

Parish Council Chair's Annual Report 2025

The Parish Council meets regularly throughout the year, with scheduled meetings in March, May, July, September and December. Along with occasionally an extra meeting to deal with planning applications that fall between the scheduled dates, which happened once this year.

We are looking to co-opt more Councillors and are currently running with three vacancies. If more people can come forward it would mean the workload could be spread and more could be done for the community, although, unfortunately lack of volunteers to serve as Councillors is a trend across the county.

A few planning applications had come through during the year, although fortunately nothing had been very contentious.

The Parish Council continues to work with the County Council and Suffolk Highways to address issues on the network that affect local people. Although at times there have been frustrations about the apparent lack of joined up thinking to address minor issues such as potholes when other works, including road closures, have been taking place. Generally speaking though the roads in the parish are OK, compared to many villages in the county.

During the last summer dialogue was opened about potentially upgrading the bridleway from Ashfield cum Thorpe to Debenham. Surveys went out from the Council, with the general consensus being that it needed to retain the current surface (nobody wanted it tarmacked as a cycle path), but there are sections that could be improved. As a result the Parish Council is trying to get a group together to address these minor issues, but rest assured no major engineering projects will be taking place.

Part of the work of the Parish Council is to liaise with and represent the views of the local community, also providing an opportunity for District and County level input at each meeting, which helps strengthen bonds.

The Be Well Bus visited the village earlier in the year and there are hopes that they can visit again. We would like to have them attend during the village barbecue, but are unsure about whether they operate weekend visits.

The TaxiBus service was launched in Stowmarket and one of our Councillors, Chris Sharpe attended to find out more and see how it can be connected to the village in the future.

Finally, County Councillor Matthew Hicks has agreed to fund a new roadside village name sign at the north end of the village from his locality budget, to replace the current damaged sign. It is expected that this will be installed around July.

Thank you
Robert Grimsey, Chairman
Ashfield-cum-Thorpe, Parish Council.