



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 11th December 2019 at the Community Hall.

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

Public present at the meeting: 1

Public Contributions

A parishioner asked about whether one of the planned Speed Indicator Devices could be positioned at the north end of the village, as he had heard that the current proposed locations were both towards the south of the village. It was pointed out that the Grove Lane end of village experiences lots of problems with speeding traffic and that this is also the area where the school buses collect children. RG explained that Councillor Whayman was heading up this project, but unfortunately was unable to attend the meeting, so although the matter was on the agenda this item would be deferred for further discussion to the next meeting. In the interim, RG explained that he understood that Suffolk Highways have looked at the sites that the Parish Council identified as potential positions - one of which included Grove Lane - but Suffolk Highways have the final say on where the signs would be positioned. There are strict criteria that need to be abided by, with minimum visibility distances and the proximity to junctions being two aspects. MHi also commented that sometimes Suffolk Highways utilised existing road furniture to avoid too many signs being positioned on the verge.

ACTPC 19-04-01 Update from County & District 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:

The County Council had been through a particularly quiet period due to the General Election moratorium period, which meant that all Cabinet and Council meetings are currently on hold, however it is expected that business will return to normal on Monday 16th, when it is hoped that the County Council budget will be published.

In Spring 2020 it is likely that Suffolk residents will find that parking enforcement will become stricter as enforcement transfers from the police to the District & County Council. SG commented that he had heard that warnings will be used at first, but MHi states he has heard nothing about this and people should plan to follow all parking regulations from day one to avoid any risk of fines.

RG asked for any comment on the avian flu outbreak in the area – MHi stated that DEFRA's advice is that the strain of avian flu that had affected the site was very low risk. It is currently unclear exactly how the outbreak happened, but at the moment it all seems to be well contained.

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:

Plans for the new Needham Market Lakes visitor centre were moving ahead at a good pace, this is a fantastic resource for the area and one of the best free visitor attractions in East Anglia.

Although the District Council was also in moratorium all the basic processes, such as planning, licencing etc have continued. Work is still continuing on the Joint Local Plan in response to the various comments received. SG asked about the planned end date for the plan, KG was uncertain, but directed SG to the District Council website for more information. SG also enquired about whether Mid Suffolk has the requisite 5 year land supply.

KG confirmed (as Chair of the planning committee), that there is now a land supply in excess of the 5 years. RG queried what the definition of sustainable communities was in terms of planning, KG explained that it does depend on interpretation, essentially if the benefits of a planning application outweigh the disadvantages then the issue of sustainability is looked at.

Concerns were raised about the ongoing expansions at the Stonham Barns development, KG lives locally so was unable to comment in great detail on the matter, but confirmed that as far as she was aware some work on the site is currently without permission and that enforcement is taking place.

Finally, KG explained that the cut-off date for locality budget claims is now the end of January, although the criteria has changed slightly, she would like to see the money benefitting villages in her area and asked the Parish Council to consider applying.

ACTPC 19-04-02 Apologies for Absence

Myles Hansen (MHa) was unable to attend due to family commitments and had sent his apologies. Paul Whyman (PW) was unable to attend due to injury and had sent his apologies. The Council accepted.

ACTPC 19-04-03 Declaration of Interests

RH declared interest in ACTPC 19-04-07 f) i) as the funding request relates to a group that her spouse volunteers with.

ACTPC 19-04-04 Minutes of previous meetings

Regarding the meeting held on Wednesday 11th September 2019 it was agreed that an amendment be applied under point 4) that The District Councillor had sent her apologies prior to the meeting, but due to Clerk changes the apology and report had not been submitted at the meeting.

Subject to the above amendment the Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 11th September 2019 as a true and accurate record, were proposed by RH, seconded by RG, all voted in favour and **WERE SO RESOLVED**. The Minutes were signed by the Vice-Chair and the Clerk

ACTPC 19-04-05 Matters Arising and Action Points

- 5.1 Removal of former Councillor as signatory from the Council's Bank Accounts. DISCHARGED
- 5.2 To distribute payments as approved at September 2019 meeting. DISCHARGED
- 5.3 To interview suitable candidates for Parish Clerk vacancy. DISCHARGED
- 5.4 Prepare business case for extending the speed limit on The Street for consideration at the December meeting prior to being submitted to Suffolk Highways. To be discussed later in meeting.
- 5.5 Report on communications with Suffolk County Council's Rights of Way Officer regarding formal notifications to land owners where footpath maintenance is required. To be discussed later in meeting.
- 5.6 Submission of 2018/2019 VAT return. ONGOING
- 5.7 SALC to be notified of new clerk's details when appointed. DISCHARGED
- 5.8 Bank to be advised of new clerk's postal address when appointed. ONGOING The Clerk explained that there had been issues surrounding the signature of SG on the new mandate form. SG has still to complete and return some forms to the bank to finalise the change of address and signing arrangements.

ACTPC 19-04-06 Parish Council Activities

- a) To consider co-option to fill vacancies on Council – RG 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 and will ask MHa to circulate information about the vacancy on the Ashfield Village Group Email when appropriate in the New Year. SG agreed to ask at the Community Council whether anyone would consider standing for co-option to the Parish Council. RG agreed to send the Clerk a copy of the village newsletter, so that an article can be written to ask for volunteers to come forward.

b) Highways

i) White lining & “cats-eyes” on A1120 – RG had circulated an email to the Councillors and MHi prior to the meeting on this matter. MHi commented that it was common practice that after resurfacing there is some time between the tar and chippings being applied and the white lining and road studs being put into place, this was an operational matter and the work is carried out by different teams. There had been no unusual delay in the work on this stretch of road, unfortunately though budget restrictions are leading to longer time periods between the phases of work.

ii) Flooding at north of village 27/28 November 2019 – RG reported that he had raised several concerns at county level about the amount of flooding that had been experienced in the parish, with suggestions that reflector posts at the edge of the road could be used to help people navigate lanes when water levels are high. RG felt that the real problem lay in the poorly maintained drains and ditches, having actively worked himself to clear a blocked drain to help clear a road. RG pointed out that historically ‘flood’ signs have been provided and put out by local residents, but this is not now allowed.

MHi responded that the days in question had resulted in an unprecedented amount of flooding across the county and that unfortunately due to a fatality on the county’s road network new strict regulations had come into force and it was illegal for anyone to carry out unauthorised work on the road network, even if it was ‘emergency work’ as described by RG. MHi encouraged the Parish Council to consider the Self-Help scheme, RG confirmed that he had attended a meeting about this, but the Parish Council currently had some reservations about the scheme and concerns about costs likely to be incurred, especially relating to insurance. RG agreed to step back from carrying out maintenance tasks on the roads in the parish.

MHi continued that unfortunately, again due to budget restrictions, problems on the network that were reported to the Highways team, often took longer than ideal to have the work carried out, but all matters do eventually get dealt with. He always looked into queries and complaints raised by parishioners, but realistic time scales need to be applied.

iii) Damage (over-running) of verges at south end of The Street – RG reported that the matter had been raised to him by a parishioner, having inspected the area he did not believe it was any worse than can be seen widely elsewhere in Suffolk, although he will continue to monitor for further deterioration. SG queried exactly what ‘over-running’ meant, RG explained that lorries had been driving on the verges, with the concern that this may lead to drains being collapsed.

iv) Drainage on Low Road towards Earl Soham – RG reported that again, due to heavy rain, this time at the beginning of October, flooding had occurred on Low Road. RG attempted some ‘self-help’ to clear the road, but was left with three large areas of standing water, all of which were reported using the Suffolk Highways online reporting tool. Each was registered for a few days, but subsequently notifications were received that the issues ‘do not warrant remedial action’ and they were removed from the map. RG felt that this was an inadequate response, as the flooding was due to happen again if the drainage was not actually addressed. RG would like to arrange a meeting with MHi and the new highways portfolio holder to help address the lack of local knowledge that the Highways team are experiencing and to find a way in which spontaneous activities can be carried out by volunteers to keep the road network open in such situations.

v) Consideration of an extension to the 30mph speed limit on The Street – As PW was unable to attend it was agreed to defer this matter to the next Parish Council meeting.

vi) Update on installation of SID signs – PW had given an email update to the Clerk on the signs that due to lack of progress regarding the fitting of the signs, he had chased Suffolk Highways to be advised that the person who had been dealing with the application had left and there had been a misunderstanding during the handover to the new person. PW has received assurances that the matter will now be progressed expediently, with fitting of the new signs as soon as possible – although probably now that will be in the New Year.

c) Update on Footpath Maintenance – RG reported that at long last the bridge over the River Deben has been replaced, re-opening a wider network of paths to local walkers. To the best of his knowledge all footpaths in the parish are accessible at the moment, although with the very wet weather they are likely to be quite muddy. RG is monitoring the situation at Thorpe Hall and should any infringements be noted the Mid Suffolk Rights of Way Officer will be asked to intervene.

- d) Final report on Defibrillator Project – RH reported that the final training session for CPR and how to use the defibrillator had taken place on 29th October. Some of the attendees were new, whilst some were repeat attendees, but overall 15 people had come along. There had been four Debenham First Responders doing the training, which meant lots of personal attention to learners had been possible. The latest training session was one of three that had been held in the last 13 months, so nothing further was planned at present. Thanks were given to RH for her work on this project.

RG raised the issue that some parishioners have commented that the defibrillator cabinet doesn't have a light at night. RH said that these were the same as those installed in Dennington, but will check the manual to see if there should be a light. In the meantime, the sign does glow in the dark and when the cabinet is opened a light comes on. Hopefully though the security light at the Community Hall would provide enough illumination to allow someone to enter an access code.

- e) Consideration of GDPR Internal Audit Recommendation – No information of personal nature is held and council is compliant.
- f) National Community Energy Campaign – request for support – The Clerk advised the Council that NALC had included an item on this matter in their latest newsletter (6th December). Although Power for People are contacting Town, Parish and Community Councils throughout the country to ask for support, the bill has apparently fallen due to the calling of the General Election. NALC will be holding a policy committee meeting on 14th January 2020 and will provide further information on this matter after that date; therefore this will be deferred to the March meeting.
- g) To Consider Parish Council involvement in the VE Day 75 Commemorations – After discussion it was decided not to take part.

ACTPC 19-04-07 Finance

- a) To review the Financial Statement for the quarter - The Clerk had previously circulated the Financial Statement for December, along with a bank reconciliation to 23 November 2019. There were no queries.
- b) To finalise and adopt the 2020/2021 Budget – The Clerk had circulated a second version draft budget for the Council to consider.

During discussion it was agreed to increase the precept by 1.9%, the maximum allowed without incurring a parish referendum, this would allow a reserve to be created for the Council.

Additionally, it was agreed to approach the retired accountant that carries out the internal audit for Worlingworth, thereby saving funds compared to the current internal audit regime.

RG proposed the adoption of the budget as agreed in the third version during the above discussion. RH seconded and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED**. The Clerk will arrange for the approved Budget to be published on the website.

- c) To set precept for forthcoming year – Following adoption of the budget the Precept was set for 2020-2021 with an increase of 1.5%. SG proposed, RH seconded and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED**. The Clerk will complete and return the form to the District Council together with the supporting budget.
- d) To consider request from Clerk to purchase computer mouse for use with Council laptop – The Clerk requested authorisation to purchase a mouse similar to the one being used with the laptop at present, as this mouse belongs to Worlingworth Parish Council and the Clerk has been advised that constantly moving the USB nano receiver is not good practice. A mouse of the same specification can be purchased for £9.99 online. RG proposed the Clerk be authorised to make the purchase, SG seconded and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED**. The Clerk will arrange purchase and claim back the expense at the next meeting.
- e) To consider new policy on funding or donation requests (see example from Worlingworth) – MHa had put forward this matter and as he was unable to attend it was agreed to defer this matter to the next Parish Council meeting
- f) To consider applications for funding as received
- i) *Contribution towards First Responder Group for first aid training*
Unable to vote as not quorate – defer to March meeting.

ii) *Suffolk Accident Rescue request for donation*

After discussion it was agreed not to support on this occasion.

g) To agree payments as detailed on the Payment Schedule

SG proposed authorisation, RH seconded and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED**. The Clerk will issue cheques accordingly.

ACTPC 19-04-08 Planning

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

i) DC/19/04454 – Householder Planning Application – erection of workshop and cart-lodge following demolition of shed at Grove Farmhouse, Grove Lane – No Comment given from Parish Council, currently awaiting decision from District Council

ii) **Received since publication of Agenda**

DC/19/05653 – Householder Planning Application – erection of side and rear extensions at Blacksmiths Cottage, The Street. Original deadline for comment 26th December 2019. RH reported that she had made contact with the planning officer as there had been no site notices on display and no letters had been received by neighbours. As a result the consultation period would be extended and comments can be submitted until 17th January 2020. RH suggested that a meeting be convened in January prior to that date, once Councillors had been given sufficient time to consider the matter and to allow for neighbourly consultation and attendance at a Parish Council meeting where the matter will be discussed.

b) Updates and Outcomes on previous planning applications:

i) DC/19/04504 – Discharge of conditions application for DC/19/02905 at Grove Farmhouse, Grove Lane – Conditions Satisfied.

ii) DC/19/03670 – Listed Building Consent for removal of partition wall to ground floor to create open plan kitchen/dining room; reinstatement of doorway between kitchen and hall; reinstatement of wall between utility and hall. Grove Farmhouse, Grove Lane – Granted.

ACTPC 19-04-09 Feedback from External Meetings & Additional Reports

None

ACTPC 19-04-10 Matters to be brought to the attention of the Council

None

ACTPC 19-04-11 Items for the March Agenda (to be notified by 2nd March 2020)

It was decided to hold an Extraordinary meeting of the Council in January to deal with the items that had been deferred and to ensure that the planning consultation can take place in time to submit any required comments.

Therefore, the following items are for the January agenda

- Consideration of an extension to the 30mph speed limit on The Street
- Update on installation of SID signs
- Donation to Debenham First Responders
- To consider new policy on funding or donation requests
- Planning - DC/19/05653 – Householder Planning Application – erection of side and rear extensions at Blacksmiths Cottage, The Street.

There being no further business requiring the attention of the Parish Council, the meeting was closed at 9.27pm. The next meeting is set for **Tuesday 7th January 2020** at 7.30 pm at the Community Hall.

Sarah Clare
Parish Clerk

Robert Grimsey
Vice-Chair