**GREAT ASHFIELD ANNUAL PARISH MEETING**

**Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday, 17th May, 2023**

**At the Lord Thurlow Hall at 7pm**

**Chairman:** Cllr Arthur Peake

Mrs C White, Parish Clerk, took the Minutes

The meeting was attended by Great Ashfield Parish Councillors, the District & County Councillors

One member of the public was present

Cllr Peake welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. **To Sign the Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 19th May 2022 were signed as a correct record of proceedings.

1. **Suffolk County Council Annual Report**

County Councillor Andy Mellen attended the meeting and presented his Annual Report for the year April 2022 to May 2023, as follows:

**Division: Thedwastre North**

**Councillor contact details:**

**Mobile: 07790 992619**

**Email: andy.mellen@suffolk.gov.uk**

# **Annual Parish Report – 2022/23**

# **Councillor: Andy Mellen**

**Representing the parishes of: Badwell Ash; Elmswell; Finningham; Great Ashfield; Hunston; Langham; Norton; Stowlangtoft; Tostock; Westhorpe, Wyverstone and Woolpit.**

**April 2023**

I have now been representing these villages as your County Councillor for almost two years. I aim to attend all Parish Council meetings, even if only briefly (there are often two or three parishes meeting on the same evening). I always try to find an answer to residents’ queries, and continue to follow up on long-standing issues of concern. Most of my e-mails are related to Highways: potholes, flooding, signage, speed and safety. Whilst making progress in some areas, it is a continuing source of frustration to me and to residents as it often takes far too long to resolve problems. We do now have a new Community Liaison Engineer, Andy Moore, who is vastly experienced in the SCC Highways systems and can often find ways to get work done. There continues to be a shortage of funding for Highways work at this time, which can cause an enormous amount of frustration for communities who want their problem resolved straight away. Later this year will see a change in our highways contractor, Kier will be replaced by Milestone Infrastructure. We are hoping that this new contractor will mean an improvement in service delivery.

Please do contact me if you have an issue where I can help.

**SCC Council members**

Since the 2021 elections the Conservatives have a large majority on the County Council: 55 of the total 75 Councillors, so they continue to lead the Council. After a by-election in Beccles the Greens retained the seat, so we continue to have 9 Green Councillors who work together with 4 Liberal Democrats and 2 Independent Councillors to form the official opposition group (Green, Liberal Democrat & Independent, GLI). Our role is to scrutinise what the administration is doing, hold them to account and also bring forward ideas and motions of our own. Opposition members also sit on various committees: I am a member of the Scrutiny committee and the Constitutional working group.

**Budget Meeting: GLI Amendments Declined**

Suffolk County Council voted in their budget for 2023-24 earlier this year. Our Group put forward several amendments but these were defeated. SCC’s portion of your council tax was raised by 1.99% plus a further 2% social care precept.

**A14 re-surfacing works**

The current works on the A14 between Woolpit and Stowmarket to break up and replace the concrete road surface are clearly going to cause a lot of disruption as traffic seeks to find a short-cut through nearby villages. Although the main work is being carried out by National Highways, SCC are liaising with them to ensure that signage is in the right place to direct traffic away from bottlenecks etc.

**Scrutiny of the Carbon “Budget”**

The administration brought forward a report which was scrutinised in January – although called a Carbon Budget for Suffolk, it was mostly a backward-looking report. The main headline from this is that the council has a long way to go to reduce its own emissions, and by 2030 (when we should be at Net Zero) there will still be a significant gap between where we should be, and what we are likely to achieve.

**Devolution: The County Deal**

Council leaders have signed an initial agreement with the government for a devolution deal for Suffolk. This will mean more powers and funding, but the most significant change is the creation of the position of a directly elected leader for the county council – this may happen as early as May 2024.

1. **Mid Suffolk District Council Annual Report**

Newly elected District Councillor Richard Winch attended the meeting to introduce himself. As he was new to the role and was still finding his way, no Annual Report was produced.

The Parish Council thanked Rick Meyer for his service over recent years, as he had been generous to the village with his time and grants, and everyone wished him well for the future.

1. **Parish Council Annual Report**

The Chairman of the Parish Council, Arthur Peake delivered the following Annual Report:

There have been some changes to personnel in the last year. Having formally welcomed Mark to the PC last May Roy resigned at the annual meeting before his move to Elmswell and I became chairman. In Roy’s place we were pleased to welcome Stephen for another term on the council. Bob decided not to stand in May 2023 after a decade on the PC. We wish him well. There is a vacancy, more later.

The PC processed 5 planning applications, almost all straightforward.

The main topic at the PC, where residents were welcomed several times to air their views, was **traffic**. Within this was the issue of Portable Space use of unclassified roads and that was exacerbated by their submission of Lawful Development Certificates (LDC) to bring their actual site usage into line with that agreed in Planning. The Chief Planning officer kindly came to our Traffic Working Group meeting and helped us to see what we can and cannot do within LDC planning. At the time of writing the latest Full Planning Application is being put to a Planning Committee in June and we hope to address that meeting.

On Elmswell Road traffic we met the SCC Highways officer in November and literally walked the road to see what traffic calming measures could be applied. To cut a long story very short the answer is no physical calming (e.g. chicanes) without street lighting at the sites and village gates may be appropriate but at a relatively high cost. In any event we have to pay for a traffic survey before any work can be considered. The actual costs involved are huge compared to our precept income.

There is one PC vacancy now and I will only stand for one year so soon there will be more. If you would like to volunteer, please contact any parish councillor for more information.

Arthur

May 2023

In addition it was reported that:

**Prior to the recent election Bob Fitch had retired from the Parish Council after many years of service, the Chairman and all present thanked him for his efforts over the years. Only six new councillors had stood for election so there remained a vacancy on the council and new volunteers were urgently needed.**

**TRASH & TREASURES** – This was a whole community event in support of the Village Hall ‘Future 50’ Project to update the hall facilities and the refurbishment works taking place in the Church, in addition SARS (Suffolk Accident Rescue Service) had their own sales area and the Rural Coffee Caravan had provided refreshments, both extremely worthwhile charities. The event had been well supported by the village and the wider community and a substantial amount of money raised.

**THANK YOU to everyone involved in the organisation and running of this event and of course, thank you for spending your money!**

1. **PCC Report**

A representative of the Parochial Church Council attended and delivered the following review of the year 2022:

The PCC met 4 times during the year and the attendance was 90% of members.

1 baptism and 2 funerals took place in the Church during the year.

1 Candidate from the Benefice was confirmed in October by Bishop Mike at Hopton.

The church was open daily for private prayer. Thanks to everyone who have given their time and energy to keep the church clean and tidy, well maintained and welcoming. This includes those who have helped to keep the church open during the day by regularly locking and unlocking the building and all who arrange flowers to enhance our lovely building.

Regular services have now resumed after COVID and during the year we were able to start offering the chalice again at Holy Communion. Family@Church continued on the first Sunday of the month. We are grateful for the continued support of our Reader Di Barker and Assistant Curate Revd Jay Price. Jay retired in August, but continues to support us as an SSM. Special services were held for CMS and Sea Sunday. Many thanks to all our organists in the benefice, Margaret Salmon, Elizabeth Moore and Jim Thompson who have continued to enhance our services with music when they can.

TOAST community breakfast continued to attract good numbers and be an important meeting place for the village.

On the death of her Majesty the Queen in September books of condolence were placed and signed in all our churches.

Ministry to Norton school flourished through a School Eucharist, weekly visits of the Open the Book team, collective worship led by the Rector, plus the Rector’s input as Governor and leading class visits. Ministry to Stowlangtoft Nursing Home is now back to normal with regular Songs of Praise led by Mrs Di Barker and the Rector, as well as monthly communion services. We are grateful to Elizabeth Moore for playing the piano for the Songs of Praise.

Craft packs were once again produced and distributed to children in the benefice at Easter and Christmas funded by a grant from the Diocese Growth Fund.

A Plant stall was held in May at Limes Farm, thanks to Stephen & Petrina Miles.

Festivals received good support. The Harvest service was very well attended with a very successful Harvest Tea in aid of Macmillan Cancer Support in the afternoon. At the end of October a memorial service was held for bereaved families.

The benefice Bible Study group met in Tostock and then in the Martin Room at Pakenham, and during Lent we studied St Luke’s Gospel. Other subjects in the year were Meeting the Spirit and Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians.

The Suffolk Historic Churches trust ‘Ride & Stride’ took place in September and thanks to everyone who walked, cycled or stewarded the event.

A new round of Safeguarding training was begun in the benefice for all PCC members and ministers. We are grateful to Lisa Hicks, Diocesan Safeguarding Trainer, whose support and help has made this possible.

The Church building is in good condition. The reordering of the chancel is on schedule in order to make it more usable by the whole community. The churchyard has been maintained to our own high standard and thanks to Stephen Miles for conducting a green audit of the churchyard. Thanks to J Miles for cutting the grass on a regular basis.

The Asst Rural Dean, Revd Dr Karen Burton conducted the Parochial Visitation on behalf of the Archdeacon in October.

The Village & Church News was a valuable asset throughout the year with thanks to all who are involved in publication and distribution.

For 2022 we managed again to pay our share of the quota (£9,600) once more. We also raised over £900 for other charities. The Parish Giving scheme is going from strength to strength. Thanks to all those who support the work of the church in so many ways.

1. **Lord Thurlow Village Hall Report**

The following Annual Report for the Village Hall had been received and was read to the meeting:

There have been several changes to the committee since the last meeting. Roy Barker stood down from the Chairman role and was replaced by Simon Laidler. Roy remains on as acting treasurer. Di Barker retired from the committee and Carol White took on her role as bookings secretary. Lindsay Pilags joined the committee as Secretary. Sue Howes and Gail Peake remain as committee members with Margaret Barrett as Village Draw Manager. A sub-committee (Simon Laidler and Gail Peake) was formed to manage the ‘Kitchen Project’. The aim of the committee is to manage and maintain the hall for the benefit of the community and to facilitate the use of the hall to generate income. Currently the hall is self-sustaining in that hire fees and other events achieve a small annual profit. The hall finances are currently in good shape thanks to previous COVID payments. We have a core of regular users but would want and expect to see this increase in the future following the planned improvements. Following consultation, It has been encouraging to see the level of support for positive changes from residents. Monthly Pub nights have always been a good source of income and the recent ‘themed; pub nights, involving quiz nights, the Coronation Pub night and new bar offers have boosted numbers substantially. New events have been added to the Great Ashfield calendar which have generated a lot of interest and new people have come forward to get involved, such as the Great Ashfield Scarecrow Festival.   
A large focus of the committee has been the proposed hall improvements which will involve a new kitchen, internal layout changes, extensive electrical work to support the kitchen and to upgrade the fire safety requirements. Also planned is the reinstatement of a front entrance and disabled access. A valuable addition to the hall will be the installation of broadband.  This will be Phase 1. In order to realise these ambitions, additional funding will be required and currently a number of grant applications are in progress. We were pleased to receive £1000 from Cllr Meyer’s locality budget to support this project.   
Subject to funding, it is hoped that Phase 1 will be completed this year (2023). We would expect to see increased community engagement, additional hire opportunities and therefore increased revenue. Longer term, in order to maintain a viable, inclusive and flexible community facility, it will be important to consider ongoing improvements to the car park area, better disabled access and internal improvements such as zonal heating and flooring.   
Simon Laidler

Chairman

1. **WI ANNUAL REPORT**

The following Report had been received and was read to the meeting:



1. **Newsletter Annual Report**

The Editor of the Great Ashfield Village News had sent the following Annual Report which was read out to the meeting:

**SUBJECT:** Great Ashfield newsletter

**EDITOR:** Mandie Beckley

**FREQUENCY:** Quarterly, named Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter

**PRINTER:** PBS, Bury St Edmunds

**PRINT RUN:** 150 copies

**COSTS PER ISSUE:**

4pp A4 Newsletter - printed onto both sides of a white 90gsm A3 paper, folded to A4

Black and white print only - 150 at £24

Full colour print to both sides - 150 at £42

If an A4 insert required for the Newsletters (printed SINGLE SIDED only);

Black print only - an extra £10

Full colour print - an extra £17

If an A4 insert required for the Newsletters (printed DOUBLE SIDED);

Black print only - an extra £14

Full colour print - an extra £26

**EDITORIAL:**

Thank you to the contributors for sending in their copy on time, if not early. It is so much

easier to put the newsletter together when I have everything to work on at the same time.

**PRINTING:**

I would also like to thank the printer Steve of PBS for such an excellent service. Although

his prices have gone up (as has everything), the cost of printing the newsletter is still very

reasonable.

**SPONSORS OF COLOUR PRINTING:**

Obtaining any sponsorship from parishioners other than those involved with the council or

the newsletter seems virtually impossible. It would be a shame to go back to a black and

white issue, especially as we are now getting better and more photos. I am happy to sponsor.

the extra colour cost for the occasional issue, but I wonder if anyone has any other ideas on

how to involve more people.

**READERS COMMENTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS:**

Again, I have received no comments or articles from any of the readers so I continue to

assume the readers are all happy with the newsletter as it is.

**COLLECTION FROM PBS:**

I am happy to do this unless there are any other volunteers.

**DISTRIBUTION:**

This is carried out by various parishoners of Great Ashfield and organised by Petrina. Again

I would like to thank every one of them for doing this in all types of British weather.

**AND FROM THE PARISH COUNCIL A BIG ’THANK YOU’ TO MANDIE BECKLEY (EDITOR) FOR DOING SUCH A GOOD JOB.**

1. **Community Speed Watch**

A representative from Community Speed Watch attended and reported as follows:

**COMMUNITY SPEEDWATCH REPORT**

We are grateful to the Long Thurlow team members who continue to organise their own sessions on Long Thurlow Road and have completed eight sessions since June 2022. Outcomes were as follows:

15/06/22: 10 vehicles reported

30/06/22: 4 vehicles

10/09/22: 8 vehicles

2/11/22: 5 vehicles

10/11/22: 5 vehicles

13/02/23: 9 vehicles

29/03/23: 8 vehicles

26/04/23: 8 vehicles

Sadly I have nothing to report from Great Ashfield. We held a team get-together recently which included our very supportive PC, Stefan Henriksen. The Long Thurlow team explained that they organise their own sessions as and when it is convenient for them. This was well received and brought a positive response from the Great Ashfield team and I hope that they might adopt a similar self-managing approach.

**Latest SID stats**

The printouts from the SID showing maximum and average speeds for the week 27/04/23 to 16/05/23 demonstrate an urgent need for traffic calming measures along the 30mph section of Elmswell Road. However, we were advised by Matthew Fox that we are not allowed permanent traffic calming measures, but may have additional road signs and/or road markings, such as speed roundels or “SLOW” markings.

Matthew Fox was contacted to establish how much such road markings would cost and a letter was written to Andy Mellen in October 2022 requesting financial support for this.

**Campaign for 20 mph**

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1. **Public Forum**

There was one member of the public in attendance, however no questions or comments were raised.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 7.40pm

**Signed: ………………………………………………………………………………. Date: ………………………………….**