



ASHFIELD-CUM-THORPE PARISH COUNCIL

All Councillors are reminded of their obligations under the Code of Conduct Regulations.

Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 10th March 2021 remotely via Zoom.

Attendance	Myles Hansen (Chair) (MHa)	Paul Whayman (PW)	Sarah Clare (Clerk)
	Robert Grimsey (Vice-Chair) (RG)	Simon Garrett (SG)	Ruth Hart (RH)
	Kathie Guthrie (District Councillor) (KG)	Matthew Hicks (County Councillor) (MHi)	

Public present at the meeting: 0

ACTPC 21-01-01 Apologies for Absence

None

ACTPC 21-01-02 Public Forum

None

ACTPC 21-01-03 Update from County Councillor

The County Councillor's Report had previously been circulated to the Council and has also been posted on the village website www.ashfield.onesuffolk.net.

MHi brought attention to the following points:

Rapid COVID testing centres are now open across Suffolk, 28 in total, with the nearest one to Ashfield-cum-Thorpe being in Debenham. The intention is that anyone who has to leave home to go to work has a rapid test twice a week. One in three people can carry the virus whilst showing no symptoms, but this is still a risk to the wider population. Anyone can book online for a test, with centres open early until late to help workers, although any business can register online to receive tests to carry out in the workplace in the same way that secondary school pupils are being asked to test at their schools.

The County Council set its budget in February; there are of course huge cost pressures on the Council, with 75% of the revenue raised going on the two critical areas of social care for vulnerable adults and children. Unfortunately, the pressures are only likely to continue to increase, as although the Government has fully refunded the actual costs of the pandemic to County Councils, the planned transformation of services that Suffolk had intended to roll out over the past year has not taken place, with staff having to be redeployed away from their usual jobs in order to deliver the essential services to get the county through the lockdowns. As a result, Suffolk County Council has had to dip into reserves.

Despite the use of reserves, it has been necessary to increase the Council Tax bill for everyone, although Suffolk has not taken the full 5% authorised by central government, instead only taking a 3.99% increase as Councillors are very aware that everyone's finances are tight.

Highways and flooding are also a big cost pressure for the County Council, this used to be a small area of work, averaging 180 incidents a year in the past, but over the preceding 12 months there have been 800 incidents recorded on the online reporting tool. Unfortunately, due to climate change, this is a problem that will not go away and is likely only to get worse. Suffolk County Council will be looking to address this issue over the next four years.

RG asked MHi if those who had been vaccinated still needed to go for rapid COVID testing? MHi explained that the understanding is that vaccinated people can still carry the virus and risk infecting others, so for the time being the answer is yes.

RG raised the issue that the vast majority of flooding issues are down to landowners not fulfilling their duties with regard to clearing out ditches and asked if Suffolk County Council would make use of their powers to require work to be done, thereby reducing the pressure on Suffolk Highways? MHi explained that the County

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Council do write letters to landowners when necessary, but it is always better if the work can be agreed amicably, letters generally do not get results unless the landowner is taken to court, which in itself is an expensive route. The other alternative is that Suffolk Highways do the work and then bill the landowner, but this then often results in council staff needing to chase debts. RG asked if the Environment Agency could be approached. MHi stated that they could be contacted, but this is outside of County Council remit.

SG queried Suffolk's readiness to move forward, after a lot of medical experts have warned that COVID is not likely to be fully beaten during the Prime Minister's "Roadmap" schedule and the likelihood that as restrictions are eased there may still be surges of cases from time to time. MHi explained that he chairs the County Council outbreak board and they are well placed to meet the ongoing fluid changes that are likely to occur, as they meet every week to discuss the situation. Comms plans are regularly drawn up to publicise changes to the public. It will be important to be adaptable as things move forward, but there is light at the end of the tunnel and it is likely that COVID boosters will become the norm in a way that each year there is a flu vaccination campaign.

MHa asked if the rapid testing is a requirement by law or just guidance. MHi stated that it is not law, but all schools, teachers and parents are being asked to do their part, along with all those who have to leave their homes for work.

ACTPC 21-01-04 Update from District Councillor

The District Councillor's Report had previously been circulated to the Council and has also been posted on the village website www.ashfield.onesuffolk.net.

RG asked KG about the current surge in fly tipping and asked if it may be that having to book an appointment to go to the tip is likely to be a cause? RG stated that he tried to book an appointment, but there was nothing available for three weeks. KG explained that this was not a District Council issue and suggested that RG speak directly to MHi (who had unfortunately left the meeting by this point). RG will follow this up with MHi and put a note in the next parish magazine to remind people of the need to book in advance for the tip.

SG commented on the report regarding the Freeport bid, explaining that he had read reports from a number of economists that Freeports don't create additional jobs, but simply move jobs around and therefore it would be important to monitor the overall number of jobs in the industry and make sure that jobs are not lost elsewhere in the county. KG thanked SG for his comment.

ACTPC 21-01-05 Declaration of Interests

None

ACTPC 21-01-06 Minutes of previous meetings

The Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 9th December 2020 as a true and accurate record, were proposed by PW, seconded by SG all voted in favour and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED**. The Minutes were signed by the Chair and the Clerk

Matters Arising and Action Points from Previous Minutes

1. Publicise the availability of locality budget monies via the village email system. DISCHARGED
2. Report overgrown hedges causing concern on the A1120 on the Suffolk Highways Online Reporting Tool. To be discussed later in meeting.
3. Conduct audit of website accessibility. To be discussed later in meeting.
4. Renew Parish Council insurance with Community Action Suffolk. DISCHARGED
5. Write thank you letter on behalf of Parish Council to volunteers who have helped a lot during lockdown. DISCHARGED
6. Arrange a bouquet of flowers to be delivered to former Councillor who has left the village. DISCHARGED

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7. Monitor potholes in village and report via Online Reporting Tool if they deteriorate to a state which would warrant repair. Advise parishioner who reported the issue of the Parish Council's course of action. To be discussed later in the meeting.
8. Respond to District Council Tree & Hedgerow Planting scheme. DISCHARGED
9. Publish budget, as approved at the meeting, on the village website. DISCHARGED
10. Submit precept request for 2021-2022. DISCHARGED
11. Purchase new laptop for Parish Council work and submit receipts for reimbursement. ONGOING
12. To distribute payments as approved at the December meeting. DISCHARGED

ACTPC 21-01-07 Planning

- a) To consider planning applications that had been submitted since the last meeting:
 - i) DC/21/01175 – Householder application – erection of two storey gable-end extension (following removal of existing garage), insertion of additional rear windows; erection of single storey rear extensions at Duck Foot Cottage, The Street, Ashfield-cum-Thorpe

Councillors had studied the application in advance of the meeting. After discussion it was decided to **SUPPORT** the application based on the following:

- The proposed changes are mostly to the rear of the property and it does not alter the look and feel of the neighbourhood, therefore it is suitable for the area..

RH proposed, MHa seconded, all voted in favour and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED.**

- b) To consider any planning applications that have been submitted since agenda was published: None
- c) Updates and outcomes on previous planning applications:
 - i) DC/20/04742 – Householder application – erection of single storey rear extension, cartlodge and home office at The Cottage, near School, The Street - Granted

ACTPC 21-01-08 Parish Council Activities

- a) To consider co-option to fill vacancies on Council – MHa asked whether anyone present wished to be considered for co-option to the Council. Nobody came forward. The Clerk confirmed that the vacancy is published on the village website. RG agreed to put a note in the next available parish magazine asking for volunteers to come forward.
- b) Report on Website Accessibility Audit – SG reported that he is part way through the audit and at present he has not found any major problems, just a few minor issues that he is hoping to get finished in the next couple of weeks. One Suffolk, the website hosts, automatically provide a lot of the necessary facilities to assist accessibility, so it is not too much of an issue. SG will report back to the Council again at the next meeting.
- c) Highways – Report on activity since last meeting
 1. Drainage and flooding on A1120/The Street
RG reported that he had clocked up approximately 60 hours between Christmas and the end of February working on issues related to flooding in the village and surrounding area. A number of times he has cut gullies into the verge to let water off the road, but in many places the road surface is deteriorating badly. A serious accident had occurred on the A1120 when there was snow earlier in the year, RG suspected that a blocked pipe under the road may have been a factor and has reported this, along with a number of other items on the online reporting tool.
 2. Update on overgrown hedges in village
RG has been in contact with a number of landowners regarding hedges that are infringing on the roads and is hopeful that they will co-operate with the requests to cut their hedges back. One such hedge near the Pumping Station RG has dealt with himself and there is one just outside of the parish boundary on the road to Framsdon that RG knows Suffolk Highways are in correspondence with regarding the fact that the overgrowth is causing overrun on the opposite verge.

3. SCC Reporting Tool

A number of issues have been reported, but due to the number of problems encountered throughout the county there are long delays in work being carried out

4. Concerns raised by parishioner regarding potholes

RG reported that during the week before the March Parish Council meeting, he had met a Suffolk Highways engineer who was surveying potholes in The Street. Initially a number of potholes had not been marked up for work, but RG had sent an email into Highways, copying MHi into the correspondence, and subsequently all defects in The Street had now been marked up. PW reported that he had also spoken to an engineer marking up potholes and had been informed that once they are marked, the work has to be done within 8 weeks. Some of the potholes were not strictly speaking deep enough and the work is weather dependent, but hopefully the matter will be resolved soon.

- d) Update on Speed Restriction Extension – PW reported that he had put in the locations that needed to be included in the traffic surveys, but that no further update is available at the moment. PW will chase up and hoped to be able to provide more information at the next Parish Council meeting.
- e) Ashfield-cum-Thorpe Welfare Trust Report – It was decided to defer this report to the Annual Parish Meeting. MHa will make contact.
- f) To review and re-adopt Standing Orders – Upon review the Council agreed that there are no amendments to be made. RH proposed adoption for the coming year, SG seconded, all voted in favour and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED**. The Clerk will publish the agreed Standing Orders on the village website.
- g) Diary Dates for 2021-2022 – Annual Parish Meeting and AGM of the council Wednesday 5th May 2021 – to be held remotely. Other Parish Council meetings to be held Wednesday 8th September 2021, Wednesday 8th December 2021 and Wednesday 9th March 2022. The Clerk will publish the dates on the website.

ACTPC 21-01-09 Finance

- a) To review the financial statement for the quarter – The Clerk had previously circulated the Financial Statement for December. There were no queries. MHa proposed acceptance, SG seconded and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED**. The Chair signed the corresponding Bank Statements to confirm the figures.
- b) To review and re-adopt Financial Regulations – Upon review the Council agreed that there are no amendments to be made. SG proposed adoption for the coming year, RH seconded, all voted in favour and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED**. The Clerk will publish the adopted regulations on the village website.
- c) To consider applications for funding as received – None have been submitted
- d) To agree payments as detailed on the Payment Schedule
PW proposed authorisation, MHa seconded and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED**. The Clerk will issue cheques accordingly.

ACTPC – 21-01-10 Urgent Matters to be brought to the attention of the Council

- a) Items for next agenda:
- Finalise audit of website accessibility
 - Update on Speed Limit application
 - Highways Report

Items for the May Agenda – please notify the Clerk of any further items for the agenda as soon as possible and by Monday 26th April 2021 at the latest, with any accompanying paperwork ready to be circulated with the agenda upon publication.

There being no further business requiring the attention of the Parish Council, the meeting was closed at 9.06pm. The next meeting is set for **Wednesday 5th May 2021** at 7.30 pm remotely via Zoom.

Sarah Clare
Parish Clerk

Myles Hansen
Chair

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