



**Minutes of the Ashfield-cum-Thorpe
Annual Parish Meeting
held on
Wednesday 5th May 2021
remotely via Zoom**

8 in attendance, including 5 Parish Councillors along with the District Councillor and the County Councillor.

Apologies – None

1. Welcome by Chair of Ashfield-cum-Thorpe Parish Council

Chairman Myles Hansen opened the meeting, thanking everyone for coming.

2. Agreement of Minutes of the Previous Annual Parish Meeting on 8 May 2019

The Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting 2019 as a true and accurate record, were proposed by Chairman Myles Hansen, seconded by Councillor Ruth Hart, all voted in favour and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED**. The Minutes were signed by the Chair and the Clerk

3. Matters Arising from the Previous Annual Parish Meeting on 8 May 2019

None

4. Report by the Chair of Ashfield-cum-Thorpe Parish Council

Myles Hansen, gave his report available at the end of these minutes noting that the Council is still running with two vacancies despite the best efforts of all to recruit others to the cause.

5. Report from Mid Suffolk District Councillor Kathie Guthrie

The full Annual Report from the District Councillor is available on the Ashfield-cum-Thorpe village website. A copy of the report has also been made available at the end of these minutes for information.

6. Report from Suffolk County Councillor Matthew Hicks

The full Annual Report from the County Councillor is available on the Ashfield-cum-Thorpe village website, but at a local village level in the past year attention was drawn to the following:

There was work still underway to see whether an extension to the speed limit at the north of the village was feasible. Money had been donated from the locality budget fund to the Community Hall towards work on the windows.

7. Report by a Representative of Ashfield Footpaths Group

Councillor Robert Grimsey gave a report, commenting that the footpath network had been particularly well used during COVID. There had been no major problems, although one or two landowners had expressed surprise and the number of people about. There were no physical obstructions on the footpaths, but there are one or two areas that need to be sprayed out. There was one landowner who has continually put up signs directing people to another route, rather than allowing free access to the official route. The Rights of Way Officer at Suffolk County Council is away of the situation and will deal with the matter, although she has been inundated in the last twelve months due to the increased use of public rights of way across the county. Generally speaking, the village footpath network is something the village should be very proud of.

8. Report by the Chair of Ashfield Community Council – see report at end of the minutes

9. Report by the Group Organiser of Ashfield Ladies Group – see report at end of the minutes

10. Report by a Trustee of Ashfield Welfare Trust – see report at end of minutes

11. Report by Ashfield’s Village Recorder – see report at end of minutes

12. Report by the Head Teacher of Earl Soham Community Primary School – see report at end of minutes

13. Open forum for questions and discussion

None

Chairman Myles Hansen thanked everyone for coming and giving up their time.

Meeting closed 8.20pm

ASHFIELD CUM THORPE PARISH COUNCIL

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 5th MAY 2021 - CHAIR'S REPORT

The work of the Parish Council (PC) over the year is well-documented in the comprehensive and precise Minutes prepared by the Clerk, so this brief report takes the form of an overview.

We are fortunate that planning applications over the year have proved non-contentious, and have arguably enhanced Ashfield as an attractive village. In addition, Councillors have responded to issues raised by people in the village, such as vehicle speeding and potholes in the road, by means of effective liaison with the relevant District and County Council officers.

Councillors work well as a team, sharing the workload between them. Our primary concern focuses on the two continuing vacancies, which in spite of concerted efforts remain unfilled. The PC is vulnerable until this situation is resolved.

The PC is very pleased to see the dramatic improvement work being carried out at the village hall and its grounds.

Myles Hansen

Chair

Annual District Councillors report to April 2021

Well what a year this has been. Everyone in lock down and different working patterns.

I must begin by thanking the entire Ward of Debenham which includes Ashfield Cum Thorpe, Aspell, Bedingfield, Debenham, Kenton and Winston for their magnificent efforts to support not only their local community but friends and Neighbours. Particular thanks go to all those volunteers, too many to mention, but the Debenham Parish Council who co-ordinated food parcels and set up a support mechanism for all things such as Doctors visits, prescriptions picking up vital medical supplies and so on and of course for the Debenham Leisure Centre to host the inoculation service for not only this community but several surrounding villages not in the Debenham Ward. I also thank our Local Gp's and nurses and staff who did us proud.

It is fair to say the whole County of Suffolk stood shoulder to shoulder and we must thank them for pulling together all the initiatives and of course sending out daily updates.

I will just point out some of the other work which went on in the back ground as well as all the usual services, bin collections and so on.

The Home but not alone phonline was invaluable and many MSDC officers were diverted to enable to phones to be supported

Babergh and Mid Suffolk were awarded £100,000 government funding to tackle rough sleeping and homelessness. Work continues.

Grants were sought and achieved to support local businesses and much work was done to ensure those entitled were supported

As well as dealing with the Covid fall out business as usual continued with virtual meetings and the planning Committee Development control B was the first on line meeting hosted by myself in the whole of East Anglia.

So much work went on in the background and over many hours that I will just bullet point some of the highlights of the year.

Debenham Parish Council's Neighbourhood Plan was highly commended as part of the virtual 2020 Planning Awards

Gateway 14 Plans have been put forward for public consideration. This is land owned by MSDC with the proposal to encourage businesses and industry to look to utilise this land just off A 14 by Tesco's to create jobs.

Many applications for new homes in Mid Suffolk have been given permissions and some included new schools and extensions to Health Centres for Example Woolpit Health Centre now has room to accommodate improvements. MSDC published a 7.67 five year housing land supply

A lot of work was undertaken to respond to government changes to the planning system and also get the Joint Local Plan put forward for Reg 19 – this should enable the Councils and communities have more say in how and where housing will be allocated.

Babergh and Mid Suffolk approved their first Biodiversity Action Plan to protect and strengthen biodiversity – supporting councils' carbon neutral aims. They will move the fleet to Hydrotreated Vegetable oil fuel to achieve a 90% reduction in CO2.

Babergh and Mid Suffolk are set to receive funding from the Government Green Home funding to install renewable heating in 48 socially rented properties insulate 50 owner occupied and privately rented park homes insulate 73 social housing properties and other projects within Suffolk.

CIL – Community infrastructure payments of £312,507 were distributed to 29 Town and Parish Councils for their projects, with Debenham Leisure Centre receiving support to various initiatives

CIFCO which is a subsidiary company with a property portfolio of 18 properties having invested £70m continues to garner much needed funds and since 2017 has invested £3m into Council Services.

MSDC secured £800.00 from the better building fund to match fund a pilot project of multifunctional microgeneration and storage Solar Car Ports to generate and store electricity and to include electric charge points.

There is a new Visitor Centre at the Needham Lake

The Regal Theatre will have a new look and is hoped it will open shortly

Stradbroke Pool and fitness centre has been refurbished Planning Permission has been granted to update and refurbish the Stowmarket Leisure Centre as the next project with a £2.2m upgrade

28 businesses across Babergh and Mid Suffolk were shortlisted for Innovation Awards.

As I said earlier we all worked differently and many many meetings were conducted by 'Zoom' or Teams. Where would we have been without the internet.

I can also advise I have allocated my locality budget as follows:-

£2500 Debenham Food Bank

£1000 Men's Shed

£700 Lap top Kenton

£85 Plaque for tree at Winston

£600 1st Responders

£1000 Ashfield Cum Thorpe Village Hall

£300 for Suffolk Flag – Debenham

£300 Debenham Library

I had £865 left over which went to a communal project in Mid Suffolk.

Just to note many of the applications came 'late in the day' and it is always difficult to allocate funding fairly but I do hope all the projects benefited and I spent wisely!

Let's hope for a better year ahead and thank you to you all for your support.

Cllr Mrs Kathie Guthrie

Cllr Matthew Hicks 2021 Annual Report for the Thredling Division

Council proposes unprecedented environmental plans in response to climate emergency

In response to its declaration of a climate emergency, Suffolk County Council aims to lead the way with an unparalleled range of activities and policy changes to support its ambition of being a 'net zero' authority by 2030. The council's Cabinet reviewed and agreed an extensive programme of recommendations to achieve this ambition. The plans include dozens of changes and new ways of working, from making its pool car fleet all-electric, to making it mandatory for all future committee decisions to consider the net zero ambition. Being 'net zero' means that the council will remove its carbon emissions where it can; if it is unable to do so, it will compensate for those emissions. The council will adopt a more detailed method to measure its carbon emissions output, so that it can more accurately track its progress on an annual basis. SCC has been involved with successful climate change projects for many years, including the Suffolk Climate Change Partnership. We have put millions of pounds into energy efficiency projects for both businesses and homes and continue to do so. Suffolk has been moving in the right direction, having seen carbon emission reductions of 41% since 1990. But now is the time to move up through the gears and do even better. The impact of climate change is an issue which involves everyone and affects everyone. With the approval of these plans, the council will lead by example. We will inspire other businesses to see what can be achieved, to show that change can, and must, happen. In March 2019, Suffolk County Council was the first authority in the county to declare a climate emergency. One of the council's priorities after this declaration was to set up a policy development panel (PDP). The panel met regularly, discussing the changes and challenges the council faces in reducing its carbon emissions. Amongst the recommendations, Suffolk County Council will continue its work with all other local authorities and agencies, under the umbrella of the Suffolk Climate Change Partnership, which was formed in 2007. With all local authorities having now declared a climate emergency, they will use their combined powers, duties, influence and leadership, continuing their work together to achieve the net zero ambition for emissions from all of Suffolk.

Suffolk wins funding for the next stage of A12 improvements

It was announced that Suffolk has secured £830,000 of funding from the Department for Transport, to develop an Outline Business Case to take forward its plans to improve the A12. Announced during the Government's budget, Suffolk County Council has been successful in winning £830,000 of funding from the Department for Transport (DfT), to develop an Outline Business Case (OBC) to take forward its plans to improve the A12 East of Ipswich. This project is specifically looking to increase capacity and improve overall traffic flow at junctions and will explore the potential for a new pedestrian and cycle bridge over the A12. With the funding secure, SCC's Transport Strategy Team will now begin work to develop the outline business case which, following public consultation, will be used to make a further bid to central government for funding to deliver the scheme. It was also announced in the budget that the DfT have given their approval for SCC to develop and submit a Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) for a project to dual the A12 between the Seckford and Dobbies roundabouts near Woodbridge. Whilst this does not include any funding at this stage, the SOBC will enable SCC to bid for future funding for this project too. I am delighted that once again Suffolk County Council has been successful in bidding for funding from central government for large infrastructure projects. These improvements are between the A14 Seven Hills junction and the A12/A1214 Park and Ride Roundabout and will help boost road capacity and traffic flow. I am also pleased that the scheme includes additional proposals to help encourage more walking and cycling.

More than 98% of pupils receive a preferred primary school on National Offer Day

On 16 April, it was reported that over 98.57% of Suffolk children were offered a place on National Offer Day at one of the schools preferred by their parents. SCC received 7,602 applications from

parents indicating which primary school they would prefer their child to join in September 2020. Some 7,116 children received offers for their first preference school and 7,493 children received an offer for one of their three preferred schools. We have a good track record of offering places at preferred schools and this year is no exception. I am delighted that we have been able to give most parents a place for their child at one of the schools they want. We use published criteria to decide who has priority for places so that the process is fair and clear. I appreciate that not all families will have received a place at their preferred school and where a parents' preference for a Suffolk school is refused, we will automatically add their child's name to the waiting list for that school. We will also advise them about how to lodge an appeal should they wish to do so.

Suffolk celebrates 1,000 miles of newly surfaced roads

I am pleased to report that Suffolk Highways completed its 1,000th resurfaced mile, following the Council's commitment to relay new road surfaces on a quarter of Suffolk's road network. In 2017, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet committed to resurfacing 1,000 miles of road across Suffolk over a four-year period; in a bid to improve the quality of roads, reduce the number of potholes and to help stop potholes from forming in the first place. The commitment also makes sound financial sense, as preventing the deterioration of road surfaces by machine surfacing or surface dressing helps reduce the need to spend more money on reactive maintenance repairing potholes now, and in future years. The 1,000th mile was laid at Horham Road in Eye. I am delighted to see our teams deliver on our promise to lay new road surfaces on a quarter of Suffolk's roads. Not only that, but we are also due to exceed the 1,000 miles and complete this work sooner than expected. Residents and businesses have always been clear that they want to see roads and infrastructure improved in Suffolk. This continues to be the biggest discussion point in our local communities. By delivering this programme we have been able to focus our budget and resources on improving our roads countywide and keeping them pothole-free for longer. SCC remain committed to focussing our efforts and resources where possible on this type of road improvement.

Suffolk County Council secures £3.1M for building decarbonisation initiative

SCC working in conjunction with property specialists Concertus, has been successful in gaining over £3M of funding from The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) to promote capital energy efficiency and heat decarbonisation projects within buildings used to provide frontline public services. Working with Concertus, the council has been preparing a range of packages to support the decarbonising of various buildings in the Council's estate including applications for the council's headquarters at Endeavour House in Ipswich, four rural fire stations, Beacon House, Waterloo Centre and Leiston Children's Centre. The council's Children and Young People service also reviewed their portfolio of school buildings along with Concertus. This review resulted in the submission of grant applications for nine schools across the county, all of which were successful. This grant scheme aligns with BEIS' new mission and priorities: fighting coronavirus, backing business, unleashing innovation, and tackling climate change. Through this scheme, it is supporting the council's own commitment to be net zero by 2030 along with the Government's own net zero goals and encouraging further green investment within the UK. Packages of work vary from building to building, but many include the fitting of solar panels and battery storage, as well as improvements to wall or roof insulation and installation of Air Source Heat Pumps to move away from the use of fossil fuels for source of heating. This is a really important step in the council delivering upon its commitment to be net zero by 2030. The estimated cumulative effect of these packages will see the council's carbon footprint reduce by over 360 tonnes of CO₂ per year, the equivalent of taking 120 cars off the road. This is a fantastic result and underlines our commitment to the county and the planet. I would like to thank all those involved in securing this funding, especially Concertus, Vertas and the Greater South East Energy Hub. I look forward to seeing the work rolled out over the coming months. The council hopes to have the work completed at all the sites before the 30 September

Major infrastructure projects now underway in East Anglia

On 4 February 2021 work began on two new bridges on the East Anglian coast, promising to bring huge economic benefits locally. The Third River Crossing in Great Yarmouth and the Gull Wing project in Lowestoft. The projects are just 10 miles apart and have a combined cost of £246m. The UK Government acknowledged the two bridges as nationally important infrastructure projects, with the Department for Transport committing a combined total of over £170million to both ventures. Farrans, one of the UK's leading building and civil engineering contractors, is involved with the construction of both projects. In Great Yarmouth, the construction is a joint venture with BAM Nuttall, and in Lowestoft it is the sole responsibility of Farrans. Road closures for both projects have already been implemented as preparation work gets underway. Trial holes for utilities are underway for the Gull Wing in Lowestoft. The Government has committed to levelling up across the country and with these two major projects, we are now starting to see this happen in our region. The Gull Wing will create local jobs and apprenticeship opportunities in Lowestoft and the Waveney area. Local people regularly emphasise the importance of the Gull Wing. It is great news that I shall now be able to tell them that the talking is now over, and the work has begun.

Adopt East launches

October marked the launch of Adopt East, a regional adoption agency which has been established to recruit adopters across the East of England. Adopt East will work across local authorities in Southend, Thurrock, Essex, Suffolk, Norfolk, Hertfordshire, Bedford and Luton to find families for children who are waiting to find their forever home. Adoptionplus, Barnardo's, and Adoption UK are also part of the partnership. The Adopt East will deliver the highest quality adoption service to children and families throughout the region by bringing together the expertise and skills of all its partners. The scale of the organisation means that adopters will have access to a larger number of children waiting for adoption. This will help partners to match children with the right family for them, at the earliest opportunity. In Suffolk we have been working hard to find loving and supportive families for children waiting for adoption. These children have not always had the best start in life and really do deserve to find their forever homes. The adoption process can seem daunting for families, but SCC have a wealth of experience and are there to support families every step of the way. Adopt East is great news for Suffolk as it will mean we can draw on expertise and skills from across the whole region to help us to find the right families for our children.

The Hold welcomes first visitors and opens inaugural exhibition

September saw the public able to access The Hold, Suffolk's flagship new heritage facility on Ipswich Waterfront. This versatile new building will be the permanent home of the Suffolk Archives Ipswich branch and is shared with the University of Suffolk, who have dedicated teaching spaces within the building. The creation of The Hold, and its associated countywide programme of events and activities, has been made possible thanks to a grant of £10.3m from The National Lottery Heritage Fund, and further funding support from other national organisations and local Suffolk heritage groups. The public are currently able to access 'front of house' areas, including archive inspired displays, the café, shop, and toilets, including a new Changing Places facility. On 2 October, the long-awaited Exhibition Gallery also opened to visitors. The inaugural exhibition, *Global Events: Suffolk Stories*, examines how Suffolk has responded as a community to key global events over the past 100 years. It focuses on the arrival of American service people during the 'Friendly Invasion' of World War Two, as well as the rising tensions and public messaging of the Cold War period, and the collective community response to the COVID-19 pandemic during 2020. Through original archival documents, photos, music, and film, visitors will be able to explore the similarities and differences between these three global events and understand how Suffolk has changed as a result.

Matthew Hicks - County Councillor for the Thredling Division

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Ashfield Community Council Annual Report

Chair: Sam Thomas

Treasurer: Geoff Henney

Secretary: Simon Garrett

Council members: Andy Pitts, Mike Harrison, Ryland Thomas, Richard Ellis.

Despite the events of the last year, the last twelve months have been busy for the Community Council. As a brand new group, prior to the pandemic, we focused primarily on running events, both existing and new, to increase the use of the hall. The cyclists' visit continue to provide us with the bulk of our income and our 'Pop up Pub' events have also proved very popular with the community.

Obviously, this year has been very unusual and whilst we have not run any events due to the restrictions, we have managed to accrue a range of grants thanks to the efforts of Geoff Henney. Whilst the hall has been unused, we decided it was a good time to undertake substantial renovations.

Grants

We have received support grants from the government for community facilities, which have been forced to close because of lockdowns and other restraints on opening. As well as locality grants that have part funded our building work. These have been received from MSDC (courtesy of Councillor Guthrie), and from SCC (courtesy of Councillor Hicks). In addition, a Capital Grant has been agreed from MSDC to cover 40% of the originally budgeted works. As further grants became available the scope of the building works was expanded beyond the original budget, partly also because of Building and Fire Regulation requirements.

Renovations and other improvements

Initially, we intended to repair the flooring in the hall, which was quite badly damaged and potentially dangerous. We asked a local structural engineer to investigate and he informed us that the problem was due to the trees sucking all the moisture from the floor and causing subsidence. He suggested a period of twelve months from the removal of the trees would allow the ground to recover and then repairs could be made to the floor. A tree surgeon was employed to remove the trees on the insistence of the insurers as well as a willow, which was at risk of splitting and causing damage to the hall.

With the additional funding, we also decided to replace the original wooden windows that were rotten. Unfortunately, as things have a habit of doing, events snowballed when we discovered that wooden supports in the walls were also rotten and substantial building work would be needed.

A local builder has since been employed, and so far, we have replaced all wooden supports and windows in the hall, as well as plastering the walls and adding external cladding. We have also painted the internal and external walls, although this is yet to be finished.

In addition, we have replaced the unsafe electric heaters with new infrared heaters on the ceiling, thermostatic controls and boost switches have also been installed which should keep the hall much warmer during the winter months. We have installed downlights in the ceiling, as well as new wall and external lighting. The hall has essentially been rewired.

To meet current fire and safety regulations, we have fitted new emergency lighting, fire doors, and replaced the fire extinguishers. To ensure the hall is accessible to all, we have built a ramp and pathway around the back of the hall, as well as levelling the floor at the front with a concreted area, which can be used for disabled parking and access.

Future Plans

The flooring is still a work in progress, and we are currently in negotiations with the insurance company and their contractor. However, we are looking at potentially completing this work at the end of June. Other planned improvements are to modernise the ladies' toilets, repair the tiling in the kitchen and refresh the bar area.

My thanks go to the committee who have during the last year have secured funding, liaised with contractors and worked hard in the planning and implementation of the building works. Without their efforts, we would not have been able to accomplish so much during this time. We are very much looking forward to holding our next event once restrictions have ended and welcoming the village back into our upgraded hall!

Sam Thomas.

Chair

4/5/21.

Ashfield Ladies Group

Report to Ashfield cum Thorpe Parish Council APM - May 2021

Due to the pandemic, Ashfield Ladies Group have not met physically since February 2020. We have, however, managed to have six zoom meetings since October 2020. Two were with speakers: Anita Sharpe told us about an Ashfield resident who emigrated to New Zealand in the nineteenth century, and Malcolm Pease took us on a journey to India.

We look forward to the completion of the village hall renovations, and hope to be recommence our meetings in the hall by the end of the year.

Membership of Ashfield Ladies group stands at 28. Our annual subscriptions have been ceased for 2021.

We are an informal group meeting once a month on the third Tuesday of each month. Members and visitors are welcome from Ashfield and the surrounding villages.

The committee aims to have as varied a programme as possible throughout the year with speakers, demonstrations and visits.

Susan Hansen
Group Organiser

*Ashfield
Welfare
Trust*

Chiltern End
The Street
Ashfield
STOWMARKET
Suffolk, IP14 6LY

Registered Charity No. 209692.

ASHFIELD WELFARE TRUST ANNUAL REPORT 2021

The Ashfield Welfare Trust is a registered charity that exists to relieve persons resident in the parish who are in conditions of need, hardship or distress. Sarah Walker, Simon Pryke and Andy Pitts, the Trustees of Ashfield Welfare Trust have continued recent practice of distributing the interest on its investments to a number of households that supports a pensioner. In Dec 2020 10 households received a cheque for £35. An adequate contingency fund has been retained, which can be used at the trustees' discretion.

The trustees would appreciate any information on changing circumstances. The trustees are not always aware that someone has reached pension age or that a pensioner has moved into the village.

The accounts for the last financial year are not yet available, but those for the year ending on the 31 March 2020 have been provided to the Parish Council.

Sarah Walker, Simon Pryke and Andy Pitts.

**Ashfield
Welfare
Trust**

East View
The Street
Ashfield
STOWMARKET
Suffolk, IP14 6LX

Registered Charity No. 209692

un cashed cheque

Statement of Account as at March 2020

Receipts		Payments	
Balance b/f	£ 703.49	Payment of £35 to	
Share Interest	£411.66	10 households	£ 350.00
Total	<u>£1,115.15</u>	Balance c/f	<u>£ 765.15</u>
		Total	<u>£1,115.15</u>

Interest on Investment

May	£105.78
August	£105.78
November	£100.01
February	£100.09
Total	<u>£411.66</u>

10 Households Supported

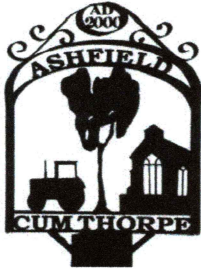
Investment Value
802 shares in
Charities Official
Investment Fund £11,914.83
(As at 31/03/2020)

Auditor's statement: I certify that these accounts represent an accurate and complete statement of the affairs of the Ashfield Welfare Trust for the year to the end of March 2020

Signed:

Name:

Date:



Ashfield Cum Thorpe 2020 Recorder's Report

2020 started with an awareness of a very infectious and lethal virus, affecting people in China. But China and the virus were a long way from Ashfield, and life sort of went on as usual. Then the virus started spreading throughout the world, and the first deaths in the UK were reported in January. By mid-March Ashfield, along with the rest of the UK, was in lockdown and the world had a pandemic. No-one knew what to expect, and life in Ashfield as we knew it was put on hold.

The summer saw some easing of restrictions, but infection rates went up again and in November a second lockdown was imposed and then a third in December. Christmas was pretty much cancelled. The lockdown was still in place at the end of the year, although an end to the pandemic was on the distant horizon following the approval of the use of a vaccine.

(A more detailed snapshot of life in Ashfield during the Covid 19 Pandemic will be covered by an Addendum to this Report).

Ashfield Parish Council

7th January, Tuesday - An extraordinary meeting of the Parish Council was held in the village hall and all Ashfield residents were invited to attend. The purpose of the meeting was to cover matters held over from the 11th of December meeting, including an update on the installation of speed indicator signs and consideration of an extension to the 30mph speed limit on The Street. Residents were also informed that there was a vacancy for a parish councillor.

Parish Council meetings after lockdown in March were held by Zoom on **10 June 9th September and 9th December** and general invitations were sent out to residents to attend.

Speed Indicator Signs

In June, the Parish Council reported that two grey poles had already been erected in the village by way of preparation for two speed indicator signs to be set up. The signs would first be used from 16th to 30th June, then from 28th July to 11th August, and periodically after that. The location of the devices had to comply with Highway Authority guidelines, which meant that the village had virtually no choice in terms of location. The signs would be shared with other villages and cost Ashfield nothing.



Highways and Road matters

Robert Grimsey continued his work of keeping track of the state of Ashfield's roads and helping to improve road safety. This role was in conjunction with Suffolk County Council, and the Council's self-help scheme to cover low level highway issues in parishes. This included drainage, reporting potholes and other matters requiring professional attention; and helping residents with overgrown hedges obstructing traffic or posing difficulties for access.

Communications and “Ashfield Talk”

In March, the Parish Council started an email system for all Ashfield residents to share important information, called Ashfield Talk. Any resident could email to the Ashfield Talk address and messages would then be distributed to all those on the mailing list. Most of the village signed up.

Footpaths

At the start of the year, it was reported that work was taking place to the footbridge over the Deben along Cretingham Lane. The bridge had been closed for a long time and this had prevented walkers from Ashfield accessing the footpaths in Framsdon. Otherwise, all of Ashfield's paths were open.

Community Council

1st February, Saturday Wine Tasting at Ashfield Village Hall. Ashfield's Resident Master of Wine, Richard Ellis, hosted a tasting event with 6 delicious and interesting wines. Soup, bread, cheese and biscuits were also offered. The entry was £10 per person and a raffle was held, with prizes and Wines were available to buy at the end of the evening.

Thursday 13th February A visit from Ashfield's cyclist friends to sample tea/coffee and the delicious cakes provided by Ashfield's resident cakemakers.

Saturday 14th March A Quiz night managed by Ashfield's resident quiz master, Malcolm Pease, “whose decision was final!” The bar was open, and nibbles were provided. The entrance fee was £10 per table with preferred 4 but no more than 6 per table. There were prizes, in addition to the honour of being top geeks.

Sunday 15th March Another Cyclists visit.

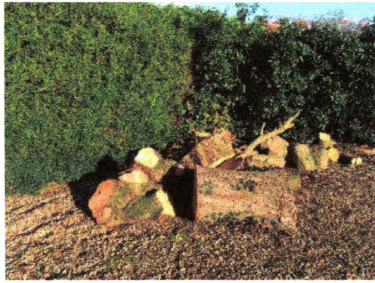
Ashfield Village Hall

One of the notable issues affecting Ashfield in 2019 was the future of the Village Hall and the implications of the possible loss of the hall. Fresh impetus was injected in 2019, with a new and enthusiastic Community Council, but like everything else, plans for social events were shelved after Ashfield went into lockdown from mid-March. The COVID-19 situation improved slightly over the summer, but “normality” was still a long way off and the village Hall remained closed for the rest of the year.

Business Support Grant The enforced closure had a positive side. Ashfield qualified for a Government Business Support Grant of £10,000 to offset the adverse economic effect of COVID-19. The grant boosted the Community Council funds to over £16,000, and funds were used for repairs which could not have taken place if the building was being used.

Hall Floor The floor had deteriorated significantly, having dropped by 6-9 inches in the centre, with widening cracks in the parquet flooring. A structural engineer's report confirmed floor slab subsidence, almost certainly a result of the proximity of 4 large trees at the side and rear of the hall, causing water depletion and ground shrinkage after the hot dry summer of 2018. The report recommended the felling of the trees. An insurance claim was made and covered the remedial work, but not the tree felling. An excess on the insurance policy was expected to be about £1,900.

In September some of the offending trees at the side and rear of the Hall were felled, the wood cut into logs and left for any villagers to collect. In November, a message was circulated that the last two trees had been felled and the wood could be taken away (although a chain saw would be needed for some of the larger pieces).



Were the offending trees the ones planted in 1977? "About Ashfield" December 1977 states "Five trees commemorating Jubilee Year were planted by Sid Robinson at the back of the Community Hall: 1 oak tree and 4 chestnut trees – 3 red and 1 white."

The new floor will probably be constructed in the summer of 2021, once the ground has stabilised.

Windows As the funds were available, quotes were obtained to replace the windows with double glazed PVC units.

Heating Plans were made to replace the "inadequate and inefficient hotchpotch" of freestanding electric heaters with modern, stylish, wall mounted heaters which should be more energy efficient. This system would also eliminate the safety risk associated with trailing wires to wall sockets.

Clear out A skip was hired to clear out the store cupboards and the shed at the back of the grounds. The 5 old gas heaters, and associated 15kg propane gas cylinders, were offered to anyone who wanted them, before being disposed of. The broken glass window in the shed was boarded up.

Maintenance and Painting Paint was bought to paint the rendered blockwork after the installation of the new windows and the boarding up the rotten window in the storeroom.

A quote for refurbishment for the flat roof was obtained, to "be prepared", as the roof has always been a concern for which funds have been kept in reserve (work was done on the roof a few years ago).

Future Hall Activities. In July, Community Centres were given permission to open, but the conditions of opening were very strict, requiring a deep clean before and after any function, social distancing, a dedicated "Covid room" in the event of someone falling ill, and separate entrances and exit. Consequently, the committee concluded that opening the Hall for any of the usual village functions was not feasible and that it was also questionable as to how many people would want to attend such functions anyway. An outside function such as a barbecue might appear more feasible, but there would still be constraints on how many people could gather in one place, and in the serving of drinks as standing at a bar was not allowed.

Fortunately, the fixed costs arising from the Hall were relatively low at £600 per annum (insurance, standing charges for water and electricity), so not holding functions for a while would not cause any financial strain. However, the evidence of "community" had been very strong in the village during lockdown, and it was suggested that it would be great to have some Community celebration when circumstances allow – perhaps Christmas when it would all be over...err...

Ashfield St Mary's Church

In March, home delivery of the church benefice magazine was suspended, and it became available online.

April 6th St Marys' Church was closed, but the churchyard remained open.

July, the church building was still closed, but it was hoped that it could soon be opened on at least a part time basis.



August 9th, Sunday services were restarted with a said service and no singing, led by Curate Kathleen Martin. Participants were asked to bring a face mask. The church building remained closed at all other times.

August Home delivery of the benefice magazine restarted, and donations were requested towards the cost of producing the magazine.

August At the end of August Rector Revd. Dr. Stephen Brian gave his final service in the benefice at Dallinghoo on Sunday 2nd August and retired later in the month. He had held the post for the past 13 years. The position remained vacant for the rest of the year.

Over the Summer, the roadside hedge and church grounds were tidied by Robert Grimsey and helpers.

September 27th The Harvest Festival Service took place, and a collection was made in lieu of food donations and donated to FIND (Families in Need) in Ipswich.

September 12th - Suffolk Historical Churches Cycle Ride—The Church was open and manned between hours 9am and 5pm and welcomed 9 cyclists, which was above the average.

October 18th - Vestry and Annual Parochial Church Meeting, usually held before the end of April, but this year it took place in October, after Evening Prayer. All Ashfield residents on the Civil electoral roll were invited to attend the meeting to elect the Churchwardens, but only those on the Church electoral roll were able to attend the APCM.

November 8th - Act of Remembrance Due to lockdown restrictions the planned Act of Remembrance could not take place. Instead, Robert Grimsey conducted “in isolation” a simple act of remembrance at Ashfield’s war memorial in the church at 11am on Sunday morning. The bell was tolled for a few minutes and then there was a period of silence. A wreath was placed beneath the memorial at the end of the Service.

December- a Christmas tree appeared in the front of the churchyard. The Carol Service was cancelled, “in view of the current worsening situation with regards to COVID-19”

Christmas Day - Holy Communion Service was held. To comply with Covid regulations, the service was a short “said” service with Christmas music. There had been some question whether it would go ahead at all, because of flooding (see later), but a message was circulated that Revd Wendy Gourlay could cross the Deben to get to Ashfield, as water levels had receded.

Ashfield Ladies Group

Tuesday January 21st The first Ladies Group meeting of 2020 was held in the Village hall with a local speaker and member of the group, Dorothy Brenton, called “Life Through the Eyes of a Child”. Sandra, the group’s treasurer collected the annual subscriptions of £25.

Tuesday February 17th The second meeting of the year starred Ashfield resident Paul Whayman with a talk entitled “The Storyteller – Part 2”.

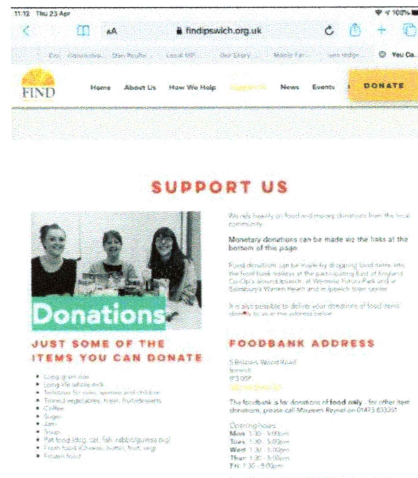
Tuesday March 17th The third Ladies Group meeting was due to meet on March 17th, with a talk from Ashfield resident Malcolm Pease entitled “A Trip to India”. This was cancelled the day before, amid growing concerns for safety in the light of the Covid situation. A number of would-be participants had already cancelled, so potential attendance was low - hence the risk of transmission of the virus was reduced - but the organisers felt that the risk was still too high. No further meetings of the Ladies Group took place in the village hall in 2020.

Tuesday November 16th. An Internet meeting using the video conferencing app, Zoom was tried for the first time, set up by Eleri Whitham. This was an informal get together and chat to hear how everyone was coping and to try out the technology.

Tuesday December 15th another meeting using Zoom was tried out; another chance to catch up and to swap news, with a very light-hearted Christmas Quiz organised by Susan Hansen.

Other Matters

Food Bank Collections for “Families in Need, a charity from Ipswich. This was instigated and organised by Kath Burton. A Collection was made in April during lockdown and a second in November, leading up to Christmas, also during lockdown. A box was placed outside Kath’s gate. At the end of November an estimated £250 worth of food was taken to the food bank in Ipswich, plus £100 cheque donations and a cheque from St Mary’s Church. The staff at FIND were very grateful.

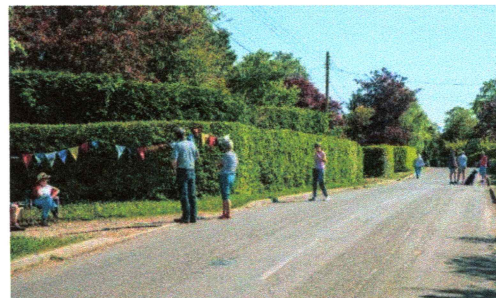


In November, Kath asked the village to save used postage stamps in answer to an appeal to raise funds from The Royal National Institute for the Blind. Stamps to be collected in early January.

Easter April 11th the weather was warm and sunny – which seemed rather unusual for a bank holiday – but everyone had to stay at home. Greetings were sent round the village via the “Ashfield Talk” email system. It started with a photograph of a bunch of flowers picked in an Ashfield garden, and was followed by other pictures of flowers from around the village.

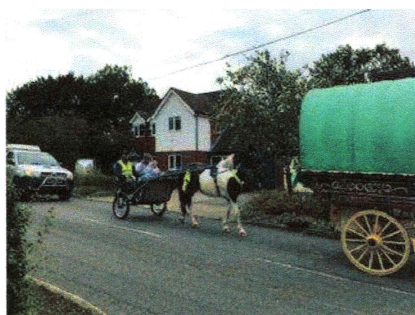


VE Day Friday May 8th Socially Distanced Street Party To mark the 75th Anniversary of Victory in Europe Day the May Day Bank Holiday was changed to May 8th. In April, the idea that Ashfield could take part in a street party was circulated, and a flutter of communications around the village followed. Individuals decided to mark the day which was warm and sunny – again, most unusual bank holiday weather. Many residents put up bunting and red, white and blue decorations; some sat in their front gardens in fancy dress taking refreshments; and others walked up and down the street, in a socially distanced manner.



Also, to coincide with VE Day, some material from the second world war collected in Ashfield by the Mason family, was uploaded onto Ashfield’s website.

August 21st Nostalgic Morning Visitors to Ashfield - Interest was generated by a group of gypsies who passed through the village with traditional horse drawn carts and caravans. Pictures were taken, and notes swapped.



It seems that gypsies have passed through the village for many years, working and camping around our area. This group walked down the street towards the A1120. They had been spotted earlier in Framlingham and Saxtead, and after Ashfield, camping in Debenham, then later on, in Stowupland.

Crime and disorder

May 5th a battery used to electrify fencing on a paddock was stolen just after 8pm in the area of Clowes Corner/Waddlegoose Lane. A vehicle engine was heard in a farmyard. An individual was seen running from a paddock and back to a car, then driving away into the village towards the A1120. The theft was reported to the police.

June – a fox took away five laying hens at timber Top Farm.

June 12th – Local sleuth Lindsay Pearson reported the discovery of the corpse of a deer, small but bigger than a Muntjac, which appeared in an Ashfield ditch next to a garden. The puzzle was how it got there and why wasn't it spotted sooner. It was deduced that it fell into the ditch, but it was unclear how it got there, perhaps it had been brought by an animal and then dropped. From the size of the remains, it could have been dropped by a fox/foxes or perhaps a buzzard, or the "Beast of Ashfield"! The Beast must have come back because the remains had gone the next morning.



August 3rd – 4th A forced entry into a barn in Ashfield. Several items were stolen, including a yellow Suzuki motocross motorbike, three chain saws, a strimmer, a helmet, and socket set. The police made an appeal for witnesses or information.

The Internet & other scams

Warnings about various scams were circulated around the village throughout the year from The Parish Council, Suffolk Trading Standards and Ashfield residents, including: -

- Telephone scams and mobile phone text scams, including scam text messages apparently from banks or from mobile phone company EE, with instructions to visit a link to confirm address details or risk the termination of an account. Several residents received similar messages.
- Messages purporting to come from TV Licensing, that Direct Debit was not available, directing the recipient to click on a link to update payment details and to make an immediate payment for a TV licence. Clearly aimed at over 75's, who were losing their free TV licence following changes in Government policy.
- Recorded phone messages apparently from HMRC alleging that a recipient's account was subject to fraud, with instructions to press a number on a keypad immediately.

- A Tax refund notice, an innocent looking message with a link which took the user to a scammer’s website.
- a Netflix scam to update payment details.
- a Facebook scam – in which messages apparently from a friend saying something like “I saw you in this video”. If the link is clicked, it would go nowhere, or ask for a Facebook Messenger login which would be sent to a scammer, who could use the account to try and extract money or goods via Facebook.



Fire Service

May 21st 6 fire appliances arrived at the thatched property Mulberry Tree Cottage, after reports of smoke inside the building. No sign of fire was found after investigation with a thermal image camera. Traffic through Ashfield was temporarily obstructed because of the number of large vehicles outside the property.



Weather and Countryside

February 7th a weather warning was circulated from Cllr Kathy Guthrie about Storm Ciara. High winds and heavy rain were expected, with the possibility of damage to the electricity network. There were some reports on the social media website, NexDoor, about trees that had come down and offers of help to remove them.

March 29th we had cold easterly winds for two days when the clocks went forward.

April 4th was warm and sunny – as was Easter weekend **10-11 April**.

April 18th it rained for the first time in many days; then the next day, it was dry and sunny but with a cold wind.

August was very warm and dry with temperatures above 30°C. On **August 1st** the temperature reached 30°C and didn’t seem much cooler at night - it was quite humid.

The weather remained dry, warm, and sunny until mid-September, by which time plants were dying back and the grass was going brown. The weather then broke, and gardens were revitalised, the grass greened up and the flowers blossomed again.

Rainfall totals for Ashfield by month in 2020 in mm. (recorded by Geoff Henney)

Jan	56	Apr	22	Jul	52	Oct	103
Feb	69	May	3	Aug	54	Nov	42
Mar	21	Jun	59	Sep	58	Dec	109

Total rainfall for 2020 was 648 mm/25.7 inches. (Total rainfall for 2019 was 617.7 mm./24.3 inches)

in December flooding became a problem. There was flooding on Low Road on 4th December, and flooding on Christmas Eve on the roads leading into Ashfield from Kenton, Cretingham, Debenham and the Low Road to Earl Soham. A message was circulated via local social media system NextDoor, advising people not to attempt to drive down Low Road to Earl Soham “without a 4 by 4” as at least two cars had got stuck. Some ditches were blocked and some gardens at Sunnyside were flooded.

Property/House sales and moves



High Row Lodge – The new house built on part of what had been Jack Scott’s vegetable garden for many years, between High Row Farm and Mara, was completed, and Ashfield welcomed two new residents.



Pear Tree Farm was for advertised for sale in July, with a guide price of £685,000. It is a former farmhouse with a 15th Century core and later additions.



Rose Farm was for sale in July at a price of £875,000. It was described as a Grade II listed building, a former farmhouse C15th or early 16th century, and later enlarged, consisting of 5 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, outbuildings & about 8 acres.

The house had been the home of the Langley family for 55 years and was sold in November to Chris & Annabel Thomas, who moved into the house with children Darcey & Freddie.

3 Sunnyside was advertised for sale in October but was taken off the market.

The Cottage had been advertised for sale but was withdrawn. A planning application was made in October for a single-story extension, cart lodge and home office.

Blacksmith Cottage – an extension to the south was started and completed, making the house at least a third bigger as a result; extensions having been made over the years to both the north and south sides of the original cottage.

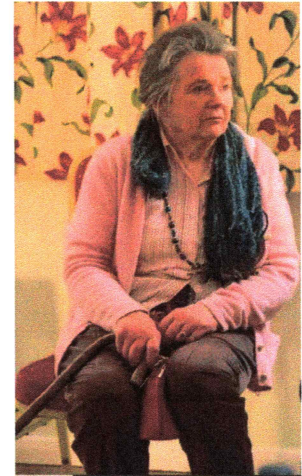


Blacksmith Cottage in about 1979, in 2019 before the latest extension and in 2020 after the extension.

People

Ann Langley

In November Ann moved to live nearer her son in Framlingham, after selling her home Rose Farm. Ann had lived in the village for around 55 years and had played a big part in the life of the village, having been a member of the Parish Council and the Community Council. Her work was much appreciated. Because of the lockdown the village could not hold any kind of event to say goodbye; instead, a loose-leaf book was made from individual contributors - the only safe thing to do in the circumstances.



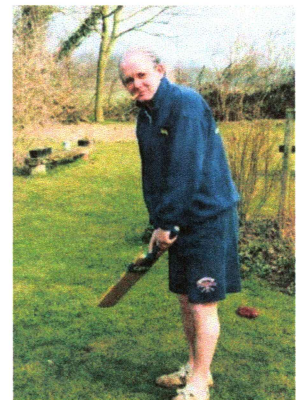
George Rushmore

George died in **March** after a short stay at Ipswich hospital. The funeral cortege drove through the village on Tuesday 31st March and the funeral took place in Ashfield's church. Only immediate family were allowed at the graveside, and no service was allowed inside the church. At the end, the bell was tolled, and non-family members were able to visit the churchyard to pay their respects.

George and Shirley Rushmore settled in Ashfield in 1996 where they remained until George's death. He was the first Rushmore ever to reach the age of 90. Shirley still lives in the village.

Tony Elliott

Tony died on 14th June after a short illness following a fall at his home in Debenham. On 25th June, the funeral cortege passed through Ashfield, so that friends and neighbours could pay their respects, as attendance at funerals was restricted due to covid regulations. The service took place at Seven Hills Crematorium and was shown live on a video link. Tony lived in Ashfield for many years, first at Acresfield and then Thatch End. He later moved to Debenham.



Tony Elliott in 1996 (from the Life in Ashfield Exhibition)

Chris Bellamy

Chris died suddenly on November 24 from a heart attack. The air ambulance and road ambulances attended at his home. His funeral took place in Ashfield on Tuesday 15th December, with a short service followed by a burial. This was another funeral in Ashfield subjected to covid regulations, and 30 members of his family, which was the maximum permitted at the time, were present.

Anita Shape,

Ashfield cum Thorpe.

May 2021

Parish Council report

Earl Soham Community Primary School

The past year has been extraordinary to say the least. Two periods of extended lockdown, one for most of the summer term 2020 and the other for much of the spring term 2021 have been quite a challenge. However the community has responded well and we have all pulled together to ensure that the children have been able to work from home, using the internet to provide communication. We quickly developed a system of leaving packs of materials outside the school for parents to collect on a weekly basis. This reduced the need for printing materials at home and supported families without the means to print them. Our school is very thankful to all parents for their hard work and support in helping the children continue their education at home.

Not all pupils were at home and some did continue to attend school, where necessary. Routines changed and both they, and the staff coped well with all of the challenges and regulations.

On March 8th 2021 the school opened fully to all pupils and it was fantastic to welcome them all back. We are still not fully back to normal, as the children are organised in two distinct groups or 'bubbles' with limited contact between them. And we are not able to conduct educational visits or sports fixtures.

A hamper of 'goodies' was collected at Hutton's and delivered to the staff as a thank you for their effort and hard work. Thanks to all who contributed to this, it was very much appreciated by everyone.

Since returning we have continued to focus on caring for our environment and being aware of the unique nature of the planet upon which we live. Staff have worked hard to get our poly tunnel up and running. The children now have gardening added to the curriculum. They are growing vegetables and bedding plants and we hope that they may be able to sell some of their produce if there is a surplus. The project has helped them reconnect with each other. We would like to thank parents and friends who have donated materials and resources to this project.

It has been a very different year and one that we will certainly all remember.

Peter Lambillion-Jameson

Head Teacher