MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE BANHAM PARISH COUNCIL

HELD AT BANHAM COMMUNITY CENTRE ON THURSDAY 14TH MAY 2026 AT 7:00PM

1.	**Welcome:** The Chairman of the Banham Parish Council welcomed the Parish Council and members of the public.
2.	**Apologies for Absence:** There were apologies of absence from Mr Keith Drewrey, Mr Brendan Sparks, Dr Jo Dalton, and Mrs Pam Spicer.
3.	**Agreement/Signing of May 25 Annual Minutes:** Minutes of the 2025 May Annual meeting were agreed and signed by the Chairman
4.	**Declarations of Interest:** There were no declarations of interest.
5.	**Chairman's Annual Report:** Thankfully we have had a relatively uneventful year. We have managed to avoid any further flooding over the winter, as the weather has been kind to us. It certainly wasn't down to the efforts of Norfolk County Council and the flood defence team, as their investigation and proposed works are still ongoing and are at exactly the same stage as they were when I gave my last annual statement a year ago...nothing quite like speed, efficiency and a sense of urgency...In fact, it's nothing like any of those things. Other than that, it has been business as usual, dealing with footpaths, potholes, street lights, allotments, speed warning equipment, planning applications, maintenance of public areas and play equipment, the village Christmas tree, Remembrance Day ceremonies, along with any other concerns our parishioners may have. The Parish Council continues to be a proud supporter of local groups, helping to support and finance the Banham Community Hub which has gone from strength to strength, all thanks to the huge effort put into it by Pam and David. I hope they are very proud, because we all are! We also support the Christmas Fair, along with other local groups and organisations. In addition we fund essential private transport for car-less local residents which has proven to be a lifetime to some. The Parish Council considers it very important to support the local community wherever possible, as support from higher authorities can often be found wanting. None of this would be possible without the incredible team that forms the Parish Council, that sacrifice their time and resources for free to serve their neighbours and their community for little reward or recognition. I would like to put it on record and thank them all for their dedication and effort, without which, the village would be much the poorer. Last but not least, our brilliant Clerk Michelle, who has proven to be the beating heart of the Parish Council, and manages to keep everyone up to speed and within the law. Well done, and thank you Michelle.

Signed:……..Dated:

6. **RFO's Report - Financial Report 2025-2026**

The Parish Council approved the accounts for the year ending 31 March 2025 The Internal Audit of the accounts was completed satisfactorily and the External Audit was confirmed and cleared. The return and Auditor's certificate confirmed that Banham Parish Council had complied with all requirements to:

- Advertise the audit and give notice to Electors of their right to inspect the accounts
- Make the accounts publicly available to electors for inspection
- Advertise the conclusion of the audit and the right to inspect the annual Return
- Publicly display the approved Annual Return and accounts to March 2023

Both the internal and external auditors had concluded there were no matters arising to be reported.

Report and audit 2025/26

The accounts for last year will be completed and submitted for Internal Audit shortly.

The 2025/26 Budget was agreed by council and reviewed, spending for the year was within budget. The budget for 2026/27 will be appended to last years accounts for approval with those accounts.

The year was a good one, the Council has been very active as you have heard from the Chair in his report.

Valerie H Plummer
14th May 2026

8. **Annual Report of Stephen Askew, District Councillor**

Annual Parish Report 2025-26_ NCC

Our Promises	What Was Delivered	Impact
Libraries & Culture	Built new libraries, invested **£3m+**, and transformed **Norwich Castle** into a world-class attraction	Stronger cultural offer and a major boost for tourism
Better Care	Invested **£40m+** in care homes and supported living	More residents able to live independently for longer
Backing Our Children	**GOOD-rated services**, **£2.5m+** for care leavers, **£5m** for jobs, and **600+ opportunities created**	Better life chances and stronger futures for young people
Better Roads	Major infrastructure projects completed and **£10m extra** invested in maintenance	One of the **best-performing highways services** in the country
Improved Buses	**£50m+ invested**, more electric buses, and **26% growth in passenger numbers**	Cleaner travel and better public transport access
Protecting the Environment	**850,000+ trees planted** and emissions cut by **50%**	Protecting Norfolk's countryside and tackling climate change
Growing the Economy	Investment in high streets, improved connectivity, and **hundreds of new homes built**	Stronger local economy and thriving communities

Signed:……..Dated: 14th May 2026

	It's been a very uncertain year for Norfolk County Council with the devolution and Local Government review nagging away in the background. The administration has a strong record of delivering on its promises and investing in the county's future. From new libraries and major road schemes to over £40 million in care and significant improvements in children's services, we have focused on the priorities that matter most to residents. It has strengthened local transport, supported businesses and high streets, expanded opportunities for young people, and taken meaningful action to protect Norfolk's environment. **Norfolk County Council delivers a balanced budget for 2026–27** Norfolk County Council approved a balanced £613.8m budget for 2026–27, demonstrating strong financial leadership and prudent management in what remains one of the toughest funding climates in decades. The administration has once again delivered stability and certainty for residents, setting a balanced financial position while identifying £42.3 million in savings and efficiencies and committing £76.3 million in targeted investment to protect vital services and strengthen Norfolk's economy. Despite significant national financial pressures and ongoing constraints in central government funding, it has ensured the county remains on a firm financial footing, without resorting to emergency measures. This stands in stark contrast to a growing number of upper-tier authorities across the country that have issued Section 114 notices or are facing effective bankruptcy. The budget enables the council to continue: • Protecting frontline services • Investing heavily in adults and children's services • Delivering new libraries and modern learning hubs in key towns • Supporting for heritage, culture, and tourism • Driving transformative reforms to improve efficiency and outcomes • Backing economic growth and infrastructure • Maintaining long-term financially sustainability In line with national funding assumptions a 4.998% increase in council tax was implemented due to the government's continued reliance on placing the burden on local taxpayers to safeguard core services. This decision reflects the financial realities facing councils nationwide, while ensuring essential services remain protected for Norfolk residents. This budget reinforces Norfolk's Conservative administration's commitment to careful stewardship of taxpayers' money, strong local services, and a resilient future for the county. **Norfolk County Council invests in community led highway improvements across the county** Norfolk County Council has reaffirmed its commitment to supporting local communities with the approval of 99 new highway improvement schemes for 2026-27, delivered in partnership with town and parish councils across Norfolk. The Parish Partnership Programme, now entering its fifteenth year, has given local communities a voice in shaping the highways enhancements that matter most to them, whether that's improving pedestrian safety, slowing vehicle speeds, or making it easier to walk, cycle or access local services. This year's programme represented a total investment of £769,034, made possible through the longstanding 50/50 funding model. Town and parish councils will collectively contribute £384,517, matched by £384,517 from Norfolk County Council, enabling more than twice as many small-scale schemes to be delivered than could be funded by the council alone. In total local councils submitted 99 bids for 2026/27 and all were approved as viable schemes after being carefully assessed against value for money, community outcomes, safety benefits and compliance.

Signed:……..Dated:

	Norfolk's bus service improvements deliver record growth and faster journeys
	
	Norfolk County Council's Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) across the county, has seen a 26% increase in passenger numbers since 2022 and making Norfolk a leading national example for sustainable travel.
	
	A paper discussed at the council's Infrastructure and Development Committee on 22nd January highlighted what has been delivered thanks to the £65.45 million secured for Norfolk from the Department for Transport. That includes;
	
	• New and enhanced bus services on more than 44 routes across Norfolk, including more evening and Sunday services
	• Affordable fares: capped single fares in key towns and multi-operator ticketing
	• Greener fleet: 75 zero-emission buses in Norwich and 24 more electric buses coming in 2026
	• Improved passenger experience: real-time information, safer waiting areas, next-stop announcements and real-time information on more buses.
	
	Customer satisfaction has risen to 87%, bucking national trends and reinforcing Norfolk's approach to improvements in bus travel across the county.
	
	Norfolk gritting vehicles headed out over the winter season
	
	Norfolk County Council's winter gritting got underway during the recent winter, with gritters active on A/B roads, key bus routes, and village access roads, using new tech for efficiency. The first runs of the recent winter season (late 2025/early 2026) started as temperatures dropped, utilizing the 58-strong fleet with automated salting to cover 2,200 miles of routes, supported by stocked salt barns and public grit bins.
	
	Norfolk County Council took first place in the Eastern region in annual Highways and Transport Satisfaction Survey
	
	Norfolk County Council has once again demonstrated strong performance in the National Highways and Transport (NHT) Public Satisfaction Survey, taking the top spot in the Eastern region for overall satisfaction and second out of 29 county councils across England.
	
	The annual survey, which gathers public views on highways and transport services, saw Norfolk achieve an overall satisfaction score of 48%, well above the national average of 40%.
	
	This marks the 15th consecutive year Norfolk has participated in the survey, and the 7th year in a row that we have come either first or second overall.
	Key highlights from this year's results include:
	
	• Top Regional Performer: Norfolk ranked 1st in the Eastern Region for overall satisfaction.
	• Some of the best above average score were in our bus services thanks to improvements that have been made as part of our Bus Service Improvement Plan. The 'local bus services' overall category we were 10% above the group average with sub indicators as follows:
	  o Public Transport Information (11% above group average)
	  o Frequency of bus services (9% above group average)
	  o Ease of access to school / work (6% above group average)
	• Condition of highways (8% above group average)

Signed:……..Dated:

Norwich Castle Keep reopens following £27m redevelopment

Norwich Castle Keep reopened to visitors following a comprehensive five-year redevelopment project that introduced new accessibility features alongside new galleries and interpretive displays.

Funded by £12 million from Norfolk County Council and over £13 million from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, all five floors of the newly named People's Palace were opened to the public for the first time ever.

The Grade I listed castle, originally commissioned by William the Conqueror 900 years ago and completed by his son Henry I in 1121, retained its historic significance while embracing modern improvements.

Importantly, a lift was installed to provide full wheelchair accessibility throughout the Keep, allowing access from the basement all the way up to the battlements, where visitors could enjoy panoramic views across Norwich.

Nationally recognised 'AI programme to be rolled out across Norfolk to prevent falls

A new, nationally recognised proactive intervention scheme is rolled out across the whole of Norfolk. The initiative was delivered in collaboration with local partners including Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprises (VCSE), city, district and borough Councils and NHS organisations, aims to reduce falls in vulnerable and older adults.

Following a successful pilot with 1250 residents, the programme, which uses Artificial Intelligence (AI) to identify residents at risk of escalating needs, enhances the safety and wellbeing of those at risk of falls. The latest Artificial Intelligence technology, natural language processing is used to 'read' case notes and automatically extract meaningful insight about our residents. This technology enables the council to identify and prioritise individuals in Norfolk most at risk of falling, allows for proactive intervention before they fall.

AI is a rapidly developing technology with the potential to improve the delivery of services. The council is using AI to benefit the people of Norfolk in a safe, ethical and transparent way.

Falls are a major concern, particularly among older or vulnerable adults, and can lead to severe injuries and a decline in quality of life. Through this programme, the council will be able to predict people who are at higher risk and offer timely and targeted interventions to support them.

For more information about preventing falls visit **Preventing and dealing with falls**.

Norfolk County Council Approved £500k Community Fund to Boost Local Projects

Norfolk County Council approved the launch of a new £500k Norfolk Community Fund for 2025/26, aimed at supporting grass roots projects that strengthen communities and improve local wellbeing.

The fund will empower local voluntary, community, and social enterprise (VCSE) groups to apply for grants between £200 and £2,500 to deliver small-scale initiatives that bring people together, promote inclusion, and enhance quality of life. Each of the county's 84 councillors will be allocated £5,000 to distribute within their divisions, ensuring funding reaches every corner of Norfolk.

Signed:……..Dated: