



ASHFIELD-CUM-THORPE PARISH COUNCIL

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

Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday 26th September 2022 at the Community Hall

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

Public present at the meeting: 3

ACTPC-22-05-01 Apologies for Absence

None

ACTPC 22-05-02 Public Forum



A parishioner raised a query about the bus service that serves the village, noting that although there is an early morning bus that goes into Ipswich, the bus that returns late in the day has been removed from the timetable. The only option now is to return to the village at mid-day, severely restricting time in town and rendering the bus service useless for anyone to use for commuting. MHi spoke about the situation, explaining that unfortunately people have not returned to using buses in the way they did prior to the COVID pandemic. Usage rates are only around 20-30% pre-pandemic levels and as a result many bus companies are reducing or removing services. Suffolk County Council (SCC) has subsidised many routes to keep the bus companies afloat during the pandemic, but this subsidy is now being phased out and will be finishing at the end of March 2023. In some instances the subsidy has been as high as £20 per person for some routes, which is not viable to continue, with public spending in other areas also being squeezed. CS expressed some surprise that public transport was not a County Council responsibility, MHi explained that the service is run by commercial companies and although SCC can put forward suggestions relating to routes that are currently subsidised ultimately the decision is up to the operator, who will base it on commercial reasons. The issue is deeply unpopular and has led to lots of complaints county-wide, but unless passenger numbers return to pre-pandemic levels many bus operators are finding it is simply no longer viable to run services.

Discussion turned to alternatives and what could be done. RG noted that there are some volunteer run community transport schemes available in the area and offered to source details for the parishioner who had raised the concern.

CS expressed concern that the village was effectively being disconnected from the county town and that the lack of public transport would lead to more car use and pollution instead. CS asked whether the County Council had any plans to address the situation, bearing in mind that only last year the village had submitted a response to the National Bus Strategy, aiming to meet the Government's net zero target. MHi reiterated that SCC received funding from Central Government to subsidise the bus services during and after the pandemic, but this funding was due to finish next March and it was now up to people to return to using the buses. The only suggestion MHi could offer was to send a letter to Ipswich Buses, asking them to reconsider the timing of the return bus, perhaps suggesting that a bus returning later in the day, instead of at mid-day, would be a better solution.

A question was raised about whether using free bus passes would be of help to bus operators, MHi confirmed that the operator does receive a payment, but unfortunately pensioner numbers using buses (the highest proportion of bus pass users) are again yet to return to pre-pandemic levels.

A query was raised about a tree that had been cut down by SCC operatives at the end of Grove Lane and whether this was appropriate use of tax-payers money and whether the operatives had jurisdiction to carry out this work. RG confirmed that the tree in question had been hit by an articulated lorry coming out of Grove Lane and had been left in a dangerous position overhanging the road. The owner of the property was fully aware of the situation and SCC had been notified on the emergency highways number. Later the same day the road was closed and the tree work was carried out. SG noted that if a tree on private property falls on to the public highway then council operatives will attend to carry out works if necessary, as it is a time-sensitive

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situation and public safety is the main consideration. If the tree had simply fallen on private land, then it would have been up to the landowner to make their arrangements.

The parishioner who had raised the query commented that the council operatives had said they would report the damaged telephone line, but clearly failed to do so, which resulted in unnecessary delays to getting the affected properties re-connected. MHi offered to pass this comment onto the highways team, agreeing that if they said they were going to do something it should have been followed through.

It was noted that the reason the tree suffered damage was partly due to issues with a vehicle that is repeatedly parked dangerously close to the junction of The Street and Grove Lane. RG explained that this is an item which is due to be discussed on the agenda.

ACTPC 22-05-03 Declaration of Interests

RB declared interest in ACTPC 22-05-08 d) as a near neighbour of the property concerned.

ACTPC 22-05-04 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:

The recent cost of living pressures has resulted in many people coming forward for help, who have not had to access the welfare system before. Families who were just about managing before are now finding things very difficult with the combined impact of prices rising for both food and fuel. MHi urged everyone to ensure that if they come across people in their neighbourhood who are struggling, they direct these people to the Suffolk County Council website and Citizen's Advice Bureau, who can help direct people to the appropriate places. There are various pots of money available to help with essential living costs.

There have been issues relating to people putting everyday batteries into their kerbside recycling bins, with a recent incident involving a fire breaking out in 400 tonnes of waste that took two hours for firefighters to put out. This is a national issue with £158 million of damage occurring each year from fires started by batteries. The batteries can be recycled, but need to be taken to dedicated battery collection points, not put into the kerbside waste collection. A parishioner present asked where the nearest battery recycling point was likely to be and was advised that the Co-Op shop in Framlingham has a collection point.

The Suffolk Solar Together deadline was tonight, the scheme had been open again for a month, when SCC goes out to the market to look at getting a good price for local residents by bulk-buying solar panels and batteries. MHi urged people to consider getting a quote, as there is no commitment to register interest. MHa asked whether registering for this scheme would open residents up to cold-calling, as he had registered with the original 'Green Deal' and suffered nuisance calls. MHi assured him that this would not be the case with Suffolk Solar Together as regulations have been tightened up.

RG asked MHi about overgrown hedges and visibility splays that he had reported to Suffolk Highways, saying he had received reports from highways operatives that work had been done, but when he had inspected the sites concerned it had not been cut back sufficiently. MHi explained that an officer is being allocated to each parish to deal with highways matters and gave RG contact details for the officer now responsible for Ashfield-cum-Thorpe. He stressed that standard reporting should still be done through the online reporting tool, but the designated officer would be able to help with anything that required escalation.

ACTPC 22-05-05 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:

The work on the Gateway 14 park is coming along well.

KG has been lobbying the MP for the area about help for people who have to heat their homes by oil. There has been a recent Government announcement that a one-off payment of £100 will be given to everyone who needs help, but at the moment there are no details of how and when this will be distributed.

KG noted how well all tiers of Council responded to the Queen's passing and what was done to mark national mourning.

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RG asked KG for help in acquiring more dog fouling stickers, he stated had requested a supply, but nothing has been forthcoming. KG asked RG to forward details to her and she will chase it up for him.

ACTPC 22-05-06 Minutes of previous meetings

The Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 11th July 2022 as a true and accurate record, were proposed by SG, seconded by RH all voted in favour and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED**. The Minutes were signed by the Chair and the Clerk

ACTPC 22-05-07 Matters Arising and Action Points from the July Minutes

1. Email fuller details of the issues concerning Grove Lane to MHi, who can make contact with the right department at the County Council to deal with the land ownership issue. To be discussed later in meeting.
2. Advise former councillor of outcome on 40 mph speed limit application and advise the wider village via Ashfield Talk. DISCHARGED
3. Submit responses to Planning Department at District Council as agreed. DISCHARGED
4. Check grass cutting schedule and if the parish is overdue raise a query using the Online Reporting Tool. DISCHARGED
5. Submit report using Online Reporting Tool about the A1120 junction and the lack of visibility splay. To be discussed later in meeting.
6. Contact agents about dangerous stacks of bales near to a public footpath. To be discussed later in meeting.
7. To distribute payments as approved at the July meeting. DISCHARGED

ACTPC 22-05-08 Planning

- a) To consider planning applications that had been submitted since the last meeting:
- i) DC/22/03842 – Application for the Modification or Discharge of a Planning Obligation under Section 106A of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 – Discharge of S106 Planning Obligation dated 03.07.2007 relating to planning permission 0020/07, to allow removal of holiday accommodation restriction on property. Osier View Barn, Thorpe Lane, IP14 6NE


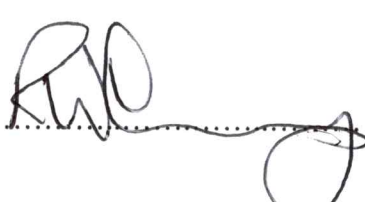
Councillors had all studied the application in advance of the meeting. After discussion it was decided to **SUPPORT** the application based on the following points:

- It is understood that neighbours to the property are pleased that with the restriction lifted the property will not be standing empty for long periods.

RG proposed, SG 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: None
- d) To note correspondence from a parishioner regarding pre-planning consultation – RG handed the chair to MHa to discuss the correspondence. SG asked whether RG had any comments to make as a member of the public on the situation. RG noted that he had done some research on the Permitted Development Rights relating to the property and that these had been excluded from the site in 2005.

MHa noted that the owners of a property in the village are planning to make some changes in their garden and had contacted the Parish Council seeking approval. The Parish Council is not the decision maker in any planning application process - it is just a consultee - and cannot formally comment upon any plans, until an official application has been submitted via the District Council. The Parish Council will then deal with the matter following the correct process.

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ACTPC 22-05-09 Parish Council Activities

- a) To consider co-option to Council – RG asked if anyone present wished to be considered. Nobody came forward. The Clerk confirmed that there are two vacancies on the Council and these are listed on the village website. RG flagged up that there are Parish Council elections next May and as a result all Councillors would need to re-submit their nomination forms.
- b) 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 RH proposed that the cover is fit for purpose and the renewal be completed, RG seconded, all voted in favour and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED.**
- c) 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 RG proposed that it be adopted, MHa seconded, all voted in favour and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED.** The Clerk will arrange for the document to be published on the village website.
- d) To consider and review the Council's Health & Safety Policy - The Clerk had circulated the policy for consideration. RG proposed adoption, CS seconded all voted in favour and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED.** The Clerk will arrange for the policy to be published on the village website.
- e) Highways & Footpaths: Report on activity since the last meeting
 - i) Concerns about large straw stacks in the village – RG explained that he had been in contact with the new owners of the farm, who have agreed a period of 3 weeks from 30th September with the previous owner to remove the straw that is causing concern. SG noted that he had also had verbal notification that the stacks would be removed, as they are leaning significantly and posed a danger to the nearby public right of way. SG had also been informed that the tank at the same location would be removed. RG said that all concerned are aware of their legal liabilities and he knows that others in the village had made direct representations. There is due to be a change of tenancy at the end of September and it is hoped that by the end of October all the bales will have been removed.
 - ii) Overgrown hedges in the parish – RG expressed concern that although some hedges had been cut back, they had not been cut back sufficiently to clear the road. RG wanted to avoid formal hedge-cutting notices being issued and said he would speak to the parishioners concerned and see what could be done to offer help if necessary.
 - iii) A1120/The Street Visibility Splays – RG asked for Councillors comments on the work that Suffolk Highways had carried out to improve visibility at the junction. MHa argued that the visibility is not too bad, the main problem is the hidden dip in the road, which is beyond the remit of verge cutting. RG felt that more work needed to be done and will monitor the situation further.
 - iv) Parking of vehicles close to Grove Lane junction, recent incidents – One particular vehicle is causing great concern to parishioners, restricting access to Grove Lane and resulted in the loss of a tree (as noted in the public forum). RG reported that as the vehicle has a company livery, he has been in touch with the company concerned a few times, explaining that the vehicle is being parked illegally and causing problems. Following the tree incident RG has again written to the CEO of the company concerned, but a month later nothing has been forthcoming.

Anecdotally it is felt that the vehicle is being parked on the road, as due to tenancy rules it cannot be parked on the driveway of the property to which it is connected. The property is let by the District Council and it was felt that if the tenant did ask for permission, it may be granted on the basis that there is no other safe location for the vehicle to be parked in the vicinity of the property. RG proposed the Clerk writes to the District Council to make them aware of the situation and ask whether this could be arranged. RG also proposed the Clerk makes further contact with the company listed on the vehicle asking for their help in ensuring the vehicle is parked in accordance with the law, CS seconded the proposals, all voted in favour and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED.**
 - v) Grove Lane (Grove Farm) extent of SCC responsibility (lack of response) – RG reported that he is still awaiting a response from SCC – RG will continue to chase with MHi.
 - vi) Dangerous Bridge on FP32 (lack of response and proposal to repair) – RG first reported the bridge as requiring some maintenance work in November 2020, proposing that he carry out some simple repairs. SCC turned down the offer as they explained they could not have volunteers carrying out work, as it

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may not be done to standards required. RG wrote again about the bridge in August 2022 pointing out that the bridge it is now dangerous. RG will chase up his reports and see when the work is likely to be done.

- vii) Report back on A1120 (40 mph speed limit) to clarify – Unfortunately it had become clear that some of the signage on the newly installed speed limit zone had not been fully completed. RG has advised MHi and this is being resolved.

ACTPC 22-05-10 Finance

- a) To review the Financial Statement as supplied by the Clerk – The Clerk had previously circulated the Financial Statement. There were no queries. SG proposed acceptance, RH seconded and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED**. The Chair signed the corresponding Bank Statements to confirm the figures.
- b) Virement to Reserves – balances on financial statement to quarter for:
- i) Asset Replacement Fund – As per the approved budget for 2022-2023 SG proposed the movement of £200 from the current account into reserves to be added to the Asset Replacement Fund, RG seconded, all voted in favour and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED**.
- ii) Contingency Fund – As per the approved budget for 2022-2023 SG proposed the movement of £200 from the current account into reserves to be added to the General Contingencies Fund, RG seconded, all voted in favour and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED**.
- c) To consider moving to online banking – The Clerk explained that as part of the enquiry to move to online banking, it had been made clear that all members of the Council needed to confirm their identities (not just those on the mandate). The process was discussed and it was noted that any costs incurred by Councillors to obtain certified copies of their identity documents could be reimbursed. Once this process has been completed the Clerk will be able explore further how to move the Council onto online banking
- 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, RG seconded, all voted in favour and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED**
- e) 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 – 22-05-11 Urgent Matters to be brought to the attention of the Council

- a) CS expressed his thought that the work of the Parish Council needs to be more widely publicised to the village, suggesting that a brief list with bullet points of what has been done is circulated on the village email after each meeting. All Councillors felt this was a good suggestion and CS will look at sending out a summary.
- b) RH notified the Council that the defibrillator was back in the village, following the recall over a software issue. MHa will send out an email to the village letting everyone know the machine is available once again.
- c) Items for next agenda:
- Budget & Precept

Items for the December Agenda – please notify the Clerk of any further items for the agenda as soon as possible and by Monday 5th December 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 9.20 pm. The next meeting is set for **Monday 12th December 2022** at 7.30 pm in the Community Hall.

Sarah Clare
Parish Clerk

Robert Grimsey
Chair

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