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 9th September 2026 at the Community Hall

Attendance	Robert Grimsey (RG) - Chair	Simon Garrett (SG)	Tom Luxmoore (TL)
	Lindsay Pearson (LP)	Chris Sharpe (CS)	Sarah Clare (Clerk)
	Teresa Davis (District Councillor) (TD)		
	Matthew Hicks (County Councillor) (MH)		

Public present at the meeting: 4

ACTPC 26-05-01 Apologies for Absence

Monica Brown (MB) had sent apologies due to personal commitments. The Council accepted.

ACTPC 26-05-02 Public Forum

A parishioner raised concerns about some hedges in the village that, despite having been kept very tidy, have become wider than they should and seeing as this was on the agenda for discussion wanted to know what could be done to address the situation.

It was noted that the condition of the road surface in Grove Lane was also on the agenda and a parishioner had attended the meeting to report that they had experienced their vehicle grounding out where the middle of the road had risen up.

Support was expressed for the idea of a dog bin being put up in the village.

Following the circulation of an email asking for feedback relating to the Rural Connect Bus, a parishioner asked whether there was any chance that the bus that used to leave Ipswich mid-afternoon could be reinstated. CS reported that this has been raised several times with the bus operators, but the response is always that there is a lack of demand and funds cannot be committed to the service.

ACTPC 26-05-03 Declaration of Interests

None

ACTPC 26-05-04 Report 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

MH brought attention to the following:

£564K in funding has been secured for a feasibility study into bus franchising across the county. The Department of Transport will be completing the study through a process of consultation and desktop exercises. Details of how and when this study will take place will be confirmed, but all parishes across the county are encouraged to engage fully, to get the best result for their residents.

CS asked about the difference between franchise or contract. MH explained that under a franchise one company operates across the whole area, whereas currently a 'pick and mix' contract approach, using several companies, means that some routes only surviving with large subsidies coming from Central Government. CS explained why the bus routes coming through the village are impractical, with four services going into Ipswich throughout the day, but only one coming back, having given only 1½ hours in town, meaning there is no sensible linked up service. MH said that the bus subsidy is being cut every year, so bus operators simply reduce their service on the heavily subsidised routes.

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County Council is investing £18.9 million to expand SEND support, which will include 169 specialist school places, linked to mainstream school, which will be a much better experience for the children involved.

MH had met with a parishioner from the village to talk about dangerous trees and has subsequently done research on the process of reporting dangerous trees in the County. The report does seem to indicate that there is not a proper formal process in place, leading to loss of confidence from public. The County Council will need to look at how to take this forward to ensure that there is a proper process put in place, but MH was uncertain how quickly this would take to action.

CS thanked MH for agreeing to cover the full cost of the pedestrian safety road signage works in the village, but queried about why replacing the repeat roundels was not something that was covered under general maintenance. MH explained that due to a change in national policy, repeat roundels were not considered a necessity, only the signs at the start and end of a speed restriction.

SG asked if there was any further information on the Local Government Reorganisation. MH explained that there was no official statement, but one would be released soon.

RG asked about whether MH could offer any money from his Locality Budget to help towards the cost of replacing the Defibrillator. MH agreed that he would fund £250

ACTPC 25-05-05 Report 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

TD brought attention to the following:

The National Planning Policy Framework has been updated with a number of changes. It has also been increased to the status of 'Critical Importance' when planning decisions are to be taken. There are three main sections that are affected:

1. There is no longer a rigid 'village boundary' as long as expansion can be deemed 'appropriate'.
2. Neighbourhood Plans that are older than five years and/or have no development allocation will not be considered.
3. The District Council will soon lose the power to bring a planning application to Committee. Decisions will rest solely with Planning Officers, with the only route for appeal being via the Secretary of State.

ACTPC 26-05-06 Minutes of previous meetings

The Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 8th July 2026 as a true and accurate record, were proposed by SG, seconded by TL all voted in favour and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED**. The Minutes were signed by the Chair and the Clerk

ACTPC 26-05-07 Matters Arising and Action Points from the July Minutes

1. Meet with MH about drainage in Low Road. To be discussed later in meeting.

2. Submit response to Planning Department at District Council as agreed. DISCHARGED

3. Advise homeowner of agreement in principle to connect to the Community Hall sewer network (subject to legal and technical aspects being addressed) if Anglian Water are unable to offer another solution. DISCHARGED

4. Speak to householder about hedge encroaching over the kerb. To be discussed later in meeting

5. Speak to landowner about overgrown footpath by The Ashes and update resident who had raised the concern. ONGOING

6. Contact Suffolk Highways to ask them to proceed with the road signs to improve pedestrian safety in the village. DISCHARGED

7. Arrange further meeting of the Emergency Plan Group. ONGOING and to be discussed later in meeting.

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8. Advise Community Council of the ideas put forward to CIL money expenditure that involves the Community Hall and ask whether they would be in agreement. DISCHARGED and to be discussed later in meeting.

9. Speak to MH about possibility of getting Slow signs painted on road heading towards Framlingham/Earl Soham. ONGOING

10. Source costings for the installation and servicing of a dog poo bin in Grove Lane. DISCHARGED and to be discussed later in meeting.

11. Publish re-adopted code of conduct and policy on the website. DISCHARGED

12. To distribute payments as approved at the July meeting. DISCHARGED

13. List Councillor responsibilities as agreed on website. DISCHARGED

ACTPC 26-05-08 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:

i) DC/26/02196 – Application for a Lawful Development Certificate for an Existing Use or Operation or Activity including those in breach of a Planning Condition. Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) - Retention of use Land as residential garden land - The Land in question in this application has been garden for at least several decades. Evidence includes a statement by the person who maintained the garden for 25 plus years & photographic evidence of land use from Google Earth over the last 26 years. This clearly shows the pond and trees and boundary of the garden at Grove Farmhouse. Location: Land To South East Of, Grove Farmhouse, Grove Lane – Granted

ii) DC/26/02695 - Householder Application - Erection of a single-storey side extension to form ancillary annexe accommodation and a single detached garage, with associated fenestration and access to the front and rear elevations. Timbertop Farm, The Street, IP14 6NA - Granted

ACTPC 26-05-09 Parish Council Activities

a) To consider co-option to fill vacancies on Council – Nobody came forward. 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 including:

i) Update on concerns relating to overgrown hedges in the village – RG reported that he had spoken to residents, but although it has been cut it is still overgrowing the highway, technically the hedge should leave a 50 cm clearance from the kerb. MH recommended reporting the hedge using the Online Reporting Tool, which would mean that Suffolk Highways would make a formal approach

ii) Drainage in Low Road – RG has spoken to MH, who is awaiting a response from Suffolk Highways. The kerb offlet is constantly blocked, despite being inspected six months after initial reporting and Suffolk Highways deciding that no action was needed. RG will continue to chase this up, as after a very brief period of rainfall recently the road was flooded.

iii) Condition of Road Surface in Grove Lane – RG reported that the centre of the road surface has risen up and has caused grounding out on a low-profile vehicle. RG has spoken to MH and he is going to get Highways to look at it, along with a couple of other locations in the village. SG recommended that this issue is reported using the Online Reporting Tool, as then it will be added to the work programme

iv) Absentee Landowners/Contact Points – Following concerns about wildfires RG will make a list of landowners of the fields surrounding the village, in order to contact them should a fire break out. This can be incorporated into the Emergency Plan work. A recent wildfire in the village is thought to have started in a compost heap.

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c) Update on development of Emergency Plan for the village – LP reported that another meeting had not been held, due to holiday season, but he will be arranging another meeting within the next four weeks. LP agreed that knowing the owners of fields would be a good addition to the plan.

A suggestion had been put forward that the idea of renewing the list of houses, resident's names and phone numbers, that used to be given out when someone new moved into the village was resurrected. This was no longer feasible due to Data Protection laws, but it was probably a good idea that something along these lines was held securely by the Emergency Plan Team. It would have to be gathered on an opt-in basis, with residents encouraged to self-identify any specific needs that may be pertinent in an emergency situation.

The publicly available information would be limited to half a dozen names (the Emergency Plan Team) clearly indicated on the noticeboard at the Village Hall, or listed on the village website. These people would be able to then make contact with any further volunteers with specialist skills that may be appropriate for whatever the emergency situation was.

Residents need to be aware that the Emergency Plan Team would not be a substitute for calling the main Emergency Services, they would be a self-help backup in an extreme situation, when it may be difficult for Emergency Services to access the village.

Advice on how residents can help themselves and be prepared would be part of the Emergency Plan, to encourage resilience.

d) CIL Payment – further consideration of potential projects, including:

i) Repair or Replacement of the Defibrillator – The volunteer who looked after the defibrillator outlined how when she had been a Councillor she had sourced funding for the machine and looked after maintenance and checks, even after stepping down from Council.

In August, during a routine check, the machine indicated that the battery needed replacing. This had been ordered and the volunteer had paid for it personally and was due to be reimbursed by the Council, as the company would not send it until it was paid for.

Upon receipt, the new battery was installed, but the machine still showed faults. After speaking to the defibrillator company, the whole machine was recalled and currently a loan defibrillator is in the cabinet. After investigation, it seems that the masterboard now needs to be replaced.

After discussion, Councillors agreed that as the machine is ageing (purchased in June 2019), it would not make sense to pay for further repairs, as it was unclear what else may go wrong with it. The defibrillator company has offered a new replacement machine at a discounted rate. The volunteer will see if the new battery (already purchased) could be reconfigured for a new machine.

RG had spoken to the TD about District Locality Budget funding ahead of the meeting and TD had confirmed she would put up £500, with the £250 agreed earlier by MH, this would cover the cost of the replacement defibrillator. SG proposed that any money not provided by these two locality budget offerings be covered by CIL money, CS seconded, all voted in favour and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED.**

The Clerk will make the Locality Budget applications. The current volunteer would continue her dialogue with the defibrillator company to complete this task, but asked whether a current Councillor could then take on the regular checks. LP agreed to undertake the checks on behalf of the Parish Council and would liaise with the volunteer to understand the role fully.

The Parish Council officially recorded their thanks to the volunteer for all the work undertaken since the defibrillator had been

ii) The installation of a dog bin in Grove Lane – The Clerk had circulated a quote and RG had identified a suitable location. RG proposed proceeding with applying for a licence, SG seconded, all voted in favour and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED.** SG will provide the What3Words location needed for the licence application.

RG proposed that once the licence was approved the purchase of the dog bin (in red) went ahead at £159.37, CS seconded all voted in favour and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED.** RG would take delivery and install.

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iii) A glass washer for the Community Hall – The Community Council had agreed that this would be very much appreciated. TL has recommended a suitable model and offered to fit in the kitchen. The cost of the project would be a £1500. RG proposed a spend of up to £1500 to get the machine purchased, LP seconded, all voted in favour and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED**. TL will arrange a pro-forma invoice to be raised for the glasswasher and once it arrives arrange installation.

e) To consider and review the Council's Risk Assessment – With no recommended updates, RG proposed re- adoption, SG seconded, all voted in favour and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED**. The Clerk will arrange for the document to be published on the village website.

f) To consider and review the Council's Statement of Internal Control – The Clerk had circulated the Statement of Internal Control in its new recommended format. RG proposed adoption, CS seconded, all voted in favour and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED**. The Clerk will arrange for the document to be published on the village website.

g) To consider the adequacy of the Parish Council Insurance Policy in order to renew cover - The Clerk had circulated the policy due for renewal for Councillors to consider. After discussion RG proposed that the cover is fit for purpose and the renewal be completed, TL seconded, all voted in favour and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED.**

h) To consider feedback to District Council regarding the Rural Connect Community Transport Evaluation – Clerk will collate any responses and pass back to the District Council. It was noted that the email sent via Ashfield Mail did not support replies, so the Clerk will re-circulate on Ashfield Talk.

i) Policy Reviews:

i) Health & Safety Policy
ii) IT & Email Usage

With no recommended amendments, RG proposed re-adoption, CS seconded, all voted in favour and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED.**

ACTPC 26-05-10 Finance

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

b) Virement from Reserves of £1,000 for cashflow purposes – The Clerk reported that since the agenda had been published the second portion of the Precept had been received and therefore it was no longer strictly necessary to move the money.

c) Funding Request from Ormiston Families – Although recognising the important work of the charity, the Parish Council felt there was no proof of immediate benefit to residents and as funds were tight no donation would be made.

d) To accept NJC recommended pay settlement, including backdating pay claim to 1st April 2026 – The Clerk had circulated the document prior to the meeting for Councillors to consider. CS proposed acceptance of the full terms, TL seconded, all voted in favour and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED**. The Clerk will advise SALC payroll

e) To agree payments as detailed on the Payment Schedule
LP proposed authorisation, TL seconded and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED.**

ACTPC – 26-05-11 Urgent Matters to be brought to the attention of the Council

a) Footpaths map – the digitised version on Community Website does not entirely align with the footpath at the back of Great Wood. RG will check, but the path may be in Debenham parish.

b) Items for next agenda:
- Budget & Precept
- Further CIL Money ideas – such as display boards

APPROVED

Items for the December Agenda – please notify the Clerk of any further items for the agenda as soon as possible and by Monday 30th November 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 9.25pm. The next meeting is set for **Wednesday 9th December 2026** at 7.30 pm in the Community Hall.

Sarah Clare
Parish Clerk

Robert Grimsey
Chair

APPROVED