



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 March 2026 at the Community Hall

Attendance Myles Hansen (MHa) Simon Garrett (SG) Chris Sharpe (CS)
Lindsay Pearson (LP) Tom Luxmoore (TL) Monica Brown (MB)
Sarah Clare (Clerk)
Matthew Hicks (County Councillor) (MHi)
Dawn Wnukowski (DW) Suffolk Joint Emergency Planning Unit

Public present at the meeting: 3

ACTPC 26-01-01 Apologies for Absence & Appointment of Chair

Robert Grimsey (Chair) (RG) had sent his apologies due to personal commitments. The Council accepted.

In light of the absence of the Chair MHa was nominated to act as Chair for the meeting by CS, seconded by SG and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED.**

Teresa Davis (District Councillor) (TD) had also sent apologies.

ACTPC 26-01-02 Public Forum

The parishioners present were attending due to item ACTPC 26-01-10 a) i), so the Chair moved this item forward for MHi to explain the options available. MHi had requested SCC Highways to review the area in light of the incident involving a school bus in the village last summer. Suggestions put forward were:

- The 30mph repeater signs be refreshed and to have a yellow square added to the surround to make them more visible to traffic.
- The installation of pedestrians in carriageway signage or even road markings. The area is unfortunately too narrow for the installation of a pavement.

MHi explained that he could get SCC to cost up these options, but in light of the May elections he would not be able to commit any of his Highways Budget for the works at this point. The budgets will be refreshed on 8th May, following the elections and the Parish Council could then apply to the Councillor in post for funding. Councillors agreed that it would be good to get the works done as soon as possible, so asked MHi to go ahead with getting the cost calculations completed.

LP commented that he understood that some of the problem last summer was caused due to vehicles being parked too close to a road junction and asked whether any enforcement could take place to avoid a similar situation. MHi said that parking enforcement is a District Council responsibility and should a vehicle be parked in a dangerous location on a persistent basis then it should be reported. LP suggested that photographic evidence of the infringement would help support any enforcement process.

ACTPC 26-01-03 Declaration of Interests

None

ACTPC 26-01-04 Presentation on Community Emergency Planning

DW from the Suffolk Joint Emergency Planning Unit explained that all Parishes are being encouraged to have an Emergency Plan in place. Plans are individually tailored to each village, identifying key contacts and local volunteers who can offer help with specific services. A guidance document and template will be shared with the Council, which can be worked through. Communities can decide how detailed or not the plan needs to be, either just doing the first four or five sections or continuing through the whole template.

Signed R. Grimsey (Clerk) Signed S. Clare (Chair)

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The aim of an Emergency Plan is not to prevent a situation, but to look at how to mitigate the consequences. Communication is always the biggest hurdle, especially during events which may affect the viability of mobile phones or the internet, so a place where public notices can be posted if required needs to be identified. A template letter is included with the guidance document, which can be sent out to the community to ask for volunteers who can come forward who may have the skills needed.

Leaflets from the Joint Emergency Planning Unit can be provided to share with communities to help people be prepared for the worst. Also, it was recommended that residents complete a Suffolk Prepared Household Emergency Plan with their own household which can be accessed via the following link:

<https://suffolkprepared.co.uk/get-prepared/prepare-yourself/making-a-household-plan/>

Finally, as part of the process the Joint Emergency Planning Unit can assess the Village Hall or any other public spaces for use as potential official Rest Centres.

CS enquired whether there anyone could come from the Emergency Planning Unit to help with setting up a plan. DW explained that this was not possible, as the best people to formulate a plan are the residents themselves, but there are some plans that have already been drawn up by other villages that could be shared, which may be of assistance.

Villages can either can use the provided template, or they can produce a plan in their own format. Once completed villages are encouraged to publish the plan, but would need to bear in mind data protection regulations, so depending on what the plan contains there may need to be some redactions.

Once a plan is complete the Joint Emergency Planning Unit can help test it by operating a table top exercise, to see how the responses would work.

Actions were agreed that the Clerk would share the link to residents about the importance of having a household plan in place in case of an emergency. Volunteers would also be invited to come forward to form a working party to create a village wide plan and DW would share templates and existing plans.

ACTPC 26-01-05 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: <https://ashfieldcumthorpe-pc.gov.uk>

MHi brought attention to the following:

The Norwich to Tilbury pylon scheme had an Open Floor Hearing in February, when interested parties were invited to present their views in person. Unfortunately, it seems that very little was considered of resident's views. Suffolk County Council are continuing to push to have the deadline moved back to 2035, which evidence indicates could then make an offshore solution more viable, but National Grid are refusing to look at alternative proposals. There is also continuing uncertainty about the working hours for the project, or the environmental impact.

A trial scheme will be taking place in Bury St Edmunds to remove vehicles that are blocking road resurfacing work. This is in response to a number of instances where crews have been unable to carry out works, which has cost the Council significant money, as each abortive visit where works are unable to take place costs in the region of £15K. The vehicle removal scheme will only take place for planned works, that have been clearly notified in advance, not reactive call outs. The money charged to residents for retrieving their cars will be kept to a minimum, just covering the costs, it is not intended to be a money making scheme.

There have been some staffing changes, with the Chief Executive stepping down at the end of March. Due to the Local Government Reorganisation it was decided to appoint two joint Chief Executives from existing Directors within the Council to cover the interim period of change. This will lead to a saving of £92K a year, along with saving time on recruitment and making use of the existing knowledge of Suffolk within the organisation.

SG asked a general question about the proposed changes in planning consultation. MHi explained that this was intended to streamline planning decisions, but there are concerns that the drop in the amount of consultation required from developers may lead to less mitigation for local communities. One noticeable recent example is that during the consultation process for Sizewell C many of the agreements to reduce the impact on the local communities only came about because of the long consultation period.

Signed R. Grimsey (Clerk) Signed S. Clare (Chair)

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ACTPC 26-01-06 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: <https://ashfieldcumthorpe-pc.gov.uk>

ACTPC 26-01-07 Minutes of previous meetings

The Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 10th December 2025 as a true and accurate record, were proposed by CS, seconded by LP all voted in favour and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED**. The Minutes were signed by the Chair and the Clerk

ACTPC 26-01-08 Matters Arising and Action Points from the December Minutes

1. Contact Suffolk Highways to arrange a site visit about reflective posts to mark dangerous ditches at the edge of the road. DISCHARGED – RG had met on site with MHi and an SCC highways officer and whilst both could see the merits of this proposal SCC do not at present fund reflector posts so couldn't help. RG has requested a price to supply the parish with 20no posts and once the cost is known will liaise with the parishes of Monk Soham and Earl Soham to see if they would share the cost.
2. Liaise with landowner to arrange for the cross-field pathway between Ashfield-cum-Thorpe and Debenham to be cleared and reinstate the footpath sign. DISCHARGED – RG had attempted to contact the landowner about the obstructed cross field path FP19 (which is actually in Debenham parish). Unfortunately, response had not been forthcoming so RG has reported it and the broken sign on the same route via the Online Reporting Tool.
3. Contact contractor/landowner to ask for assistance in mitigating the problems caused by the unpleasant smell. ONGOING – TL said he understood that there are currently reviews being undertaken on the use of human sewage as a fertiliser. CS commented that it is approaching a year since the start of the problem, so there is a need to act before it is likely to reoccur.
4. Contact Community Action Suffolk to request that the answers to queries raised about the need for Antivirus Software are received. DISCHARGED
5. Once the two websites are set up, tailor them to the Community and Parish Council needs as appropriate. DISCHARGED
6. Submit responses to Planning Department at District Council as agreed. DISCHARGED
7. Advise Debenham resident that the Parish Council do not support the nomination of Thorpe lane as a Quiet Lane. DISCHARGED
8. Publish meeting dates for year 2026-2027 and book hall with Community Council. DISCHARGED
9. Purchase and fit replacement screen for noticeboard (authorised up to £100 spend). ONGOING
10. Publish budget as approved at meeting on the village website. DISCHARGED
11. Submit precept request for 2026-2027. DISCHARGED
12. To arrange virements as agreed at the December 2025 Parish Council meeting. DISCHARGED
13. To distribute payments as approved at the December meeting. DISCHARGED

ACTPC 26-01-09 Planning

- a) To consider planning applications that had been submitted since the last meeting:
- i) DC/26/00645 – Application under Section 73A of the Town & Country Planning Act for DC/22/02418 (1 no. dwelling) for the variation of Condition 2 (Approved plans and documents) to enable design and materials amendments. Land at The Street, IP14 6NA

Councillors had all studied the application in advance of the meeting. After discussion it was decided to submit **NO COMMENT** the application:

CS proposed, MB seconded, all in favour and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED**

Signed R. Grimsey (Clerk) Signed S. Clare (Chair)

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- 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 26-01-10 Parish Council Activities

- a) Highways & Footpaths: Report on activity since the last meeting including:
 - i) Consideration of signage to improve safety around school bus pick up/drop off. – See County Councillor report.
 - ii) RG had provided a comprehensive report to the Council ahead of his absence, outlining the works he has carried out which included a thorough inspection of the parish footpath network. This revealed a number of issues although thankfully nothing that precluded general use and enjoyment of the network. It was, as is to be expected in winter, quite muddy in places.

Since the New Year RG had dealt with most of the issues that have arisen including repairs to a bridge and reinstatement/replacement of a dozen or so waymark posts. In several cases the 'reinstated' posts had decayed at or below ground level, provided that they were still long enough they were just replanted, but it is likely that next winter several of these will require full replacement and RG will liaise with SCC to arrange this.

During the wet weather RG had spent some time out attending to localised drainage issues, unblocking a few pipes and gullies and liaising with both SCC and Anglian Water at times.

A parishioner present said that they had heard there was the possibility of the path to Debenham being upgraded. CS explained that the Parish Council had sought views from residents about the idea when the District Council had come forward with information about promoting cycling and walking routes, but it had been very clear from the horse riding community that they did not want to see any changes to the surface of the track, so the idea had been abandoned.

- b) Consideration of Submission to the Suffolk Bus Improvement Plan – CS noted that the majority of the funding on offer is capital, for new bus stops etc, and of little value to communities such as Ashfield-cum-Thorpe, when what is really needed is improved and more practical bus services; and then a sustained campaign to raise enthusiasm for using those services

The village's essential requirement remains the same: at least one return service from Ipswich at a sensible time. At present only one bus a day leaves Ipswich at 1230, which being in the middle of the day makes it useless for commuters. CS felt it would not be unreasonable to modify the service to add a bus leaving Ipswich around 1730, or adding a loop via Ashfield on the Cretingham service, which currently leaves at 1745.

CS will look again at contacting the relevant officers to explain why existing services are so unbalanced and impractical. Currently the village is included in the 'wish list' but has been overlooked in previous reviews.

- c) Policy Reviews: Bring Your Own Device/Email Communication Policy – SG had circulated an email to the Council with a suggested addition to the wording of this policy ahead of re-adoption. LP expressed some concerns about one of the proposed clauses being too specific, all agreed and so this clause was removed from the proposed changes. SG proposed amending the text as agreed at the meeting, CS seconded, all voted in favour and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED**.

ACTPC 26-01-11 Finance

- a) To review the Financial Statement as supplied by the Clerk – The Clerk had previously circulated the Financial Statement. There were no queries. LP proposed acceptance, SG seconded and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED**. The Chair signed the corresponding Bank Statements to confirm the figures.
- b) To review and reconfirm for the forthcoming year the Direct Debit and Standing Order instructions on the Parish Council bank account – The Clerk had circulated a schedule of payment instructions, there is currently only one annual direct debit actioned on the account, in favour of the Information Commissioners Office for Data Protection Registration. This direct debit provides a £5 discount for the service each year.

Signed R. Grimsey (Clerk) Signed S. Clare (Chair)

Following review LP proposed confirmation and no changes to be made, MB seconded, all voted in favour and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED**

- c) Further Virement of £100 from General Contingency Fund to Community Account to cover additional bill of replacement defibrillator pads (not anticipated at December meeting): - MHa proposed the movement, TL seconded, all voted in favour and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED.**
- d) To agree payments as detailed on the Payment Schedule
TL proposed authorisation, MB seconded and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED.**

ACTPC – 26-01-12 Urgent Matters to be brought to the attention of the Council

- a) MHa advised the Council that he would be tendering his resignation from the Council before the next meeting. The Council thanked him for his service over the years.
- b) SG reported that he had spoken to UK Power Networks and asked about why recent works in the village to put in power cables, which had required a road closure, had been done as underground installation rather than overhead. UKPN had stated that they now always try to minimise working at height when scheduling works, the matter was nothing to do with planning requirements.
- c) Items for next agenda:
- Audit Approval
 - Review & Readoption of Standing Orders & Financial Regulations

Items for the May Agenda – please notify the Clerk of any further items for the agenda as soon as possible and by Monday 4th May 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 9.10pm. The next meeting is set for **Wednesday 13th May 2026** at 7.30 pm in the Community Hall.

Sarah Clare
Parish Clerk

Robert Grimsey
Chair