

GREAT ASHFIELD PARISH COUNCIL (“the Council”)

Minutes of the meeting held:

At 7.30pm

On Wednesday 15 January 2025

At Great Ashfield Village Hall

Present:

Councillors:

Mr J Myers (Chair), Mr S Miles, Mr B Barker, Mr J Harding, Mr N. Jones, Mr M Livens

Clerk:

Mr D Ogden

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Mrs D Stick

In attendance:

Mr R Winch (District Councillor)

Mr A Mellen (County Councillor)

Mr S Laidler (Great Ashfield Village Hall Representative)

1. Record any Councillors’ apologies for absence

See above

2. Declarations of interest

Cllr Miles advised that he had a personal interest in a planning matter which would be raised later in the meeting

3. To consider the minutes of the meeting of 15 October 2024 and confirm as a true record

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 October 2024 were agreed to represent a true record of that meeting and were duly signed by the Chair and Clerk.

4. Review of the outstanding actions log

1. No volunteers had come forward to continue production of the village newsletter following the retirement of the previous editor. The Councillors agreed to continue to produce the publication on a rotational basis, noting that membership of the other means of communication, the Whatsapp Group was limited. Mr Harding to produce the next edition.

CLOSED

2. Mr. Harding reported that he had received no encouragement from Badwell Ash regarding the possibility of producing a combined publication for both villages. **CLOSED**

3. Mr Ogden reported that funds were confirmed as available from County Council funds for the streetlight replacement, but that the contractor had been unable to confirm a date for the work to be carried out. Mr Winch advised that additional funds to replace another light maybe available in the form of a grant from the District Council in the next financial year.
4. Mr Ogden reported that a resolution to the issue of securing appropriate banking access, following multiple changes to the members of the council, appeared to be close and advised that he would confirm as soon as possible.
5. Cllr Harding and Mr Laidler confirmed that grants had been achieved by the Village Hall and that a number of events were planned with more suggestions encouraged. **CLOSED**
- 6./7. Financial summaries had been provided to facilitate the discussion, later in the meeting, to set the Council's precept for 2025-26. **CLOSED**
- 8./9. Mr Ogden confirmed that two maintenance items had been reported to Suffolk Highways for action. The reports had been acknowledged but no date had been advised for the work to be done.

5. Report from District Councillor Richard Winch

Mr Winch presented his report. He advised that grants were available if specific projects to benefit the village were identified and undertook to send a link to Mr. Ogden.

In respect of issues concerning traffic generated by Portable Space Ltd, Mr Winch advised that a working group had been established to liaise with the company with a meeting scheduled for w/c 20 January. He advised that it appeared, at present, that traffic had been reduced and was within agreed limits. Mr Winch asked for two volunteers from the Council to assist in monitoring activity. Mr Livens and Mr Barker agreed to undertake this role.

6. Report from County Councillor Andy Mellen

Mr Mellen presented his report. He advised that elections currently scheduled for May 2025 were likely to be delayed for 12 months due to central government plans to re-organise local government

7. Training Requirements for:

- (i) Parish Councillors
- (ii) Parish Clerk

The proposals to apply for Councillors Barker, Livens, Harding and Myers and Mr Ogden to attend preferred sessions were agreed. **ACTION** – Mr Ogden to book and confirm

8. Financial Report and Consideration of setting the precept for 2025-26

It was acknowledged that the clerk's salary had not been reviewed for some years and that Mr Ogden's assessment appeared to be reasonable. The recommendation to set salary at £1,269pa, backdated to the date when he was confirmed in the role was accepted.

ACTION Mr Ogden to liaise with SALC re payment.

It was noted that the approved training was a significant expense in the context of the overall budget. All agreed that this was a function of the significant changes to the make-up of the Council and a necessary action.

Further debate centred on whether to request a material rise to the Council's precept, which was noted to be significantly lower than nearby comparable parishes, or whether to use some of the reserves that had accumulated (current bank balance £8,252).

Cllr Livens presented an analysis, which stressed that modest rises, in cash terms, for individual households, would enable the Council to plan ahead for potential major projects. Traffic calming was discussed but it was acknowledged that this was unlikely to be achieved in the short term.

All agreed that utilising reserves for current expenditure would not be prudent. Cllr Miles advised that a material rise should bring a tangible benefit and suggested that replacing the salt bins may be an appropriate project

Mr Livens suggested that the precept be set at £4,320, this representing a sum of £30 per village property. All accepted that although this represented a significant percentage rise this was largely driven by needing to 'catch up' from previous years where increases had been extremely modest.

ACTION Mr Ogden to submit required forms for this amount.

9. **Village Maintenance** - Grass Triangle – Junction of School Road & Wheelers Lane

Mr Barker supplied a detailed explanation of how the problem had arisen; essentially due to multiple blockages in drainage pipes (on private land). The process of identifying the problem had contributed to damage to the triangle but a solution had been identified, and a contractor has been appointed to resolve the issue. This is expected to be completed in the next couple of months. As the flow of water should then be stopped the damage to the triangle will begin to repair naturally. At that stage it was agreed that the area will be assessed to identify whether remedial work may be required/practical.

The issue of the footpath on the main road was discussed, it having been narrowed by vegetation etc.

ACTION Mr Miles and Mr Barker to collaborate in identifying the scope of the area to be addressed and seek quotes deal with the matter.

10. **Public forum**

The condition of the noticeboard at the village hall was raised and it was agreed that a replacement was required. **ACTION** Mr. Myers to seek a quote. It was noted that any new sign could be better positioned so as not to impair visibility for drivers exiting the car park.

11. To confirm time and date of next meeting

The date of the next meeting was set for 10 April 2025, at 7.30 in the village hall. Mr Livens to chair.

12. Any other business

Details of three planning applications had been received too late to be included within the agenda and were therefore addressed within any other business. There were no comments regarding change of use applications associated with a building at Rookery Barn, Daisy Green. An extension to storage facilities at Ashfield Storage, Lea farm was discussed (this being the matter which Cllr Miles had identified earlier in the meeting as being of personal interest). Cllr Jones asked whether the development would lead to significantly increased traffic. Cllr. Miles advised that this was not expected as many of the existing storage units were rarely visited, being used for domestic storage. He added that a condition of planning was an undertaking to offset the lost grass with a replanted wild flower area. No objections were raised.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.00pm.