



**Minutes of the Ashfield-cum-Thorpe
Annual Parish Meeting
held on
Monday 12th May 2025
In the Community Hall**

10 in attendance, including 3 Parish Councillors and the County Councillor and District Councillor

Apologies – Councillor Myles Hansen

1. Welcome by Chair of Ashfield-cum-Thorpe Parish Council

Chairman Robert Grimsey opened the meeting, thanking everyone for coming

2. Agreement of Minutes of the Previous Annual Parish Meeting on 20th May 2024

The Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting 2024 as a true and accurate record, were proposed by Councillor Chris Sharpe, seconded by Councillor Simon Garrett, all voted in favour and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED**. The Minutes were signed by the Chair and the Clerk

3. Matters Arising from the Previous Annual Parish Meeting on 20th May 2024

None

4. Report by the Chair of Ashfield-cum-Thorpe Parish Council – Report on village website – presented by Chairman Robert Grimsey.

5. Report from Mid Suffolk District Councillor Teresa Davis

The full Annual Report from the District Councillor is available on the Ashfield-cum-Thorpe village website.

A question was asked about how the Local Government Reorganisation may affect Parish Councils. MHi explained that at present there are no plans to change Parish Councils, but this may possibly change after the process of implementing Unitary Authorities has taken place across the country. At present Parish Councillors are volunteers, with no obligation to train for the positions that they hold, although these positions are official roles.

SG commented that with small budgets and very few realistic powers open to Parish Councils, it can be difficult to get people to come forward, there is often frustration at the lack of real power Parish Councils hold. TD stated that this was not the case, there are a number of powers that Parish Councils could take on, even if at present higher up authorities are currently carrying out the duty. MHi agreed that in some areas Parishes have been given the opportunity to take on more duties as a result of devolution, but in many cases smaller Councils are unwilling to take on these roles for a number of reasons, such as time commitments and the subsequent need to increase a precept in order to have sufficient funding. In conclusion as it stands the Local Government Reorganisation will have no real effect on the day to day operation of Parish Councils, but this may change.

RG asked if there was any progress stopping and/or even reversing the development at Stonham Barns that is in breach of planning permissions. TD stated that the enforcement is taking place at the moment, but there is a need to manage expectation, as the investigation is ongoing and has not yet met the criteria to be taken to court.

Signed (Clerk) Signed (Chair)

Report from Suffolk County Councillor Matthew Hicks

The full Annual Report from the County Councillor is available on the Ashfield-cum-Thorpe village website, but at a local village level in the past year attention was drawn to the following:

MHi wanted to stress that despite the increasing costs of adult and child care, which takes up 77p in every £1 of Council Tax, the County Council is committed to not cutting any frontline services and through a process of efficiency savings the remaining 23p in the £1 is covering all other services without cuts. MHi reiterated the County Council's position that one Council for the whole of the County was the best solution financially, as assessed by an independent body. The process will take a couple of years to complete, but there are no plans to reduce services.

In light of the climate emergency declared by the County Council a question was asked about why the huge buildings at the Gateway 14 development were not covered in solar panels. MHi explained that this was sought, but according to the National Grid there was no way to connect panels to the network at that location.

RG asked about the efficiency of Suffolk Highways, citing a case of when there were four potholes in the one area only two were filled when operatives attended. MHi explained how potholes are risk assessed and prioritised, with the new contractor covering ground much more quickly, the wait from reporting to filling has been reduced. It is expected that if the team have sufficient materials then they would fill unreported potholes if noticed close to a reported one when attending site, but he could not comment on individual situations.

A question was asked about how bad things have to get for a road through to be resurfaced rather than just patched. MHi explained that there is an ongoing resurfacing programme for all roads across Suffolk, but if there is a particularly bad area then communities need to report concerns using the Suffolk Highways Online Reporting Tool. Too often people complain, but do not report the matter and as a result nothing gets done until a routine inspection takes place.

Finally MHi said he was pleased to have been able to give locality funding for the Community Hall sound baffling during last year.

6. **Report by a Representative of Ashfield Footpaths Group** – Report on village website - presented by Councillor Robert Grimsey
7. **Report by the Chair of Ashfield Community Council** – Report on village website, along with Treasurer's Report & Accounts – presented by Geoff Henney.
8. **Report by the Group Organiser of Ashfield Ladies Group** – Report on village website – presented by Councillor Robert Grimsey.
9. **Report by a Trustee of Ashfield Welfare Trust** – Report on village website – presented by Ann Burton.

By resolution of the Ashfield-cum-Thorpe Annual Parish Meeting the resignation Sarah Harrison from the positions of Chair was accepted. Ruth Hart was proposed to take up the position of Chair to the Ashfield Welfare Trust by Geoff Henney, seconded by Richard Ellis all voted in favour and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED.**

CS enquired how do residents know about the Ashfield Welfare Trust, it was confirmed that information about the Trust is included in the Welcome Pack which is distributed to new residents.

10. **Report by Ashfield's Village Recorder** –A brief summary of the report was provided by the Village Recorder, Anita Sharpe.

A question was raised about why the report is removed from the website after a short period, the Village Recorder confirmed that this was for privacy reasons.

11. Open forum for questions and discussion

A question was asked about whether there were any planning applications for the Grove Farm area? The Parish Council have not been notified of any applications, which would come via the District Council as and when received.

Meeting closed 8.55 pm

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