



## 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 9<sup>th</sup> September 2020 remotely via Zoom.

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

Public present at the meeting: 0

### ACTPC 20-05-01 Apologies for Absence

Paul Whayman (Parish Councillor) (PW) was unable to attend due to personal commitments and had sent his apologies. The Council accepted.

### ACTPC 20-05-02 Public Forum

None

### ACTPC 20-05-03 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:

The majority of children have returned to school following the easing of lockdown, the County Council are responsible for providing 12% of the school population with transport and this has proven tricky with the different types of transport used. Guidance was only issued by the Government on 11<sup>th</sup> August, so the team at the County Council have had to work hard to ensure everything was in place ready for the start of term. There has been some difficulty and confusion, but the bus contractors have been very good in negotiations, including putting double-deckers on some routes to enable the children to be kept separate from the public (the children are transport on the top deck). There is some concern that as furlough ends and more adults return to work social distancing may become a problem on some routes that are not school specific. As a result, the usual sale of spare seats to children that don't automatically qualify for free transport has been suspended, but this is not too much of a problem as many parents are choosing to drive their children to school in private cars – although this is leading to congestion around some schools.

During lockdown Highways completed a four-year pledge of carrying out 1,000 miles of resurfacing work. It is hoped that this will make a huge difference to the drivers of the county. The next area that Suffolk County Council will be working on will be flood defence work – it is clear that there will be increasing wet weather in years to come.

SG raised a query about which roads were selected for resurfacing, as he has experienced a lot of heavily damaged and pot-holed C class roads when out cycling. MHi explained that all roads in the County are on a rota for resurfacing, although for some this may only mean a top-dressing once every 25 years or so. The special 1,000 mile project was based on surveys for roads that needed work done before their "usual" maintenance schedule. It was suggested that if there are very bad potholes that are a danger to cyclists these are reported on the County's Online Reporting tool, they would then be prioritised and dealt with.

The project to improve the A140 around Eye has now started and it is expected to be completed early in 2021. A new website has been launched to keep everyone up to date on the work, including when road closures etc may be in place, visit [www.eyea140scheme.co.uk](http://www.eyea140scheme.co.uk) for more information.

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

#### ACTPC 20-05-04 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:

Debenham have come 2<sup>nd</sup> in a National Award for their Neighbourhood Plan, the press release has just been released and has generated lots of interest. RG asked whether the development opposite the high school is still a possibility. KG stated that the original application has now expired, but there is nothing to prevent a new application coming forward.

Suffolk's Resilience Partners have been urging people to queue responsibly outside pubs as lockdown eases – but this may change due to the new restrictions that had just been announced. Unfortunately, a couple of pubs in the district have closed down as a result of the national lockdown.

MSDC has received £800,000 of Government funding to install solar car ports in a bid to improve the infrastructure needed to support greater adoption of electric vehicles.

High streets across the district could benefit from local spending and all residents are encouraged to support their local businesses as much as possible to help with recovery from lockdown.

New council homes at Eye have been given the go-ahead, with the development including an upgrade and refurbishment of the existing care home.

Needham Lake is still open to visitors, which provides an invaluable outdoor space and the Regal Theatre in Stowmarket is undergoing redevelopment ready for re-opening when restrictions are lifted. District Councillors were lucky enough to get a sneak peek at the new look recently and it's very exciting.

The day after this meeting KG was due to be attending a major meeting to discuss the new White Papers that have been published in relation to planning. As a result, no guidance could be offered to the Parish Council to assist with the NALC consultation (later on the agenda). KG will forward the District Council's thoughts on the issue to the Clerk when they are available.

KG touched upon an issue with a parishioner who had raised concerns with RG about the conduct of a neighbour. KG had sent an email sent to the housing enforcement team on 15<sup>th</sup> August, but had not heard back yet, KG will chase and report back to the Parish Council.

#### ACTPC 20-05-05 Declaration of Interests

None

#### ACTPC 20-05-06 Minutes of previous meetings

The Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> June 2020 as a true and accurate record, were proposed by MHa, seconded by RG, 3 in favour and 1 abstained and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED**. The Minutes were signed by the Vice-Chair and the Clerk

#### Matters Arising and Action Points from Previous Minutes

- i) Produce email regarding the SID installation and rota for distribution on Ashfield Group email. DISCHARGED
- ii) Submit Exemption Certificate to External Auditors and publish on website. DISCHARGED
- iii) Publish Full AGAR forms on website. DISCHARGED
- iv) To distribute payments as approved at the June meeting. DISCHARGED
- v) To set up Direct Debit to enable automatic payment of Data Protection Fee. DISCHARGED
- vi) Transfer £200 from Community Account to Reserves as per budget. DISCHARGED
- vii) Remove Councillor's personal email addresses from village website. DISCHARGED

#### ACTPC 20-05-07 Planning

- a) To consider planning applications that had been submitted since the last meeting:
  - i) None Received.
  - ii) Any other applications submitted since Agenda published - None

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

- b) Updates and outcomes on previous planning applications:
  - i) None to report

ACTPC 20-05-08 Parish Council Activities

- a) To consider co-option to fill vacancies on Council – MHa 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.
- b) To report back to the Council on the SID machine rota – Although PW was not present a number of emails had been circulated about the general discontent over the SID machine operations in the village.

MHa commented that over the years that he had been on the Parish Council whatever is done to try and reduce the issue of speeding, nothing seems to make much of a difference. There has been a steady increase in the amount of traffic coming through the village, the majority of drivers are respectful of the speed limits and the signs can act as a reminder to help people be aware of their speed, but unfortunately there are always going to be one or two drivers that don't think the speed limits apply to them.

At the moment there is a solution of sorts in place, it may not be exactly what all parishioners were expecting, but it has not cost the Parish Council anything (other than time and effort). Ultimately it is a case of 'getting what you pay for' and although there have been some negative comments it must be recognised that the current signs are better than no signs at all.

RG commented that at Forward Green the same type of signs are in operation, but they are located at the start of the speed restriction, not in the middle of the village. It was noted, however, that the locating of the signs had been a) subject to Suffolk Highways approval b) subject to no objection from residents living adjacent to proposed locations. It was noted that two of the Suffolk Highways approved locations had not proven feasible due to objections from residents.

RH suggested that some sort of survey needed to be carried out amongst parishioners to find out what the true feeling in the village was. The options could be laid out, but it needed to be made clear that anything other than the current solution would cost money and would also need volunteers to come forward to help manage and operate the cameras.

MHa agreed to draft a note explaining the situation with the speed signs, which would be sent out by email to the majority of residents and also paper copies would be delivered to all houses not on the Ashfield Group email list.

- c) Update on any progress regarding 40 mph speed restriction extension – MHi reported that he had received a preliminary reply Suffolk Highways regarding the request to extend the speed limit. He asked that the Councillors did not get too down hearted at the response, saying that in his experience the first inclination of officers is to state that there is no need for change, with the claim that policies cannot be met. It is now up to the Parish Council to challenge these findings with their local knowledge of the problems. The initial review has stated 'no' to a number of issues that Councillors know not to be the case – but the information will need to be supplied in the format requested.

MHi will forward the preliminary report to the Clerk who will forward to the Councillors for comment. The replies will be collated into one response to be returned to MHi for submission. MHi will pay for the speed survey report that is requested by Suffolk Highways.

RG stated that another issue alongside speeding vehicles that makes the roads dangerous is the overgrowing hedges which force vehicles into the middle of the road. MHi advised that overgrown hedges can be reported on the Online Reporting Tool which would then provide a reference number that he can chase up if necessary. RG will do this for the hedges that are causing concern on the A1120.

- d) Debrief of support offered throughout village during Lockdown – It was agreed to defer this item to the December agenda as PW had been the primary lead in organising the support network.
- e) Consideration of checklist for holding Parish Council meetings in person – The Clerk had circulated information from NALC and SALC about considerations and risk assessments that need to be carried out before any meetings could be taken in person again. Taking into account new Government lockdown restrictions that had been announced during the day prior to the meeting and the fact that the Community

Hall is not yet out of lockdown, it was agreed that for the foreseeable future Council meetings would continue online.

- f) Arrangements for formal farewell to former Councillor – It was agreed to defer this item to the December agenda for discussion.
- g) Consideration of undertaking an accessibility audit and scan of the village website – The Clerk had been contacted by One Suffolk who host the village website. In response to new accessibility regulations that come into force in September a new service is being offered to conduct an audit of the website and identify what needs to be done to ensure the website is compliant. The basic structure of the website is compliant, but how information is uploaded and edited may need to be changed.

The Clerk has been directed to a number of self-help online tutorials which One Suffolk has put together to assist users with identifying items that needing correction, but a full audit to identify all problems will cost £144 + VAT

After discussion SG offered to carry out an internal audit of the website himself to see what problems may be apparent, using the online tutorials that One Suffolk have produced. The Clerk will forward the tutorial link to SG.

SG went on to propose that if, after looking into it the matter it proved too complex for him to address then the Parish Council should agree to spend funds on the One Suffolk audit and scan, RG seconded the matter, three voted in favour, one abstained and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED**

- h) Consideration of Expressions of Interest for Quiet Lanes in the Parish - After discussion it was decided to ask for Grove Lane to be nominated for consideration The Clerk will make contact with the group organising the nominations and see what is needed to progress the matter further.
- i) Consideration of Responses to NALC consultations: - The following documents had been circulated to all Councillors for consideration:
  - i. PC10-20: Changes to the Current Planning System
  - ii. PC11-20: White Paper Planning for the Future
  - iii. PC12-20: Transparency & Competition: Data & Land Control

SG expressed concerns that the proposals seem to remove many current restrictions in the planning process and it was unclear who would actually have any say in the decision-making process. KG explained that the current housing expectation on the District is likely to be increased significantly. RG asked about whether the current level of housing development was actually sustainable, bearing in mind the lack of other economic development to provide jobs and whether agricultural land should be used for building as it could undermine food security. KG explained that unfortunately there are a number of different opinions about what sustainability actually means and that regrettably in her experience food security is very often dismissed at appeal as the definition of 'top quality' agricultural land is also open to interpretation.

After discussion it was agreed to wait until KG could report back on the District Council's response to the consultation before agreeing upon a final response from the Parish Council.

#### ACTPC 20-05-09 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 consider applications for funding as received – None have been submitted
- c) To accept NJC recommended pay settlement – MHa proposed acceptance, RH seconded all voted in favour and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED**. The Clerk will advise SALC payroll.
- d) 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 20-05-10 Feedback from External Meeting & Additional Officers' Reports

None

ACTPC – 20-05-10 Urgent Matters to be brought to the attention of the Council

- a) RG explained that an irate parishioner had stopped him in the village asking that the Parish Council look at dealing with noise and nuisance from a neighbour. This has been referred to the District Council as it is outside of Parish Council remit (see minute ACTPC – 20-05-04)
- b) Items for next agenda:
- Insurance cover renewal
  - Consideration of participation in the Town & Parish Council Hedge Noticing Scheme

There being no further business requiring the attention of the Parish Council, the meeting was closed at 8.51pm. The next meeting is set for **Wednesday 9th December 2020** at 7.30 pm remotely via Zoom.

Sarah Clare  
Parish Clerk

Myles Hansen  
Chair

DRAFT