



# 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 8<sup>th</sup> December 2021 at the Community Hall

Attendance	Robert Grimsey (Chair) (RG)	Myles Hansen (Vice-Chair) (MHa)	Chris Sharpe (CS)
	Simon Garrett (SG)	Sarah Clare (Clerk)	
	Kathie Guthrie (District Councillor) (KG)	Matthew Hicks (County Councillor) (MHi)	

Public present at the meeting: 2

ACTPC 21-06-01 Apologies for Absence

Ruth Hart (RH) had sent apologies due to ill health, the Council accepted.

ACTPC 21-06-02 Public Forum

A parishioner had circulated data to the Council prior to the meeting regarding speeding in the village. Using the method of taking two fixed points within the village she had timed vehicles with her mobile phone and calculated the speeds using the distance and time. Giving a 10-15% margin for error she felt that none of the vehicles that she had tracked had been travelling at or below 30 mph. Data had been collected over four different days and times. She suggested that this evidence shows that there needs to be further mitigations carried out to reduce speeding in the village.

RG thanked the parishioner for her efforts and understood that there are concerns raised regularly by village residents about the issue of speeding, however, the radar survey that had taken place at four different points throughout the village in July, following a request and funding from MHi had shown that the mean average for vehicles travelling through the village was 27 mph, with the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile being 32 mph. MHi has asked the Suffolk Highways team to produce a report from the raw data, which is still outstanding at the moment, but the intention of the survey was to see if the proposed 40 mph speed limit zone to the north of the village could be justified. The data collected seems to indicate that the majority of vehicles passing through the village were travelling at or just under the speed limit, with a small proportion of vehicles speeding at between 30-35 mph, there is unfortunately the odd exception of up to 70 mph. MHi stated that the only real way to prevent speeding in the village was to get Suffolk Constabulary to attend with their safety cameras. The County Council can help with funding for white lining etc, but unfortunately regular commuters tend not to take notice of such measures.

MHa agreed that the whole issue of speeding has been discussed many times at the Parish Council over the years and although figures and statistics are very helpful, the truth is that whilst most people do try to stick to the limit, unfortunately there are a hard core few who think that speed limits don't apply to them and the only way these people can be tackled is through police enforcement.

The parishioner who had collected the data asked whether the Parish Council would consider upgrading the speed enforcement sign that is currently in the village, having noticed that other villages in the area have more interactive signs. RG explained that the current system of being on the County Council rota was adopted due to the fact that it was at no cost to the village and didn't require volunteers to come forward and manage the system. MHi agreed that many other villages have more interactive signs, but reiterated the fact that in his experience the only way to stop the hardcore of motorists who are intent on speeding was to request Suffolk Constabulary attend with speed enforcement cameras.

SG argued that most of the low level 30-35 mph speeding is likely careless or thoughtless, not deliberate and that the reminder of having the SID sign flash at motorists can often be enough to encourage people to slow down, although this slowing down may not be recorded as they've gone through the SID zone.

CS suggested that the Parish Council might want to revisit the speed camera situation as the original decision was taken a few years back due to a lack of volunteers coming forward and the cost of potentially up to £3K to purchase a machine, but opinions may be different now. KG suggested that it may be possible to access

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funding through the locality budget and MHi also suggested that a one-off raise for a year on the Parish element of the precept could be considered to help cover large capital costs if the village went down this route.

It was agreed that the Clerk would contact the Police & Crime Commissioner for Suffolk and request that Ashfield-cum-Thorpe be included in regular Safety Camera rotas and that the issue of whether or not to upgrade the SID to a Parish owned machine would be re-considered at a future Parish Council meeting.

Another parishioner spoke about how they had attended the meeting due to the HGV Route Consultation being on the agenda. They had already responded as a private individual, having been involved in the previous consultation some years ago, but was keen to urge the Parish Council to ensure that they did not miss the opportunity to put through a strong objection to the idea that the road through the village could be considered a lorry route. The parishioner recalled that approximately twenty years ago the village of Debenham had mobilised successfully against being a designated lorry route and the houses there are set back considerably more than houses in Ashfield-cum-Thorpe.

MHi commented that every Parish Council is being urged to respond and he would support whatever views each individual parish put forward, as Parish Councillors know more about what is actually happening in their village than anyone else. The issue is that no villages want lorries to pass through, but unfortunately it is impossible to be zero tolerance on this issue, as lorries need to access rural and agricultural properties for a number of reasons.

RG expressed concern that there are plans to change the routes in the area, MHi said that this is not the case, the review is simply a statutory duty that the County Council has to carry out every ten years, although this time round it has been delayed for an extra year due to COVID.

ACTPC 21-06-03 Declaration of Interests

None

ACTPC 21-06-04 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](http://www.ashfield.onesuffolk.net).

MHi brought attention to the following points:

There is a lot of talk about 'Levelling Up' and Suffolk has received a boost in government funding with £940K coming to Suffolk to support two community schemes; the Enabling Self-Employment in Suffolk and the Suffolk Road to Net Zero business support programme are among 477 schemes across the country to receive funding from the Community Renewal Fund. Both of these schemes are being led by the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership in conjunction with Suffolk County Council, with the Road To Net Zero being an important aspect of the Suffolk Climate Emergency Plan to ensure that everyone works together, best practices are shared and the work is not repeated by different groups.

As part of the declared Climate Emergency, on 9<sup>th</sup> November Suffolk County Council announced plans to decarbonise their buildings through measures such as new boilers, installing solar panels, rainwater harvesting and the installation of smart LED street lighting. The aim is to make all County Council owned buildings 'smart'

The budget setting process has just started, again there are huge pressures on the adult social care and children's services areas of the budget. As has been said before 75% of the budget goes on funding these two areas alone, which have seen increased pressures throughout the pandemic, it is likely that the Council Tax bill may have to rise by about 2% as a result.

SG asked for clarification on the 75% figure, asking if that also covered educational services. MHi explained that main stream education is funded directly from Central Government, with the money coming into Suffolk County Council and then going straight out to the schools. The 75% figure relates to all other Children's Services in the county, such as SEND provision and the running of children's centres.

RG raised a concern with MHi about the footpath signs in Thorpe Lane, MHi thought that this matter had been dealt with, but would chase and get back to RG directly.

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ACTPC 21-06-05 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](http://www.ashfield.onesuffolk.net).

KG brought attention to the following points:

The new café at Needham Lake has now been named The Duck & Teapot following a public vote and it is on course for opening early in the new year.

There are eight new affordable homes now available in phase one of the development at the old Mid Suffolk District Council Offices. CS asked about what protections were in place to ensure that these affordable homes were not bought cheaply and then sold on quickly for a profit. KG explained that there are some restrictions in place, but sometimes these can prove difficult to enforce.

KG highlighted the National Tree Scheme initiative and encouraged everyone to get involved if they have suitable land available.

Finally, a plea that there have been quite a few missed bin collections in recent weeks, due to the large number of roadworks going on across the county, if this occurs then please leave the bins out and the refuse teams will get to you as soon as they can.

ACTPC 21-06-06 Minutes of previous meetings

Regarding the meeting held on Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> September 2021, RG requested an amendment under item ACTPC 21-05-08 c) i) RG had met with the new occupants of Pear Tree farm, but there are no paths that run across their property.

Subject to the above amendment, the Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> September 2021 as a true and accurate record, were proposed by RG, seconded by CS all voted in favour and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED**. The Minutes were signed by the Chair and the Clerk

ACTPC 21-06-07 Matters Arising and Action Points from the May & June Minutes

1. Future agenda item – speeding in the village. DISCHARGED
2. Circulate to Ashfield group about Solar Together Scheme. DISCHARGED
3. Clerk to source template letter to be sent to landowners asking for vegetation overhanging the highway to be cut back. DISCHARGED
4. Arrange for Register of Interests link and training options for CS. DISCHARGED
5. Provide KG with information relating to attempt to report anti-social behaviour. To be discussed later in the meeting.
6. Set up log to record incidents of anti-social behaviour. DISCHARGED
7. Chase up Speed Limit Extension to update Parish Council at next meeting. To be discussed later in meeting.
8. To arrange renewal of Parish Council insurance. DISCHARGED
9. Publish Parish Council's Risk Assessment on village website. DISCHARGED
10. Submit responses to Planning Department at District Council as agreed. DISCHARGED
11. Publish Internal Financial Control Statement on village website. DISCHARGED
12. To distribute payments as approved at the September meeting. DISCHARGED

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ACTPC 21-06-08 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. Nobody came forward. The Clerk confirmed that there are now two vacancies on the Council and these are listed on the village website.
- b) To consider further action to be taken to tackle anti-social behaviour within the village – RG asked whether MHa had anything further to add to the Parish Council log of incidents. MHa advised that he has added the recent reports to his log, specifically the issues related to the firing of a weapon. RG asked the Council whether they thought this should be reported to the police, MHa advised that as the firing had taken place wholly within a private property it was unlikely to be something the police would investigate. RG commented that the ongoing speed survey work had identified a few exceptional speeds and that this should also be considered an anti-social behaviour, generally though there had been less issues in recent weeks, possibly due to the District Council taking some enforcement action.
- c) Highways – further consideration of ways to tackle speeding in the village, including if possible feedback from traffic surveys – This matter had taken up a large portion of time during the public forum, in order to formalise the agreed course of action RG proposed that an approach is made to the police for safety cameras to be deployed in the village, CS seconded, all voted in favour and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED**.

CS offered to put together something to go out on Ashfield Talk about cost implication of the Parish Council purchasing its own Speed Indicator Sign and the fact that volunteers would need to come forward to manage such a sign, dependent upon response the Parish Council may then want to discuss the matter further at a future meeting.

Following receipt of the data from the Suffolk Highways survey, it looks like the speed limit restriction of having a 40 mph buffer zone at the north end of the village is very unlikely, but RG will chase MHi to see whether there are any other mitigations that may be possible.

- d) The use of personal email addresses by Councillors – Following attendance at an online forum for Data Management the Clerk had circulated an Information Commissioner's Office guide about the data breach risks and the implications in the event of a Freedom of Information Request for Councillors who are using their personal email addresses.

SG suggested that all Councillors adopt an email address with a common prefix, suggesting actpc.initials@gmail.com

It was agreed that each individual Councillor would set up a Council specific email and advise the Clerk. SG also suggested that it would be good to adopt a formal email communication policy, the Clerk will source such a policy, with a view to adopting it at the next meeting.

- e) Consideration of response to Draft Housing Land Supply Consultation – CS had reviewed the document and reported that there is nothing that is likely to have a material impact on Ashfield cum Thorpe, particularly as Mid Suffolk now have their statutory requirement of housing stock land for the coming years. After discussion it was agreed that no response was required.
- f) Consideration of response to HGV Route Consultation – CS had worked on collating the comments that had been received from parishioners. Generally, concerns were not about the amount of traffic, but there were worries about the weight of the vehicles coming through the village at times, particularly in relation to some of the houses (many of which are old) that stand very close to the road. It was agreed that any increase to the numbers, size or weight of lorries passing through Ashfield-cum-Thorpe would be completely unacceptable, but this was difficult as agricultural vehicles are seemingly getting bigger each season.

It was agreed that a response to the consultation was essential, CS offered to compile the response and circulate to Councillors for comment, the Clerk will then submit on behalf of the Parish Council.

- g) Consideration of response to Bus Back Better plans for Suffolk – CS had again compiled responses received from parishioners. The most common comment was that the bus service cannot realistically be used for commuting as there is no return bus to the village later in the day. SG commented that it can just about be used for shopping, but again due to the lack of late buses it was not fit for using for socialising in the evenings. CG will anonymise the report for filing in the Parish Council archives and report the comments back to Suffolk County Council.

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ACTPC 21-06-09 Planning

- a) To consider planning applications that had been submitted since the last meeting: None
- 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/21/04345 – Planning Application – Construction of menage 25m x 40m with 1.25m post and rail fencing and two gates. Rose Farm, IP14 6LU - Granted

ACTPC 21-06-10 Finance

- a) To review the Financial Statement for the quarter – The Clerk had previously circulated the Financial Statement for September. There were no queries. CS proposed acceptance, SG seconded and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED**. The Chair signed the corresponding Bank Statements to confirm the figures.
- b) To consider applications for funding: - After discussion it was felt that there was no evidence supplied by any of the applicants that there had been direct assistance to residents of Ashfield-cum-Thorpe, as this was a requisite to offer Section 137 funding it was agreed not to proceed with any donations.
  - i) SARS – No response
  - ii) Citizens Advice Bureau – No response
  - iii) Lighthouse Women's Aid – No response
- c) To finalise and adopt the 2022-2023 Budget – The Clerk had circulated a draft budget for the Council to consider.

RG proposed the adoption of the budget as circulated, SG seconded and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED**. The Clerk will arrange for the approved Budget to be published on the website.

- d) To set precept for 2022-2023 – Following adoption of the budget the Precept was set for 2022-2023 with an increase of 1.9% SG proposed, RG seconded and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED**. The Clerk will complete and return the form to the District Council.
- e) Virement to Reserves – balances on Financial Statement to quarter for:
  - i) *Asset Replacement Fund* – As per the approved budget for 2021-2022 originally it was planned to move £400 to reserves to be earmarked as an Asset Replacement Fund. However, following the purchase of a laptop the figure remaining in the budget had fallen to only £16. RG proposed that the current underspend recorded on the Financial Statement be added to the remaining £16 and therefore £360 should move to reserves instead, CW seconded, all voted in favour and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED**.
  - ii) *Contingency Fund* – As per the approved budget for 2021-2022 RG proposed the movement of £200 from the current account into reserves to be added to the General Contingencies Fund, SG seconded, all voted in favour and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED**.
- f) To agree payments as detailed on the Payment Schedule  
RG proposed authorisation, SG seconded and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED**. The Clerk will issue cheques accordingly.

ACTPC – 21-06-11 Urgent Matters to be brought to the attention of the Council

- a) RG proposed a vote of thanks to acknowledge the fantastic work done by the Community Council on upgrading the Hall.
- b) Items for next agenda
  - Police visit – CS agreed to arrange the invitation and will send an email out at least two weeks in advance to ask for any questions in order to allow for meaningful responses.

Items for the March Agenda – please notify the Clerk of any further items for the agenda as soon as possible and by Monday 28<sup>th</sup> February 2022 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 9.17 pm. The next meeting is set for **Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> March 2022** at 7.30 pm in the Community Hall.

Sarah Clare  
Parish Clerk

Signed ...  ..... (Clerk)

Robert Grimsey  
Chair

Signed ...  ..... (Chair)