

BROME and OAKLEY PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of Meeting of Brome and Oakley Parish Council held at 7.30 pm on Monday 19 May 2025 at Brome and Oakley Village Hall.

PRESENT: Councillors Roger Broughton, Isobel Demangeat, Tom Pace, John Parry, Ian Stockham and 15 members of the public.

1. Election of Chairman

It was unanimously agreed to election Cllr Broughton as Chairman. Cllr Broughton duly signed the declaration of acceptance of office. Cllr Demangeat was thanked for all her efforts in chairing the Parish Council for the previous two years.

2. Apologies for absence – apologies were received from Cllrs Keeley. Cllrs Doe and Prior were absent

3. Declarations of pecuniary and other interests from members on any item to be discussed and requests for dispensations

Cllrs Broughton, Pace and Parry declared an interest in matters relating to the Village Hall.

Public Forum

Commenced at 19.40. Neither the District or County Councillor were present.

In relation to the proposal solar farm development the following representations were received.

Mr George West introduced himself as the representative from Warren Hill Farms (landowners for the project). He explained the land had been in family for five generations. Recent changes in inheritance tax rules had meant financial risk needed to be reduced to ensure the farm stays in family going forward. Climate change had made it more difficult to grow crops. However, Mr West was mindful how the development would affect people living nearby. Mr West stated screening and planting would be delivered by EcoPower and a proposed plan would be issued by EcoPower in due course, the wood in Brome opposite The Avenue and behind the telephone box could be made into a children's play area and hedgerow planting would continue to protect and increase biodiversity. He hoped to create an amazing eco system, through grazing sheep, planting wildlife strips and housing bees and had discussed with the MP how to utilise industrial buildings for solar and how solar farms were also needed to meet net zero targets. Worries about construction and what happens at the end of the lease, could be addressed directly to Mr West who didn't want to impose the development but wanted the community to understand and see benefits over time.

Mr Phil Watson, Strategic Energy Projects Manager from Suffolk County Council, recommended that the parish looked at the plan as presented and how they wanted to shape it for the best outcomes for the village, what might be possible and what compromises might be possible. Mr Watson suggested the NSIP Planning Inspector will only consider what is presented to them and cannot deal with ancillary matters, for example solar on buildings, therefore, all matters need to be raised with the developer before examination and the examiner would look at residual matters between the application and the areas of dispute.

The Chairman asked how enhanced dialogue could happen. Mr Watson replied via a liaison group having a rolling dialogue. If the Parish Council remains, in principle, against the development, the process would be to make the proposal acceptable in planning terms and this is what the inspector would want to see.

Questions were asked by the Chairman of the Residents Group to landowner and said there was currently much uncertainty which was owing particularly to the start of statutory consultation date being delayed. The landowner confirmed a community liaison group was going to be created.

Signed  Chairperson  Clerk

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The landowner was asked how much influence they would have on the final plans? Mr West, responded that he was hoping EcoPower Suffolk would take on comments regarding Biodiversity Net Gain. Legally, a Heads of Terms had been signed and the Option Lease Agreement was close to being completed – all in the name of Warren Hill Farms. The land had been defined for the development but the area of the fields to be used was still to be confirmed, e.g. a 10 acre field could only have six acres of development. EcoPower would do planting and maintain it or the landowner may be contractor to maintain the land. Finally, the landowner was asked how confident he was EcoPower would build when they say they will given the sheer volume of solar farm development in the area, would this put any pressure on the scheme being delivered and this it was reiterated that this uncertainty was a negativity for the community. Mr West committed to checking if there was a latest delivery date but understood grid connection in 2030 was intended. Mr Watson added that when the Secretary of State issues a Development Consent Order it is usually time limited to a maximum of five years.

Public Forum closed at 20.04 and the Parish Council meeting resumed.

4. Minutes of the last meeting

- The minutes of the meeting of 14 April 2025 were approved.
- Matters arising from the minutes of the meeting of 14 April 2025 – none.

5. Appointments

The following appointments were made

- Vice Chairman – Cllr Ian Stockham
- Responsible Financial Officer – Sarah Foote
- Bank signatories – Cllrs Keeley, Parry, Prior were current signatories and it was agreed this would remain. The Clerk had view only access to the bank account.
- SALC Representative – no appointment made.
- EPR Liaison Representative – Cllr John Parry.
- Representative Councillors to Diss and District Neighbourhood Plan Management Group – It was noted that Cllr Broughton and Mr Liddell, a parishioner, were the current representatives. The Councillor representative would be further considered at the next meeting.
- Vehicle Activated Sign Co-ordinators – Cllrs Doe and Stockham.
- Progress Power Liaison Group Representative – Cllr John Parry
- Progress Power Community Benefit Fund Representative – Cllr John Parry.

6. Planning

- The following planning applications were considered:

Ref	Location	Application
DC/25/01974	Progress Power Ltd Potash Lane Eye	Approval of Details reserved by Requirement 15 and 23, pursuant to The Progress Power (Gas Fired Power Station) Order 2015 As Amended – Travel Plan
It was agreed there was no reason to object to this application but noted that cycle provision from Diss (train or bus) station was not good.		
DC/25/02223	Land east of Buck Lane, Oakley	Application to determine if prior approval is required for a proposed: Erection, Extension or Alteration of a Building for Agricultural or Forestry use The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) - Schedule 2, Part

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6 - Erection of general agricultural store/barn

It was agreed there was no reason to object to this application.

b. There were no planning determinations to note.

c. Other planning matters:

Mid Suffolk District Council Planning for the Future briefing paper was noted. In the DDNP 12 new dwellings had been allocated, however, due to new housing targets the briefing papers was stated an indicative requirement of 70 dwellings. There was uncertainty if this included the 12 dwellings allocated in the DDNP. It was agreed to correspond with DDNP to make them aware of the briefing and to ask Mid Suffolk District Council for information on how the figures had been arrived at given the local work that had gone into producing the neighbourhood plan. It was also agreed to ask about the recent call for sites, and how some land allocations in this were classed as in Eye but were believed to be in Brome.

7. EcoPower Solar Farm development

a. The Parish Council's response to the non-statutory consultation which had been submitted on 19 April was noted.

b. It was agreed that Cllrs Broughton and Parry would be the Parish Council representatives on any outside bodies

c. Protocols for engagement outside of Parish Council meetings – it was agreed landowner engagement would be via further Parish Council meetings and that the landowner would be invited to attend meetings with relevant agenda items.

d. Ten public comments in relation to 'Area 2' land off Brome Street/Bromelands were noted. It was noted that the first consultation submission had been generic regarding the proposal and only had addressed one parcel of land. Now, many more specifics in relation to other parcels of land had been highlighted and it was agreed that a further consultation response should be submitted to EcoPower. Details of what this submission would included were considered and it was agreed that all councillors would submit their comments to the Clerk to collate and make a submission to EcoPower on 29 May. This submission would also be copied to the landowner.

e. There were no other matters related to the proposed development to consider.

8. Finance and Governance

a. The current financial position was noted as £6,681.04 in current account and £4,069.99 in business account.

b. It was agreed to make the following payments.

Amount	Payee	Details
£247.66	Sarah Foote	Clerk's salary May 2025
£8.70	Sarah Foote	Clerk's expenses May 2025
£644.11	Community Action Suffolk/James Hallam	Annual Insurance premium
£165.20	HMRC	PAYE

9. Correspondence

The following items of correspondence were noted:

Date	From	Subject
07.05.2025	Mid Suffolk District Council	NSIP and large-scale energy developments update
09.05.2025	Mid Suffolk District Council	Town and Parish Update May 2025
09.05.2025	Suffolk Association of Local Councils	The Local Councillor Magazine

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09.05.2025	Suffolk County Council	Suffolk Devolution Deal - Briefing on Local Government Reorganisation. Eye Town Hall 11 June – it was agreed Cllrs Broughton and Parry would attend this event.
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10. Urgent Matters and matters for report
None.

11. Date of next meeting – Monday 9 June 2025.

Meeting closed: 21.11

Signed R. A. L. C. Chairperson L. M. T. Clerk
Date 14.7.2025