Considering staff safety and customer safety.
- **Community support:** The Board recorded thanks to the staff team, the landlords (Elaine and Alan) and the volunteer team. **Sincere thanks to all volunteers.**
- **Finance:** The Society reported a stable year-end position with no significant surplus. As a not-for-profit Community Benefit Society, funds continue to be reinvested to support fair pricing, stock levels and maintenance. We go forward with a degree of optimism.
- **Risks/Issues:** Short-term cashflow pressure was noted due to recent capital expenditure and irregular costs; March takings were reported as £2.5k higher than the same month last year. Recent essential expenditure included £1,380 for air conditioning and £4,065 (50% deposit) for a new freezer; VAT recovery is expected after the quarter ending 31 May. A Post Office Horizon compensation claim was reported as approved, but funds had not been received at the time of the report.
- **Forward look:** Priorities include strengthening local supplier relationships, increasing community use of the café space in quieter periods, recruiting/supporting volunteers, and maintaining a welcoming and affordable service.

David said that Rocklands as a Parish should be extremely proud as it has retained all of its amenities - shop, public house, playing fields and village school.

6.2 **Village Hall (James Alger - Committee chair)**. The Clerk delivered the report.

For most of the past 12 months the Village Hall has been ticking along but we have recently experienced a large bump in the road with the discovery of an underground water leak. Sam Coaker very kindly and

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at short notice put in place a temporary repair to get us up and running, a permanent solution with the pipes going underground will be done at some point over the summer.

The large bill we received for water, because of the leak, has drained our finances but I am in touch with both Anglian Water and Wave (who bill us) to get the moneys back. Since the last Parish Council AGM we have made a number of improvements, the main ones being the non-slip floor in the kitchen, resurfacing the car park and driveway and upgrading the electrics. Thanks to all the contractors who carried out the work. Given our current financial situation, we do not have any plans for further works at the moment and will look to grant funding any future projects.

The village hall committee has recently undergone considerable upheaval. After many years serving as both Treasurer and Secretary, Sarah Good has finally stepped down - though not yet completely as she has undertaken some amazing work on the village hall grounds. Change of circumstances also means that Shena Scholes (officially 'Bookings Secretary' for 14 years, but also a leading light over many years) has also stepped down. Organising 'who' and 'how' to fill her multiple roles reveals just how much she has been doing to keep the various facets of our busy village hall functioning. The village also owes many of its memorable social celebrations to her vision and drive. Again, I would like to thank both of them for their hard work and service over many years and to say, they will be missed.

We are extremely pleased to welcome Richard Davies as our new Treasurer. We note that he is generously taking on the same role for the Playing Fields as well - as did Sarah Good before him.

At our recent AGM we also welcomed a new committee member, Tim Ford.

We hope that the next 12 months is less stressful.

6.3 Little Rocky's Parent and Toddler Group (Sharon Brown). Sharon delivered her report.

Little Rocky's Parent and Toddler Group is an ever-evolving group with regular attendance from core families and others who attend intermittently. All attendees are treated with the same level of respect and welcoming approach.

It would not be possible to run this group without our wonderful team of volunteers, all of whom come from professional backgrounds. It is the love and compassion which is demonstrated throughout the session that makes our group so special. A huge debt of gratitude is due to the following people: Shena Scholes, Lucy Mosse, Cath and Dave Jones, Lesley Harty, Maria Bunn and John Brown. I'm the one who comes up with all the crazy ideas for the activities.

We have had some new families join us recently, thankfully, with very young babies. Going forward, however, we do face a period of uncertainty as we lose 16 children in July who will move onto their next phase of the learning journey. It has been such a privilege to watch these little ones develop physically, emotionally and socially. We will miss them all so much as we have got to know them, many of whom are from very small babies.

Five of our LR children will be starting at Rocklands Primary and at least one (to our knowledge) will be moving onto Great Ellingham. The remaining 10 will be spread out over Caston, Attleborough, Hingham, Great Buckenham and some further afield.

We continue to have close links with our local primary school and will welcome the Head Teacher and Reception teacher to LR in June, for a transition session with the children.

We have purchased more resources with a focus on sensory equipment. We rely heavily on fundraising to boost our coffers as so much of our weekly income is absorbed by expenditure. By the time we have paid for hall hire, heating and refreshments, there is very little left over. There have been quite a few weeks during the winter whereby we have run at a loss. It is during these circumstances that we have had to dip into our savings to bail us out. This is not ideal as the additional funds are there to supplement our resources. Wear and tear feature very highly within our group, so we are constantly having to replace 'well loved' equipment. We have increased our subs slightly, but it is our aim to make our group affordable and accessible without discrimination.

Thanks to our construction manager, our resources cupboard has been decked out with shelving to help us keep all our equipment organised. He still has more work to do though so as one job drops off the bottom of the list, I find him a few more to be added to the top.

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Our 3 main funding raising events are: Winter Market, Easter Bunny Trail and forthcoming Strawberry Tea. We are truly grateful for the support from 'the village' at these events.

Little Rocky's is a social environment where both adult carers and children can interact positively. There has been much networking between the carers, and we have seen friendships flourish. This is a 'safe space' for everyone, and it is imperative that this group receives the support needed, in order for it to continue.

6.4 Rocklands Primary School (Julie Dekker). The Clerk delivered the report.

The school continues to be over-subscribed in most year groups with the number of children attending the school currently standing at 73 pupils.

In July we will say goodbye to 10 Year 6s, who will leave us to attend high school. This year our children are transitioning to: Attleborough Academy, Wymondham College, Wayland High and Old Buckenham High. We will be sorry to see them leave us but know that they are well prepared for the exciting adventure ahead of them.

In September, we will be joined by 13 new Reception children. Our pupil intake number is 10, so we are oversubscribed this year. This is an amazing achievement considering that many schools in Norfolk are struggling to fill spaces and many headteachers are facing the unenviable task of reducing classes and losing teachers. As a village community, we should celebrate the popularity of our school and the fantastic reputation it has in the local area and within education circles. This reputation is not something that school staff have achieved in isolation but is part of a wider community effort. Through close working ties with the wonderful team at Little Rocky's, children are supported throughout their journey from toddlerhood to starting school. Staff at Little Rocky's are part of a wider network of early years professionals and attend the Early Years Café hosted by Mrs Chamberlin at Great Ellingham Primary. This sharing of expertise and access to up-to-date training ensures that our youngest children are provided with outstanding early years provision. The fact that all the adults within the Little Rocky's team are volunteers is stunning; we are so very lucky to have them. Mrs Shaw and I are looking forward to attending some of the Friday morning sessions ahead of the pre-schoolers transitioning to school, to begin to get to know our new children and their families.

Rocklands Primary continues to benefit from being part of a federation and many joint activities take place each term across the 2 schools. This week is Year 6 SATs week so all our older children are being tested on grammar, spelling, reading and maths. Spread across 4 mornings the tests are always taken very seriously and our children always try their best. Once all the tests are completed, the Shakespeare play is revealed and the fun of the summer term begins: sports day, building the electric Goblin go-karts, Highline Adventure Day and the Prefect bowling trip. Our children work hard but also get to play hard. As for all schools our budget is very tight, with financial decisions made at County and Government level having an often-detrimental impact on our finances. However, with careful housekeeping we have avoided having to make uncomfortable staffing decisions, so far. The support of our parents' group (FORS) makes a huge difference to our finances. This year, they have provided: coaches for school trips, new iPads for classes, books for the library, new guided reading books and have given each class a top-up to their class budget. Their support is never taken for granted and is very much appreciated. A big 'thank you' to all those within the wider community who support our fundraising events.

Our federation benefits from a strong team of governors who support and challenge the senior leadership in a variety of ways. Governors are all volunteers but take their role and responsibilities very seriously. Not all governors have an educational background and we are always looking out for those who would be interested in joining the team and supporting the federation as we look towards the future.

6.5 Rocklands Youth Club (Dave Jones). Dave couldn't attend the meeting, but has provided a report post-meeting which is included here.

Youth club continues to function well thanks to the voluntary energy offered by those who ensure sessions are safely supervised. We have two layers of volunteers - Registered Leaders (who also sit on the Committee) and Voluntary Assistant Leaders (being parents who sign up to a roster of help.) The

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quality of our wonderful youngsters and style of 'hands off' supervision combine to make every session relaxed, friendly and enjoyable . We simply offer each of our members opportunity to be the best person they can be , with minimum of adult 'interference' . Everyone responds superbly ! We also appreciate the assistance offered by older members and those on DofE placements.

6.6 Rocklands Playing Fields (Cllr. Buckland). Amanda delivered the report.

Playing Field has seen some extra hires in April due to the water leak at the village hall. Thanks to Shena and Amanda for working so closely to ensure hires could continue at the pavilion where suitable. Fours had their annual sports day, which was fantastic to see.

We were alerted to a cable dipping by Steve Green, thanks for alerting me to this. I put a temporary barrier in place for safety and alerted the community and user groups. I've been in communication with the alarm company who have attended, removed and made safe the cable.

6.7 St. Peter's Church (RSP) (John Brown). Sharon Brown delivered John's report.

Over the year we have had many different types of service to provide variety to the style of worship. We have had several services which have been followed by a buffet lunch. One of the traits of RSP is that we are good at feeding people with a selection of savouries and sweet desserts.

Our service of Remembrance at the flower bed is always very well attended. This year it was followed by hot soup in the village hall; this was well received.

We rely very heavily on fundraising to try to boost the rapidly depleting coffers. Thankfully there has been a new formula for calculating the Parish Share; this allows for a reduced payment from churches with very small congregations.

Our church remains a popular venue for performances and services from the local primary school. We have many people who visit our church and always write positive messages in our visitors' book. We are quite unique in having our church open every day.

One of the strengths of the two churches in Rocklands is that we liaise really well, particularly with fund raising. We have had a Cheese and Wine evening and a coffee morning. Our next coffee morning will be on 23 May, to which everyone is welcome.

Our most recent service was to commemorate VE Day. The service took the format of a 'Creative Church' with the theme of window of hope. The congregation were encouraged to make a stained-glass window, using glue and tissue paper (not a good combination for some !!!) a window stencil and space to write their own message. The silence was deafening as the powers of concentration took over. All the windows of hope are on display in the church for anyone to view.

One massive achievement for 2026 has been the resurfacing of Church Lane, thanks to a wonderful local family. What a difference this has made.

As we continue into 2026, we ask for God's holy blessings to guide our church through a very uncertain future.

6.8 All Saints Church (Cath Jones). Sharon Brown delivered the report.

The past year has been a busy one for RAS, and we have continued to keep going without a church warden for a fifth year running. We are still waiting for the cogs of the Anglican Church to finalise the amalgamation of Shellrock and Hingham/High Oak benefices - fingers crossed that the end is nigh !

On a more positive note, several successful fundraising/social events have taken place, some in collaboration with our friends at St Peter's church, including:

- Paperback book and plant stall
- Flower Festival
- Harvest Supper
- Coffee morning at the Village Hall
- Cheese and Wine

We have also enjoyed some special services during the year, alongside our traditional monthly worship, including:

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- During the Flower Festival, a quiet reflective time on the Sunday morning with music, readings and poetry etc.
- The Pet/Harvest service
- Advent Carol service
- Candlelit Christingle service
- Candlelit Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve
- Informal Candlemas service
- A new innovation this year was the Dawn service on Easter Day .

Sadly, during May half term 2025, we suffered vandalism when our only stained glass window had a rock thrown through it. A specialist company came to inspect and advised that the whole window needed attention so it was removed in January 2026 and the space boarded up, while the window went back to the workshop. Ecclesiastical Insurance covered only the cost of the repair of the actual smashed panes but unbelievably, the wonder of Rocklands prevailed and we received enough donations from villagers to cover the cost of about £20,000, for which we are SO grateful. The restored window was returned just in time for Easter, and a secure grill has been fitted to the outside to prevent further wilful damage and hopefully the window will be safe for the next 100 years or more!

We have had various setbacks, but we have continued to pull together as a team, in spite of illness and advancing years slowing (some of!) us down. Looking at the long-term future, the way ahead is not clear, but the short term is fairly secure.

6.9 White Hart Public House (Dave Thomas). No report received.

6.10 Chapel Green Meadow (Sue Steel). No report received.

To receive comments from the public

There were no comments from the public.

The meeting closed at 7:29pm.

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