



# ASHFIELD-CUM-THORPE PARISH COUNCIL

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

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> May 2026 at the Community Hall

(Meeting commenced at 9.10 pm following the conclusion of the Annual Parish Meeting)

Attendance	Robert Grimsey (RG)	Chris Sharpe (CS)	Monica Brown (MB)
	Lindsay Pearson (LP)	Tom Luxmoore (TL)	
	Sarah Clare (Clerk)	(MHi) Teresa Davis (District Councillor) (TD)	

Public present at the meeting: 1

ACTPC 26-02-01 Appointment of Chair

RG was nominated as Chair by CS, MB seconded and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED**

The acceptance of office form was signed.

ACTPC 26-02-02 Apologies for Absence

Simon Garrett (SG) had sent his apologies due to family commitments. The Council accepted.

ACTPC 26-02-03 Public Forum

None

ACTPC 26-02-04 Declaration of Interests

None

ACTPC 26-02-05 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>

ACTPC 26-02-06 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 26-02-07 Minutes of previous meetings

The Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> March 2026 as a true and accurate record, were proposed by CW, seconded by TL all voted in favour and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED**. The Minutes were signed by the Chair and the Clerk

ACTPC 26-02-08 Matters Arising and Action Points from the March Minutes

1. Circulate link to Suffolk Prepared website on village email about setting up an individual emergency household plan and ask for volunteers to come forward to help form a working party to create a village wide emergency plan. DISCHARGED
2. Contact contractor/landowner to ask for assistance in mitigating the problems caused by the unpleasant smell. ONGOING – RG raised the matter with TD asking if it was the case that the District Council was looking at preventing the use of human sewage sludge on agricultural land. Last year it caused a serious issue for most of the village and it was much worse than "usual" country smells. Environmental Health at the District Council was quite dismissive last year and there are concerns that this could arise again.

Signed ..... (Clerk) Signed ..... (Chair) 1

TL noted that there had been a recent government article about the use of human sewage on farmland, with the Government gov acknowledging that more research is needed as the sector is not fully controlled or tested in the way it should be. There are also concerns about forever chemicals and heavy metals, along with bacterial or viral agents. TD noted that there is nothing wrong in principle in using human sewage, but recognised concerns about it not having been treated correctly. RG will draft something to come from the Parish Council to send to the manager of the farm. TL suggested that if the problem arose again then getting the press involved may be helpful. CS agreed to send TD the full dialogue from last year to see what could potentially be done to mitigate the risk of a repeat.

3. Purchase and fit replacement screen for noticeboard (authorised up to £100 spend). DISCHARGED
4. Submit responses to Planning Department at District Council as agreed. DISCHARGED
5. Contact relevant officers regarding bus provision for the village to see where Ashfield-cum-Thorpe currently sits in the 'wish list' and whether there are any plans to improve services. DISCHARGED – CS reported that after addressing the issue of poor bus service the response received had been that there had been some changes to 118 119 service to help with connections between Framlingham and Diss, but currently the service was unable to add any additional journeys for Ashfield-cum-Thorpe.
6. Published amended Bring Your Own Device policy on village website. DISCHARGED
7. To arrange virement as agreed at the March 2026 Parish Council meeting. DISCHARGED
8. To distribute payments as approved at the March meeting. DISCHARGED

ACTPC 25-02-09 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: Skylarks decision -

ACTPC 26-02-10 Parish Council Activities

- a) To consider co-option to fill vacancies on Council – No members of the public were present. The Clerk confirmed that is currently one vacancy on the Council which is listed on the village website.
- b) Highways & Footpaths: Report on activity since the last meeting – Full report given at the APM. RG has been out and carried out a small amount of maintenance where necessary. MB commented that some of the footpaths are much wider than they have been. LP noted that there was a legal requirement of 4 ft width. RG commented that good use of the paths encourages landowners to put in the effort to ensure that the paths are in good condition. CS reported that there was one path that needed to be better marked, RG will investigate, noting that there are 14 days to reinstate a path after ploughing.

RG will speak to MHi about drainage in Low Road, SCC contractors had been on site for several nights in March and drains are still blocked in the area. RG has reviewed various sites with MHi and SCC Highways with concerns about the quality of the work and this will need to be addressed.

- c) Consideration of estimate of costs for the installation of road signs to improve pedestrian safety in the village – Proposals as put together by SCC Highways to install 'pedestrian in carriageway' signs and to update the 30mph signs had been circulated to the Council for consideration. The work is estimated in the region of **£2018.22**, with a proviso given that the final cost is dependent on several variable factors, including the nature and complexity of the project, traffic management requirements and delivery timescales. RG suggested contacting MHi to see if there is help with funding available, also to query about whether replacing the 30mph signs should be routine maintenance. Defer to July meeting.
- d) Update on development of Emergency Plan for the village – Unfortunately, there had been very little interest in the request for volunteers to form a working party. LP had been the only one to respond to the Clerk's email request. It was agreed to recirculate the email.
- e) CIL Payment Received – Consideration of potential projects – It was noted that the road signage works could be paid for using the CIL funding. At the APM suggestions had been requested and it was agreed that the Clerk would email the village to canvass for ideas.

Signed ..... (Clerk) Signed ..... (Chair) 2

- f) To consider whether to submit an Expression of Interest for Neighbourhood Plan funding – The District Council was offering some funding towards the formulation of a Neighbourhood Plan for villages who “*wish to produce Plans which seek to allocate sites for housing development that make an agreed contribution to meeting the district-wide housing needs*”. After consideration the Council felt that Ashfield-cum-Thorpe was not a suitable location for new housing development so it was not worth putting in an expression of interest at this point.
- g) To consider involvement with the Suffolk Enhanced Bus Partnership – After consideration it was felt that despite many attempts by the Parish Council in recent times to engage with bus service providers, pleas for a better bus service for the village had been ignored and that more meetings would just take up more time.
- h) To re-adopt Standing Orders – RG proposed adoption, MB seconded, all voted in favour and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED**. The Clerk will publish accordingly on the village website.
- i) New Policy Adoptions: The Clerk had circulated the following new policies to be adopted
  - i. Equality & Diversity (new NALC Model)
  - ii. Dignity at Work
  - iii. Grievance
  - iv. Disciplinary
  - v. Grants & Donations
  - vi. Safeguarding
  - vii. Complaints

TL proposed adoption of all the recommended policies, RG seconded, all voted in favour and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED**. The Clerk will publish the adopted policies on the village website

- j) Policy Reviews: The Clerk advised that there were no changes to the policies
  - i. Environmental
  - ii. Freedom of Information Policy & Publication Scheme
  - iii. Data Protection (to include Retention & Privacy)

RG proposed re-adoption for the policies. TL seconded, all voted in favour and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED**. The Clerk will publish the re-adopted policies on the village website

ACTPC 26-02-11 Finance

- a) To review the Financial Statement as supplied by the Clerk – The Clerk had previously circulated the Financial Statement. There were no queries. RG proposed acceptance, TL seconded and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED**. The Chair signed the corresponding Bank Statements to confirm the figures.
- b) To re-adopt the Financial Regulations – TL proposed re-adoption, RG seconded, all voted in favour and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED**. The Clerk will publish the new regulations on the village website.
- c) To approve CIL Statement for period 2025-2026 for submission – Following circulation and consideration of the CIL statement, CS proposed approval, LP seconded, all voted in favour and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED**. The Clerk will arrange for the CIL Statement to be submitted and published on the website
- d) To confirm Exemption from External Audit for Accounting Period 2025-2026 – Following circulation and consideration, RG proposed the submission, CW seconded, all voted in favour and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED**. The Chairman and Clerk signed the forms on behalf of the Council, the Clerk will submit the Exemption Certificate.
- e) To approve Annual Governance Statement for Accounting Period 2025-2026 – Following circulation and consideration of the Governance Statement, RG proposed approval, TL seconded, all voted in favour and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED**. The Chairman and the Clerk signed the forms on behalf of the Council and the Clerk will publish the AGAR on the village website.
- f) To approve the Accounting Statements for 2025-2026 – Following consideration of the Accounting Statements as provided by the Clerk, TL proposed approval, RG seconded, all voted in favour and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED**. The Chairman and the Clerk signed the forms on behalf of the Council, the Clerk will publish the Accounting Statements on the village website.

Signed ..... (Clerk) Signed ..... (Chair) 3

- g) To accept Internal Auditors Report & Recommendations – RG proposed acceptance, TL seconded all voted in favour and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED**. It was noted that a few points had been raised as outlined below:

Recommendation 1 - Verify that the 'Announcement Date' was the working day prior to the Commencement Date (they cannot be the same date). The announcement date in 2025 was 30<sup>th</sup> May, whilst the commencement date was 3<sup>rd</sup> June.

Response: Guidance notes state "Insert date of placing of the notice which must be not less than 1 day before the commencement date" so although the first date was not the working day prior it was within guidance, but this can be easily remedied for future years.

Recommendation 2 – I cannot see any evidence that you have a Data Protection Policy.

Response: The Data Protection policy is currently rolled up with the Privacy Notice. Having looked at SALC's templates they've essentially rebranded the Privacy Notice to be the Data Protection (to include Retention & Privacy) Policy, so I've got this on the May 2026 agenda for review and adoption.

Recommendation 3 – Councillor responsibilities are not listed on the website.

Response: The Councillor responsibilities is a bit of an issue. I explained to the auditor that as we'd only had four for so long everybody kind of just did a bit of everything, but perhaps now we have more Councillors we can look at allocating nominal responsibilities.

Recommendation 4 The detailed internal audit report was not discussed, and an action plan was not created using the recommendations provided by the Internal Auditor.

Response: The internal audit report was discussed and accepted at the May 2025 meeting, with the note that 'a few points had been raised for the Clerk to address in the upcoming year'. This year the recommendations and responses are being recorded in the minutes and where appropriate a follow-up will be diarised later in the year.

Other Recommendation Relating to Clerk's Salary - The Internal Auditor had raised concerns with the Clerk about the salary band, advising the Clerk that she was currently on a much lower band than other Clerks. The recommendation was for Band 17, but it was recognised that moving from the current band 10 to band 17 would be quite a financial stretch, so the Internal Auditor recommended moving a couple of bands at a time to spread the load. It was also noted that the hours are very low and not meeting the minimum recommended level of 4 hours per week.

The Clerk had put forward a proposal to move to Band 12 and to increase the hours to 4 per week, including back dating to April 2026 and then revisiting the band level again during the budget process for 27/28 financial year.

The Council felt that the proposal was OK, but it was noted that as it was not an official agenda item the decision would need to be ratified at the next meeting.

- h) To appoint Internal Auditor for 2026-2027 – It was agreed to appoint Tina Newby as the Internal Auditor for 2026-2027. LP proposed, MB seconded all voted in favour **IT WAS SO RESOLVED**.
- i) To confirm dates for the Notice for the Period for the Exercise of Public Rights in 2026 – The recommended dates for 2026 are 3<sup>rd</sup> June to 14<sup>th</sup> July. RG proposed the acceptance of these dates, LP seconded, all voted in favour and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED**
- j) To consider update to Bank Mandate – With the resignation of a Councillor who is also on the bank mandate at the March meeting, the Clerk had contacted the bank and had the required forms to remove this Councillor from the mandate. RG proposed the change be actioned, TL seconded, all voted in favour and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED**.
- k) Virement to Reserves – to move £5616.40 in CIL funds from current account to reserves as an interest bearing account - CS proposed the movement, LP seconded, all voted in favour and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED**.
- l) To agree payments as detailed on the Payment Schedule  
RG proposed authorisation, CS seconded and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED**.

Signed ..... (Clerk) Signed ..... (Chair) 4

ACTPC – 26-02-12 Urgent Matters to be brought to the attention of the Council

- a) Items for next agenda:
- Update on Emergency Plan
  - Potential CIL Projects

Items for the July Agenda – please notify the Clerk of any further items for the agenda as soon as possible and by Monday 29<sup>th</sup> June 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 10.30 pm. The next meeting is set for **Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> July 2026** at 7.30 pm in the Community Hall.

Sarah Clare  
Parish Clerk

Robert Grimsey  
Chair

DRAFT

Signed ..... (Clerk) Signed ..... (Chair) 5