



# 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 11<sup>th</sup> September 2023 at the Community Hall

Attendance	Robert Grimsey (Chair) (RG)	Myles Hansen (Vice-Chair) (MHa)
	Chris Sharpe (CS)	Sarah Clare (Clerk)
	Teresa Davis (District Councillor) (TD)	Matthew Hicks (County Councillor) (MHi)

Public present at the meeting: 0

ACTPC 23-07-01 Apologies for Absence

Simon Garrett (SG) had sent his apologies due to family commitments. The Council accepted.

ACTPC 23-07-02 Public Forum

None

ACTPC 23-07-03 Declaration of Interests

None

ACTPC 23-07-04 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 drew attention to the following:

Suffolk has just successfully established its 200<sup>th</sup> No Cold Calling Zone. MHi wasn't sure if this was something that would be required in Ashfield-cum-Thorpe. CS asked what the zone actually achieves. MHi explained that it is a scheme run through Trading Standards that provided signage to help support people in refusing to engage with door-to-door sales. Evidence indicates that it gives vulnerable people assurance and helps give them the confidence to say 'No' if anyone does knock on their door, as they are certain that reputable companies would be respecting the signage and not knocking in the first place. There is also an added advantage that distraction burglaries in areas that are designated No Cold Calling Zones have fallen, as again residents are confident that they have no obligation to engage with someone on their doorstep as they shouldn't have been knocking on the door, thereby accomplices do not have time to access a property by a back door. RG asked if the scheme could be imposed as a blanket ban across the county. MHi said that it really has to be community driven to be effective, as it is dependent upon community engagement and so imposing it from above without consultation would probably not work so well.

A new training centre for the fire service has opened at Wattisham. The top of the range facilities may be useful for other areas and could potentially bring in revenue in the future if hired out to other counties. The fire service in Suffolk is looking to recruit more on call firefighters, so if anyone lives or works within ten minutes of their local fire station they are encouraged to consider this option.

MHi provided an update on the County Council Budget, explaining that since it had been agreed in February earlier this year, there is now unfortunately an in-year deficit of around £30 million. This is due to a huge increase in demand for Adult Social Care and Children's Services, particularly relating to a rise in the number of children with extremely complex needs. Pay settlements have gone up and demands on staff have increased. All County Councils are experiencing similar problems, it seems that COVID has especially led to an increase in children's mental health needs. Nationally there is significant worry about how quickly the pressures are increasing in these areas. Government settlements for County Councils are due to be published in December in preparation for the next financial year. There are already indications that the Government will expect mitigation to take place in the form of with increases in Local Council Tax for next year, but this current £30K deficit is within this financial year. RG queried the claim that there are some children whose needs

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equate to £1 million per year (or £3K per day) – MHi explained that in extremely complex cases support is needed 24 hours a day, often needing more than one carer at any one time, so staff costs alone are a significant part of the costs involved. Also, improvements in medical science leads to new treatments being available. The County Council is looking to move from private sector care to inhouse properties, which ultimately will help to reduce costs, but there is a large capital outlay to build such facilities and it is a long-term project. It is also difficult to predict future needs in this area.

RG raised concerns with MHi about the danger to lorries in Grove Lane, with overrunning of the verge occurring and lorries being dangerously close to falling into the ditch at times. RG asked if MHi could consider using some of his locality budget to provide reflector posts to alert drivers to the dangers. MHi asked RG to email the details and he would then ask Suffolk Highways to look at the situation and determine if reflector posts would be the appropriate response.

RG asked MHi about sourcing new wooden fingerpost signs to help walkers using cross field paths. MHi advised that RG should speak to the Rights of Way Officer at the County Council. RG expressed concern that the County Council officers only appeared to be willing to replace signs at the point where paths leave the public highway and that the signs that needed replacing were out in the middle of fields. MHi suggested that if this was a problem RG could ask to carry out the work under the 'Self Help Scheme' and the signs would be supply only. RG asked if the County Council could supply the old-style wooden finger posts, but MHi thought that they would likely only supply the new plastic signs.

Finally MHi spoke about the proposed improvements at the A1120 and A140 junction. The County Council is supported by the local MP about the changes that are needed and a consultation period will be taking place shortly to get local views on the matter.

ACTPC 23-07-05 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).

TD drew attention to the following:

The issue of enforcement relating to the developments at Stonham Barns had been looked into, TD was unable to discuss details with the Councillors due to legal implications, but wanted to offer reassurance that something is being done. The ongoing issues at Stonham Barns are causing concern with the increased traffic using the A1120/A140 junction TD believes there are some plans being put forward by Suffolk Highways to try and address some of the traffic problems that are occurring.

The Biodiversity Officer at the District Council is going to apply for funds from the Coronation Living Heritage Funds. As a result, they are looking for suitable sites for tree and hedgerow planting.

There has been quite a bit of interest in advice on effective ways to insulate Grade I and Grade II listed buildings and the Heritage Team are hoping to hold information events on this subject in the area soon.

ACTPC 23-07-06 Minutes of previous meetings

The Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 10<sup>th</sup> July 2023 as a true and accurate record, were proposed by MHa, seconded by RG all voted in favour and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED**. The Minutes were signed by the Chair and the Clerk

ACTPC 23-07-07 Matters Arising and Action Points from the July Minutes

1. Reinstatate footpath sign. ONGOING (see notes above)
2. Remind District Councillor of need to send across People & Places prospectus and the grant for installation for public access EV charging points for consideration at a future meeting. DISCHARGED
3. Publish re-adopted Councillor Code of Conduct & Privacy Notice on village website. DISCHARGED
4. Advise SARS of the outcome of their request for funding. DISCHARGED
5. Email County Councillor about the lack of verge cutting in the parish. DISCHARGED
6. To authorise online payments as approved at the July meeting. DISCHARGED


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ACTPC 23-07-08 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: None

ACTPC 23-07-09 Parish Council Activities

- a) To consider co-option to fill vacancies on Council – No members of the public were present. The Clerk confirmed that there are now three vacancies on the Council and these are listed on the village website.
- b) Consideration of how to recruit new Parish Councillors – Concerns about the lack of volunteers coming forward was again discussed. It was agreed that existing Councillors need to be more proactive and consider personal approaches to those they felt would be good additions to the Council. RG will put a piece in the next Parish Magazine asking for volunteers to come forward. CS and MHa will liaise to put together a friendly explanation of what being a Parish Councillor is, which can be circulated on the village email system.
- c) Highways & Footpaths: Report on activity since the last meeting – RG noted that the issues regarding the footpath sign and Grove Lane had already been discussed earlier in the meeting.
- d) Consideration of whether to apply for Pride in Your Place grant funding – TD was asked for examples of what this money could be used for, but after discussion it was felt that there was nothing suitable in the village.
- e) Consideration of whether to adopt a People & Places Plan and any actions to be taken – This is a 'light-touch' approach to forming a Neighbourhood Plan. CS was interested in the prospect of the 20 minute neighbourhood, with the aim that everything you could need should be within a 20 minute walk or cycle ride. CS suggested that the bridleways in the village should be improved to be suitable for a standard bike to use (rather than just mountain bikes), as the surfaces currently become extremely muddy in the winter months and put walkers and cyclists off using them. CS felt that if the surfaces were improved sufficiently then it was feasible to reach Debenham within a 20 minute cycle ride. TD asked CS to send details of the route to her, so that this could be looked at by the Sustainable Travel Officer at the District Council. TD also suggested that some footpaths could be upgraded to accommodate cyclists, as there have already been a few upgraded in Suffolk.
- f) Consideration of application for EV charging point grant – Ashfield Community Council operate the Community Hall, so would need to be involved in any decision about whether to install an EV charging point. CS raised concern about the Community being responsible for maintaining and operating the charger and whether anyone working as a volunteer would be willing to do this. CS suggested that the company installing should offer a maintenance contract as part of the deal. TD agreed to pass on this feedback, but was unsure about the deadline for applying as the scheme is being run by the PlugIn Suffolk group, not the District Council. It was agreed that the Clerk should send information about the EV Charging Point to the Community Council for them to consider.
- g) 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.
- h) To consider and review the Council's Health & Safety Policy – The Clerk had circulated the policy for consideration. RG proposed adoption, MHa seconded all voted in favour and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED**. The Clerk will arrange for the policy to be published on the village website.
- i) 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 CS proposed that the cover is fit for purpose and the renewal be completed, RG seconded, all voted in favour and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED**.

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ACTPC 23-07-10 Finance

- a) To review the Financial Statement as supplied by the Clerk – The Clerk had previously circulated the Financial Statement. There were no queries. RG proposed acceptance, CS 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 – The approved budget for 2023-2024 had a proposed movement of £200 from the current account into reserves to be added to the Asset Replacement Fund, however, as the Defibrillator battery is in need of replacement and a payment of £286.20 is due to be released RG proposed that a figure of £86 is moved from the Reserves to the Current Account for this Asset Replacement to be completed, CS seconded, all voted in favour and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED**
  - ii) Contingency Fund – As per the approved budget for 2023-24 RG proposed the movement of £200 from the current account into reserves to be added to the General Contingencies Fund, CS seconded, all voted in favour and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED**.
- c) To consider and review Internal Financial Control Statement – 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**
- d) To agree payments as detailed on the Payment Schedule  
RG proposed authorisation, MHa seconded and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED**. The payments were arranged by cheque.

ACTPC – 23-07-11 Urgent Matters to be brought to the attention of the Council


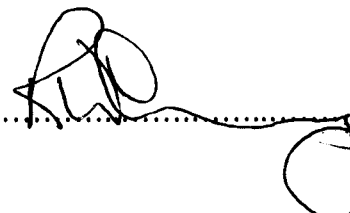
- a) Following a recent incident MHa suggested that a relaunch reminding residents how the village email system Ashfield Talk works would be a good idea. CS agreed to look into this and liaise with MHa to address the situation to avoid a similar occurrence.
- b) RG reported an issue had been raised by resident who was complaining about a long power cut that had affected the village. The resident had asked the Parish Council to write to UK Power Networks asking for an explanation. MHa suggested that the resident concerned considered signing up for UKPN notifications, which gave information about why a power cut was occurring and estimated times for reconnection. It was agreed that the Parish Council was not in a position to chase UKPN for such information, especially as it was freely available in the public domain. RG will liaise with the resident concerned and help them sign up for the notification system if they felt it appropriate.
- 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 Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> December 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 9.15 pm. The next meeting is set for **Monday 11<sup>th</sup> December 2023** at 7.30 pm in the Community Hall.

Sarah Clare  
Parish Clerk

Robert Grimsey  
Chair

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