



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 8th September 2021 at St Mary's Church

Attendance Robert Grimsey (Chair) (RG) Myles Hansen (Vice-Chair) (MHa)
Ruth Hart (RH) Sarah Clare (Clerk)

Public present at the meeting: 2

ACTPC 21-05-01 Apologies for Absence

Apologies had been received from Simon Garrett (SG) who was unable to attend due to personal commitments. Council accepts.

ACTPC 21-05-02 Public Forum

A parishioner raised concerns about traffic speeding through the village. RG explained that this is often an issue that is raised with the Parish Council and asked the parishioner whether they had any clear evidence of vehicles travelling above the speed limit. The evidence offered was the revving up of engines and it was explained that Friday and Saturday nights were particularly badly affected.

RG noted that the Parish Council has gone through a lot of work to obtain a SID in the village, which is operated by Suffolk Highways at no cost to the village and is shared with a number of other villages, meaning it is in place on a rotational basis. However, there have been recent concerns about some particular individuals who are using the roads in the village as a race track from time to time.

The parishioner asked about the simplistic design of the SID that is used in the village, feeling that signs that offer more feedback to motorists are better received and more effective. MHa commented that following research done in the village (which had included a public meeting) there was no enthusiasm for purchasing such signs, let alone the volunteers willing to come forward to operate such a scheme, which is why the current free option was pursued at considerable effort by a Councillor who has now moved out of the village. In addition, the police had attended and carried out several speed traps at the time and determined that there was no significant speeding issue in the village. Unfortunately, such issues are usually down to a few ordinary people who habitually break the speed limit, despite being law-abiding in every other way.

The parishioner pressed that public opinion on the matter may have changed since the work done prior to the installation of the current SID machines. RG explained that to purchase a more advanced SID would cost around £5K and this would mean an additional amount on the precept that would be far above the cap of the annual precept rise, but further canvassing of opinion on the matter could potentially be carried out. The parishioner suggested that the Community Hall seemed to have surplus funds after having received grants during lockdown. RG explained that such grants are likely to be ring-fenced and not available for the purchase of a SID.

The matter went on to discuss the proposed 40 mph speed limit north of the village, RG explained that there were currently traffic survey boxes in place to monitor the traffic and it is hoped that the results will help to understand the problem better and offer evidence to back-up the request for the 40-mph zone. The interventions that the Parish Council currently have in place and are working on (the SID and the requested 40-mph zone) have taken considerable time and effort to get in place.

MHi stepped in to explain that speeding is really a police issue and not a parish council issue, however, Suffolk County Council have put the traffic survey boxes in place in order to gauge the average speed of traffic and how it approaches the village. The 40-mph zone has been refused once and the traffic survey is now taking place as part of an appeal process. MHi explained that it is extremely difficult to get speed limits changed and it may be better to look at applying for a place on the rota for the new ANPR (Automatic Number Plate Recognition) cameras that are being rolled out across the county. These cameras result in the registered keeper of the car receiving a warning letter and can be more effective in tackling speeding problems.

RG closed the discussion by suggesting that if there was evidence of a regular offender then the police should be notified, but this matter would be carried forward for further discussion at a future meeting.

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ACTPC 21-05-03 Declaration of Interests

None

ACTPC 21-05-04 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:

Suffolk is very keen to do its part in taking in Afghan families and refugees, however, at the moment there are no plans to set up drop off points for donations. This is down to two reasons; currently they don't know what the needs will be and also Council workers don't want to receive inappropriate items, such as perishable goods. Instead, Suffolk County Council (SCC) is asking people interested in helping to register on the County Council's website and then when needs are known the Council will be in touch.

"Levelling Up" is being discussed a lot and the Government is looking to offer devolution deals to areas outside of the North of England. There have been 35 expressions of interest from counties across the country, but Suffolk was unique in that all district and borough councils have agreed to support the County Council's application, along with all the County's MP's. MHi had just met with government and civil servants and it is understood that the decision will be made in about three weeks' time on which areas are going to be part of the scheme. If successful the bid would mean that Suffolk had greater power over how to spend monies raised within the county.

Parish Councils are being urged to ensure that people know about SCC's scheme to help instal solar panels on house-holders roofs. Interested parties have until 27th September to register on the scheme, which last time was able to offer approximately 30% discounts as SCC was able to go out to the market place and bulk buy the panels, by asking companies to tender. This results in individual customers getting solar panels in a cheaper mor affordable way and having confidence in the contractors involved. It was agreed to circulate the information on the village email group.

RG asked why there appear to be so many road closures in place across the county when there is no evidence of works actually taking place. MHi explained that there have been issues with the contractor who manages road closures Network Assurance (NA) who receive up to 200 requests for road closures each day from various utility companies. Unfortunately, there have been a number of instances where the utility companies do not notify NA when their plans have changed, resulting in NA putting in closures when they are not needed. Earlier this year a new permit scheme was introduced which requires utility companies to put their name and contact details up at any road closure, which it is hoped will give provide better accountability to the system.

RG finally asked MHi about overgrown hedges, MHi stated that hedges are the responsibility of the landowner and although Suffolk Highways can become involved, the County Council encourages Parish Councils to make first approaches to the landowner to encourage them to carry out the work.

MHa asked MHi if he could offer some guidance on how Parish Councils could tackle anti-social behaviour in the village. This is reported under ActPC 21-05-08 b) below

ACTPC 21-05-05 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.

KG brought attention to the following points:

The District Council is working hard on the continued COVID vaccine rollout and there is updated information the website.

The District Council is also working hand-in-hand with the County Council to address the needs of the Afghan refugees.

The green light has been given to the Gateway 14 site on the outskirts of Stowmarket, which it is hoped will bring investment into the area.

The old council offices at Needham Market have now been transformed into new homes, which are now coming onto the market.

Signed (Clerk) Signed (Chair) 8

There will be a Local Energy Showcase taking place on 21st & 22nd October at Wherstead Park, businesses and community organisations are urged to join in to find out what they can do to tackle climate change.

A green oasis is planned near Stowmarket to support the District Council's biodiversity plans, three acres of land has been purchased specifically for this purpose.

Finally, the District Council is asking residents to bear with them over the recent difficulties regarding bin collections. Delays have occurred due to bin crews having to go into isolation following positive COVID tests and a lack of trained drivers. It is hoped that these problems will soon be resolved.

ACTPC 21-05-06 Minutes of previous meetings

The Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 9th June 2021 as a true and accurate record, were proposed by MHa, seconded by RH all voted in favour and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED**. The Minutes were signed by the Chair and the Clerk

ACTPC 21-05-07 Matters Arising and Action Points from the May & June Minutes

1. Submit responses to Planning Department at District Council as agreed. DISCHARGED
2. Write note about Parish Councillor vacancies for circulation on village email. DISCHARGED
3. Contact MHi after the election period regarding highways issues. To be discussed later in meeting.
4. Chase up Speed Limit Extension to update Parish Council at next meeting. To be discussed later in meeting.
5. Submit Exemption from External Audit certificate and publish on website. DISCHARGED
6. Publish AGAR information on website. DISCHARGED
7. To distribute payments as approved. DISCHARGED

ACTPC 21-05-08 Parish Council Activities

- a) To consider co-option to Council - RG asked whether anyone present wished to be considered for co-option to the Council.

Parishioner Chris Sharpe (CS) indicated that he was willing to be considered. MHa proposed that he be accepted for co-option, RG seconded, all voted in favour and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED**.

The Clerk asked CS to sign the declarations of eligibility and acceptance and will arrange for a link to be emailed to complete the Register of Interests and look into training options for New Councillors.

- b) To consider action to be taken to tackle anti-social behaviour within the village – The Parish Council raised concerns with MHi and KG about a particular local authority house in the village where residents have been causing problems for neighbours, outlining various incidents that have taken place. It is understood that neighbours to this property have been threatened with 'consequences' should they report such incidents to the police or local authorities. RG had attempted to make a formal report, but found the system at the District Council to be difficult to navigate and frustratingly slow. KG asked RG to provide her with the details and she would follow this up.

MHi explained that without a log of incidents then it is unlikely that any action can be taken. RG explained that the Clerk had sourced a reporting form from SALC that had been circulated on the village email system asking residents to come forward with information. To date unfortunately nothing had been sent to the Clerk. It was felt that some people may be put off by form filling and RH reported that she had been verbally advised about issues. The Clerk asked RH to provide the information and she would formally record them in a spreadsheet. MHa offered to provide a log of incidents to date which can be held centrally by the Clerk and added to when necessary.

In the meantime, parishioners who have received direct threats need to be encouraged to report them to the police as individuals – this cannot be done on their behalf by the Parish Council.

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c) Highways

- i) Footpath Report – RG reported he has chased MHi about missing roadside footpath signs that were reported over twelve months ago, it is hoped they will now be replaced within a few weeks. There are particular problems with the paths off Thorpe Lane, which within a month or so of being replaced seem to disappear, it is clear that they are being deliberately removed as there is no way the posts could have rotted in such a small timeframe.

Following a few concerns that had been raised about Footpath 13, RG has met with the occupants of the land and they now better understand their responsibilities and have received their waymark discs which they will be installing. RG has also met with the new occupants of Pear Tree Farm and made sure they are also aware of their responsibilities regarding the paths that run across their property, encouragingly they are keen to help look after the paths within the parish.

- ii) Verge Cutting – RG raised a question about verge-cutting and why so many are being left un-cut. MHi explained that there have been increasing requests from members of the public for verges not to be cut so frequently, in order that wildlife habitats are maintained. This has resulted in a large number of verges across the county becoming Roadside Nature Reserves, however, when these requests are received the area is assessed for road safety and all junctions have been cut back to the required visibility splays. There have however been specific issues this year due to the way in which the growing season was compressed into a short period of time, meaning that the contractors simply couldn't keep up with the need to cut verges, but this has now been resolved
- iii) Feedback from SCC on traffic/speed surveys – To date no information had been received, so this matter will be carried over to the next meeting. The Clerk will chase if nothing has been received by the end of September.

- d) To consider the adequacy of the Parish Council Insurance Policy in order to renew cover – The Clerk had circulated the policy due for renewal for Councillors to consider. After discussion RG proposed that the cover is fit for purpose and the renewal be completed, RH seconded, all voted in favour and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED.**

- e) To consider and review the Council's Risk Assessment – The Clerk had circulated the document prior to the meeting for Councillors to consider. After discussion MHa proposed that it be adopted, RG seconded, all voted in favour and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED.**

ACTPC 21-05-09 Planning

- a) To consider planning applications that had been submitted since the last meeting:

- i) DC/21/04345 – Planning Application – Construction of menage 25m x 40m with 1.25m post and rail fencing and two gates. Rose Farm, Main Road, IP14 6LU.

Councillors had all studied the application in advance of the meeting. After discussion it was decided to **SUPPORT** the application as it stands
RG proposed, RH 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/21/02627 – Householder Application – Proposed alterations, including a change in roof direction to existing garage and single storey extension to existing dwelling. The Nook, The Street, IP14 6LX – Granted.

ACTPC 21-05-10 Finance

- a) To review the Financial Statement for the quarter – The Clerk had previously circulated the Financial Statement for September. There were no queries. RH proposed acceptance, RG seconded and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED.** The Chair signed the corresponding Bank Statements to confirm the figures.

- b) To accept Internal Auditors Report – RG proposed acceptance, RH seconded all voted in favour and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED.**

Signed  (Clerk)

Signed  (Chair)

10

- c) To appoint Internal Auditor for 2021-2022 – It was agreed to appoint J. Shea Auditing as the Internal Auditor for 2021-2022. RG proposed, MHa seconded all voted in favour **IT WAS SO RESOLVED.**
- d) To consider and review Internal Financial Control Statement – The Clerk had circulated the document prior to the meeting for Councillors to consider. After discussion RH proposed that it be adopted, CS seconded, all voted in favour and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED**
- e) To agree payments as detailed on the Payment Schedule
RG proposed authorisation, RH seconded and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED.** The Clerk will issue cheques accordingly. RH confirmed that the pads are being replaced due to expiration, not because the defibrillator had been used.

ACTPC – 21-05-11 Urgent Matters to be brought to the attention of the Council


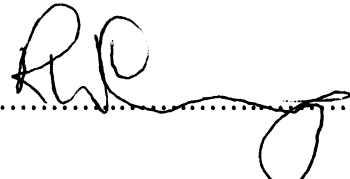
- a) RG reminded all Councillors that emails could be subject to a Freedom of Information request and therefore it is better that any comments on matters in the village are anonymised if possible to ensure compliance with GDPR.
- b) RH asked about Queen’s Green Canopy planting at Community Hall. RG explained that as there is no land actually in the Parish Council’s possession there was no opportunity for the Parish Council to be directly involved. However, RG will make a personal approach to the Community Hall Committee to see if they wish to participate in the scheme.
- c) Items for next agenda
 - Virement to reserves
 - Anti Social Behaviour
 - Budget & Precept
 - Further consideration of ways to tackle speeding in the village
 - Feedback from traffic surveys

Items for the December Agenda – please notify the Clerk of any further items for the agenda as soon as possible and by Monday 29th November 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 9.08pm. The next meeting is set for **Wednesday 8th December 2021** at 7.30 pm in the Community Hall.

Sarah Clare
Parish Clerk

Robert Grimsey
Chair

Signed  (Clerk) Signed  (Chair) 11