



# ASHFIELD-CUM-THORPE PARISH COUNCIL

**All Councillors are reminded of their obligations under the Code of Conduct Regulations.**

Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday 14<sup>th</sup> July 2025 at the Community Hall

Attendance	Robert Grimsey (Chair) (RG)	Chris Sharpe (CS)	Myles Hansen (MHa)
	Simon Garrett (SG)	Sarah Clare (Clerk)	
	Teresa Davis (District Councillor) (TD)	Matthew Hicks (County Councillor) (MHi)	Nick Hardingham (District Councillor for Stonham Aspal) (NH)

Public present at the meeting: 3

ACTPC 25-03-01 Apologies for Absence

None

ACTPC 25-03-02 Public Forum

A parishioner had been in contact with CS to raise concerns about an incident that had occurred when the school bus had dropped off their child in the village.

The particular incident was as follows:

- The school bus stops outside one of the driveways at Sunnyside Corner, a row of houses at the north end of the village.
- The parishioner went to meet their child off the bus, which meant they had to cross the road to get to their home.
- As usual, the bus then drove slightly further up the road, reversed into the junction with Grove Lane, to head back down The Street. On this occasion, there was a large tractor and trailer parked outside one of the houses at Sunnyside Corner. As the pedestrians crossing, they were nearly hit by the returning bus, requiring them to jump onto the small verge opposite to avoid being run down.

There appear to be several factors to consider:

1. It was felt that the bus driver did not take adequate care. The matter has been raised with the bus company and the parishioner has received an apology.
2. The pedestrians were emerging from behind the parked tractor and trailer. It may be the case that the bus driver was unsuspected until the last moment. This does not, of course, absolve the driver from the necessity to take care in what was obviously a hazardous situation.
3. Although there may not have been any issue in this particular case, there have been other incidents whereby traffic emerging from Grove Lane has had to swing wide to avoid a vehicle parked close to the junction, causing some damage. (Note also that this location is close to a bend in the road; vehicles emerging from Grove Lane or travelling south past that junction may not see hazards until too late).
4. The verges form a "place of refuge" to avoid traffic, especially in cases such as this. As in other places in the village, hedges had been allowed to grow, reducing the width of the verge and making it more difficult to avoid traffic. (It should be noted that there are extenuating circumstances why the hedge concerned has not been trimmed yet this year, it is usually well maintained).

Possible actions:

1. Confirm with the parishioner that the bus company and the driver concerned have properly recognised the seriousness of the incident, and that no further action is required in this respect.
2. Discuss with the owner of the tractor and trailer whether it would be possible to not park outside Sunnyside corner at times when children would be joining / leaving the bus.
3. Consider whether there may be a safer place for the children to alight from the bus. One possibility discussed is for the driver to reverse into Grove Lane before dropping off the children; waiting at that point until the children have left the bus; then continuing the journey south. This would, of course, briefly block the entrance to Grove Lane; however, there is very little traffic down the road, and it is very unlikely that a brief pause to let children off the bus would be a problem

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4. Consider whether better signage would help – to indicate to motorists that children might be in the area at certain times. MHi indicated that he would be happy to consider supporting signage from his budget. On a wider basis, better signage for the 30mph limit, and the existence of a possibly dangerous bend, might be worth considering.
5. Remind the owner of the tractor and trailer that the vehicles must be parked a sufficient distance from the Grove Lane junction, in accordance with the Highway Code. Again, noting that this may not have been a significant factor in this particular case.

A suggestion was put forward to obtain 30mph stickers to be put on bins, but this would only help raise awareness on bin collection day.

During the discussion about hedges encroaching, some concerns were raised about other footpaths in the parish being overgrown. RG asked that any issues are brought to the Parish Council to deal with. Although the Online Reporting Tool at SCC can be of use, very often a personal approach to the landowner can deal with the matter in a much quicker timeframe.

ACTPC 25-03-03 Declaration of Interests

None

ACTPC 25-03-04 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://ashfield.onesuffolk.net>.

MHi brought attention to the following:

Suffolk Libraries is now inhouse again at SCC, the main reason being to maintain the existing opening hours. It is thought that from a user perspective there is not likely to be much difference, as the staff were transferred and continue in their roles.

There are consultations ongoing about the LGR and all residents in Suffolk will receive information via the postal system to ensure that everybody has a chance to have their say. There will be some initial funding from Central Government to help kickstart the process, but there will be a considerable financial cost to the county at first, but in the long term a single unitary authority will make major savings.

Concerns continue to rise about the Planning & Infrastructure Bill and the proposals to reduce the time allowed for statutory consultation on Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects. Currently it is through extended consultation that mitigation can often be obtained for the communities affected. Suffolk County Council has raised an objection with Central Government.

SG raised concerns about the differences experienced by rural communities compared to urban areas. MHi explained that those in urban areas are worried that rural communities will get priority, so the concerns are universal, but the single Unitary Authority proposed by the County Council would have outreach hubs across the county to enable local people to engage with their representatives.

RG asked about the reasoning behind the widespread speed restrictions on the A12. MHi felt that this was likely to be due to the works being prepared for the Sizewell C development. On the subject of speed restrictions MHi explained that the County Council was looking at changing the process for getting speed limits put in place, with lots of village wanting 20 mph zones. These would be led by Parish Polls, to ascertain demand, not imposed from the top down.

With regard to the parishioners affected by the recent incident with the bus, CS offered to summarise the situation and look at ways to mitigate the risks. MHi will look into historical signage for the area and see about replacing any signs that may be missing, or adding new signs to help alert drivers to the risk. MHi asked that the Parish Council make a formal request for locality budget funding to address this matter.

CS asked MHi what was happening with the Ipswich Northern Route, as it had been in the press so much recently. MHi said that a motion was brought to Council to ask for route to be started, but it was amended to be looked at alongside other options, before being passed. Currently no work can start until Central Government funding comes through and ultimately the relief road would be a decision for the Mayor, nothing will be happening until the Local Government Reorganisation is completed.

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ACTPC 25-03-05 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://ashfield.onesuffolk.net>.

TD brought attention to the following:

The District Council are also running consultations about the Local Government Reorganisation, with different options to the County Council's suggestions, which involves a number of Unitary Authorities to retain some localism. All residents are encouraged to take part, details can be found on the District Council website.

The District Council has launched a new scheme called Business Resilience Grants, whereby local businesses can apply for match funding of up to £15K.

The Mid Suffolk TaxiBus has now launched its second route, which includes stops in Debenham, so the District is looking at ways to improve access from surrounding villages to help people connect with the TaxiBus. The TaxiBus has been operating now for about a year and some concerns have been raised about competition with local operators, the service will be trialling for another year to see how things develop and where the demand is. It has become apparent that most journeys are around half an hour in length. TD will send over a timetable for circulation to the village.

NH who represents Stonham Aspal had been invited along by TD to update Councillors on the situation at Stonham Barns. Since being elected NH has been putting pressure on Planning Enforcement Officers to get action on the unauthorised development at Stonham Barns. The Chief Planning Officer for the case has met with NH and promised action, but some enforcement cases have been ongoing for many years. Mid Suffolk District Council commissioned a landscape report some years ago to proscribe where Stonham Barns can develop and this has not always been actioned. A lot of the works have been applied for retrospectively, but even if rejected no remediation has taken place. The national policy on enforcement is that negotiation is the preferred course of action with the aim of achieving an acceptable outcome, rather than enforcing the original decisions. The assumption is that Enforcement Officers will work with the applicant, including the submission of a new application, which cannot be subject to enforcement whilst under consideration. Recently a new application has been received, which will now go before the Planning Committee. Some areas are currently not included in the current application, so these are still potentially subject to enforcement. The Housing Officer at the District Council is being included in the action to assess the residential status and NH understand a Housing Contravention Notice has been served.

RG asked about events licencing as the impact on the local road network is significant. NH understands that there have been some breaches in holding car boot sales on Bank Holidays and Sundays. RG asked what the Parish Council could do – NH suggested writing to the Chief Planning Officer to raise concerns about how the issues affect residents of Ashfield-cum-Thorpe.

TD confirmed that she will be working with NH and keep the Parish Council updated.

SG asked TD about the District's view on the Local Government Reorganisation. TD outlined that the proposal being put to the full District Council that three Unitary Authorities would be the preferable option to keep decision making local. Currently they are waiting on facts and figures of population, economic activity and how assets would be distributed between the three authorities, but there has been a high uptake on the consultation, with the general feeling from the public being that people want to keep decision making local. The boundaries have not yet been set, but will be before the submission is made to Central Government. Currently there are five District Councils across Suffolk negotiating between themselves to resolve a common view to submit to Central Government, although all District Councils are of the opinion that a single Unitary Authority (as proposed by the County Council) would result in each councillor having a significantly larger number of residents to represent, compared to the three Unitary option.

ACTPC 25-03-06 Minutes of previous meetings

The Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 12<sup>th</sup> May 2025 as a true and accurate record, were proposed by SG, seconded by CS all voted in favour and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED**. The Minutes were signed by the Chair and the Clerk

ACTPC 25-03-07 Matters Arising and Action Points from the May Minutes

1. Print A3 posters to advertise Parish Councillor vacancies (CS to forward file to SG). ONGOING – SG confirmed that he has the file and will get the poster laminated soon

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2. Review Save The Parish Council leaflet and circulate to Councillors for approval, then post to Ashfield Mail. DISCHARGED
3. Contact relevant landowners about cutting back hedges that are overhanging the highway. ONGOING
4. Contact Suffolk Highways to arrange a site visit about reflective posts to mark dangerous ditches at the edge of the road. ONGOING
5. Contact Be Well Bus for availability and list of potential topics that they can supply information on, then poll the village via Ashfield Talk to find out what residents would find most useful. DISCHARGED – Confirmed that the bus does operate on Saturdays, but already booked elsewhere for the date of the village barbecue. The bus still wants to come and will look into confirming a date for attendance whereupon SG will book the hall accordingly.
6. Submit response to consultation about proposal to stop informing nearby neighbours of planning applications by the sending of letters. DISCHARGED
7. Investigate cross field pathway between Ashfield-cum-Thorpe and Debenham. ONGOING
8. Contact Emergency Planning Officer at the District Council for an informal chat about setting up a plan for the village. ONGOING
9. Publish New Model Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and re-adopted policy on village website. DISCHARGED
10. Submit Exemption from External Audit certificate and publish on website. DISCHARGED
11. Publish AGAR information on website. DISCHARGED
12. Submit and publish CIL Statement. DISCHARGED
13. Start process of getting CS added to bank mandate and allow for online access. ONGOING
14. To distribute payments as approved at the May meeting. DISCHARGED

#### ACTPC 25-03-08 Planning

- a) To consider planning applications that had been submitted since the last meeting: None
- 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 25-03-09 Parish Council Activities

- a) To consider co-option to fill vacancies on Council – Nobody came forward. The Clerk confirmed that there are now three vacancies on the Council and these are listed on the village website.
- b) Highways & Footpaths: Report on activity since the last meeting – RG reported that he would complete outstanding items on the action list and report back at the Autumn meeting.
  - i) Concerns raised about safety at school bus stop – As noted in the public forum and in discussion with County Councillor.
- c) Re-adoption of Councillor Code of Conduct - The Clerk reported that there were no changes to the code since it had been adopted, but it was good practice for Councils to re-adopt each year. CS proposed re-adoption, RG seconded, all voted in favour and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED**. The Clerk will publish accordingly on the village website.
- d) To adopt New Travel Expenses Policy – At the recommendation of the Internal Auditor a standard Travel & Expenses Policy had been circulated to Councillors for review. RG proposed adoption, SG seconded, all voted in favour and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED**. The Clerk will publish accordingly on the village website.

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e) Policy Reviews:

i) Privacy Notice

The Privacy Notice has no recommended amendments, therefore CS proposed re-adoption, MHa seconded, all voted in favour and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED.**

ACTPC 25-03-10 Finance

a) To review the Financial Statement as supplied by the Clerk – The Clerk had previously circulated the Financial Statement. There were no queries. MHa proposed acceptance, CS seconded and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED.** The Chair signed the corresponding Bank Statements to confirm the figures.

b) To agree payments as detailed on the Payment Schedule  
RG proposed authorisation, MHa seconded and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED.**

ACTPC – 25-03-11 Urgent Matters to be brought to the attention of the Council

a) RG had forwarded the information about the new HR services being offered at SALC to all Councillors, but no further action needs to be taken.

- b) Items for next agenda:
- Insurance Renewal
  - Review of Council's Risk Assessment & Health & Safety Policy

Items for the October Agenda – please notify the Clerk of any further items for the agenda as soon as possible and by Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> October 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 9.27pm. The next meeting is set for **Monday 13<sup>th</sup> October 2025** at 7.30 pm in the Community Hall.

Sarah Clare  
Parish Clerk

Robert Grimsey  
Chair

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