

Parish Councillors present: Councillor Curtis, Councillor Wiles, Councillor McCourt, Councillor Kok, Councillor Purchase, Councillor Sennett, Councillor Tingley and Councillor Fry (Chairman)

Also present: Kate Bennett (Parish Clerk), County Councillor Dawson and two members of the public

Apologies: Councillor Burgess-Lee, Councillor Howard, Borough Councillor Crofts and Harry Humphrey

Minutes (draft)

1 Welcome

The Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed everyone.

2 To receive apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were noted as above and the reasons for such approved.

3 Members' Declarations of Interests in items on the agenda and any dispensations required considered

Councillor Tingley declared an interest at Item 12, Planning: Planning Application 25/01753/O for a proposed residential development of up to 4 dwellings at Land East of 3 to 6 Meadowgate Lane, Emneth and a dispensation was approved to allow him to confirm details of the proposed development should the need arise. Councillor Tingley would not take part in any vote on the matter.

4 Open Forum for Public Participation (fifteen minutes only): no report.

5 To consider the co-option of a member of public onto the Parish Council

A resident of Emneth was present expressing an interest in the casual vacancy open to co-option onto the Parish Council following the resignation of Mr. Michael Pearson. The fourteen day statutory advertising period for this casual vacancy was now complete. Mr. Dylan Oakley, who could not be present at this month's meeting, was also still interested in the casual vacancy and had asked for his application to be considered in his absence.

Following a brief presentation from Mr. Max Ingram it was resolved to co-opt Mr. Ingram onto the Parish Council and he joined the meeting. The Clerk will arrange for a Declaration of Acceptance of Office and Register of Interests Form to be signed before the start of the next meeting.

For the purpose of the Minutes it can be noted that Councillor Jon Burgess-Lee has resigned from the Parish Council so a further vacancy will be available for co-option at the 27th January 2026 meeting. Thanks to be recorded to Jon for his service on the Council and to local matters over the last few years.

6 To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 2th October 2025

It was resolved, with all in favour, to approve the Minutes of last month's meeting and these were signed and initialled as a true record of the meeting by the Chairman.

7 Clerk to provide an update on any matters not included on this month's agenda

- a) The Clerk will arrange to meet with a contractor to sort out the grounds maintenance works required at Betsy Pad.
- b) A new Parish noticeboard has been ordered and should be delivered soon.
- c) The new bench for Gaultree Square has been delivered and is now awaiting installation.
- d) The uneven kerb outside the Spar Shop has been reported to Norfolk County Council Highways as a trip hazard.
- e) Once funding from Norfolk County Council has been received into the Parish Council's account, the new bus shelter for Scarfield Lane can be ordered.

8 To discuss Playing Field Matters

- a) Thanks to be recorded to Cousins of Emneth who has removed all of the hedging along the left hand side perimeter of the car park and a tree by the old pavilion. The Chairman of the Playing Field had met with the neighbouring land owners and agreed the boundary line where the new fencing will be installed.

- b) The bus shelter removed from Gaultree Square is being stored in the old pavilion until it can be erected in the play area.
- c) After considering three quotes for the grass cutting contract at the playing field for 2026, it was resolved to appoint The Glover Group as the preferred contractor.
- d) It was resolved to approve expenditure of £460 + Vat to Nurture Landscapes for verti draining to the football pitches again this year.
- e) One of the wooden rails in the car park had recently been damaged by a visiting car.
- f) Damaged guttering at the new pavilion was reported; Alex Lane agreed to investigate.

9 Finance

- a) It was resolved with all in favour to approve the November 2025 Payments List as presented. Councillors Purchase and Fry to authorize on the Unity Trust website after the meeting.
- b) Income received since last meeting to be recorded at £4,747.55:
 - £3,972.55 agricultural holdings annual rent
 - £775.00 cemetery income
- c) Following consideration of the 2026/27 Budget figures (previously reviewed by the Finance Working Group and recommended by them) it was resolved to set the 2026/2027 precept at £48,000.00 (an increase of 6.66% on last year's precept which was £45,000.00). This will help to boost general reserves which have been depleted slightly this year by unbudgeted for expenditure i.e.
 - towpath grounds maintenance at £928.00 (a tree report, hogweed treatment programme and new signage)
 - tree work at the cemetery of £750.00
 - grounds maintenance works to clear overgrowth along the length of the Elmside footpath £650.00
 - a new noticeboard £1,500.00
 - a new bench and installation of concrete base at Gaultree Square £1,100.00.

The increase in precept is also required to cover the ever-increasing cost to run the Parish i.e. staff salaries (the Clerk, Litter Picker and Playing Field Caretaker), dog waste bin emptying which has increased by 200% this financial year, grounds maintenance and running costs at the cemetery, towpath and playing field / play area, energy costs for street lights and potential costs next year in professional fees for acquiring further burial land for the Parish.

An average Band D Council Tax contribution for Emneth based on a precept of £48,000.00 will be in the region of £50.51 per annum (0.97 pence per week). The average Band D nationally this year was £92.22 per annum.

- d) Councillors Tingley and Sennett considered the bank statements for internal audit purposes.

10 To receive a report from Norfolk County Council

- a) County Councillor Dawson is currently involved with the Campaign against Mud on Roads, pavement parking, access to the A1101 from the A47 at the Elme Hall roundabout (poor surface), the gap on Outwell Road which is awaiting signage and hi-viz and the visibility issues at the Church Road / A1101 junction.
- b) If the elections planned for May 2026 go ahead there will be an election for Norfolk County Councillors and another for Unitary Members in anticipation of building a 'shadow' authority in line with the Local Government Reorganization. If the 'one unitary authority' is approved (as preferred by Norfolk County Council) the current 460 Borough and District councillors will be reduced to 160.

11 To receive a report from the Borough Council

- a) The Community Infrastructure Levy governance has now been reviewed (see Item 13b of these Minutes).

12 Planning

- a) To consider any planning applications since last meeting:
- Planning application 25/01812/F self-build proposed agriculturally tied dwelling at Land West of Midfarrow Farm, Walsoken Road, Walsoken. Councillors resolved to not comment as they believed this not to be in the Parish of Emneth. For the purpose of the Minutes it can subsequently be recorded that it *is* in fact in the Parish of Emneth and following the meeting councillors resolved to support the application with the caveat that the agricultural restriction is enforced.
 - Planning application 25/01753/O proposed residential development of up to 4 dwellings at Land East of 3 to 6 Meadowgate Lane, Emneth. It was resolved to *object* to this application based on concerns with an increase in traffic along a very narrow road and being so close to the junction with the A1101 and also concerns with the destruction of hedgerows at the proposed location.

Not all decisions on planning applications for the Parish are resolved upon at a monthly meeting; some are considered during the course of the month and resolved upon online. Details of all planning applications considered by Emneth Parish Council can be viewed on the Borough Council's planning portal by visiting and referencing the relevant *planning application number* or a *key word* into the *Search bar*.

- b) To note any planning decisions and/or appeal notifications since last meeting:
- Planning application 25/01357/F Parkfield, 127 The Wroe, Emneth, extension to existing dwellings: the application has been permitted by the Local Planning Authority.
 - Planning application 25/01235/F removal of existing jet washes and other works at Morrisons s/s, 40 Elm High Road, Wisbech: the application has been permitted by the Local Planning Authority.

13 Parish Matters

- a) It was resolved for the Clerk to investigate the condition of the defibrillator cabinet on the wall at the Premier Store and replace if necessary.
- b) The review of the governance surrounding Community Infrastructure Levy developer contributions and subsequent funding to Parishes and community groups is now complete and is available on the Borough Council's website for interested parties. The funding available to Parish Councils and community groups is now known as the Spending Strategy and Parish Councils are being invited to produce a Parish Infrastructure Investment Plan (PiIP) detailing the Parish's current infrastructure and identifying their future need to plan how 'cil' contributions are spent. This should be in place by March 2026 when the next round of funding is opening for applications.
- c) It was resolved to allocate the remaining October 2025 cil receipts of £747.51 (total received £1,522.41) to the new concrete base and bench at Gaultree Square.
- d) Councillor Sennett agreed to assist Councillor Finnis into the maintenance requirements for the SAM2 camera.
- e) The new *Assertion 10 Digital and Data Compliance* requirements for 2026' external audit will require Councils to have a minimum of one generic email account on a council owned domain (ie; not a free Outlook.com, gmail.com, Hotmail.com, aol.com, btinternet.com, etc account). This service should be hosted on a GDPR compliant server and Councils are advised to consider providing council owned addresses to staff and councillors.
- f) A quote to carry out works along the towpath following a tree survey earlier this year was noted. This to be revisited at the next meeting as it is understood that Elm Parish Council is sourcing another quote.

14 Cemetery Issues

- a) Following a complaint from a cemetery user concerning a large oak tree, a quote to reduce a tree limb was considered but it was resolved to not pursue this at this time as the tree is healthy and the fact that it is causing an issue with falling leaves is not a justifiable reason to have a limb removed.

- b) The need for more burial land in the Parish was discussed again. Councillor Howard had confirmed with the Clerk prior to the meeting that she is in the process of seeking some pre-application advice regarding a possible development on her land adjacent to the cemetery which, if successful, would result in her being agreeable to selling the piece of land the Parish Council was interested in some years ago directly behind the current cemetery. This agenda item to be revisited at the next meeting in January by which time she will hopefully be in a position to confirm whether or not this piece of land is for sale.

15 Agricultural Holdings Issues

- a) There is just one outstanding payment for land rent due for 2025-2026; Clerk will chase the tenant.

16 To discuss Central Hall issues

- a) The Hall has been closed recently due to an issue with the roof.

17 To discuss Norfolk County Council issues including highways

- a) Residents are reminded to report pot holes directly on the Norfolk County Council website by following the links to *Roads and Transport*, then *Roads*, then *Report a highways problem*.

18 To note any communications from the Police since last meeting

- a) The Community Engagement Officer for Emneth is Maddison Cage.
b) Residents are encouraged to report anti-social behaviour issues to the Police by dialling 101 or emailing sntdownhammarket@norfolk.police.uk

19 To note general correspondence received since last meeting

- a) An email concerning brambles overgrowing the verge into the highway at Hollycroft Road has been received and forwarded onto Norfolk County Council Highways for their action.

20 If required to consider excluding the public and press under the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 due to the confidential nature of the items being discussed

- a) A new signed tenancy agreement from a tenant at Hungate Road is still awaited.
b) A new signed tenancy agreement from a tenant at Grays Lane is still awaited.

21 Items for the next meeting agenda

- Tenancy of land at Hungate Road Holdings
- Tenancy of land at Grays Lane Holdings
- Parish Infrastructure Investment Plan
- SAM2
- To co-opt a new councillor
- To discuss acquiring land for future burials
- To sign a contract with new grass cutting contractor at the playing field

22 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be on Tuesday 27th January 2026 at 6.30pm at Emneth Central Hall.

Meeting closed at 7.54pm

Chairman's signature