

The Assington Annual Parish Meeting was held in by video conference on Monday 22nd March 2021

Chairman The meeting was opened by Andrew Hill Vice Chairman Mr Simon Thorogood, Chairman of the Parish Council, joined the meeting as soon as he was able

Present Chairman Simon Thorogood, Vice Chairman Andrew Hill, Lee Parker (Babergh District Councillor), James Finch (Suffolk County Councillor), Cllr Bronwen Stacey, Cllr Rose Symonds, Cllr Helen Wallace, Cllr Ian Jordon, Mr Bob Cowlin from The Assington Association, the Clerk, assistant Clerk and, 3 local government electors.

1. Apologies Bob Cowlin
2. The Chairman opened the meeting by welcoming everyone present.
3. The Minutes of the meeting of 25th March 2019 were approved by those present and signed by the Chairman as a correct record. approve
4. Matters Arising? - There were none.

Reports

5. CClr Finch, Suffolk County Councillor

➤ **The Year of COVID 19**

The year has been dominated for all of us at National and local level by pulling together to overcome the unprecedented incident of Coronavirus throughout the year. The County Council with the Suffolk fire Service reacted from the very beginning back in March 2020 in many ways to the National guidance given by the Ministry of Health and the NHS. These are just some examples:-

- Immediate response supplying the elderly and vulnerable with food packs so that they were well fed and nobody suffered because of the 1st lock down and were unable to visit the shops.
- The collection and dissemination of local data and advice to guide the local policy for best practice control.
- The organisation of Home Schooling with the local authority in maintained schools
- The introduction of "Home but not Alone" free phone line for the lonely.
- Support Lines for those with Financial Worries.
- The follow up to Test and Trace and now recently totally co-ordinated at the local level since March 2021.
- Local co-ordination of the Vaccination programme with Clinical Commissioning Groups via the Director of Public Health – Stuart Keeble.

There will be lots of lessons learnt for this last year and no doubt our future *modus operandi* both in work and leisure will be different in the future.

We should all thank each other for the collaboration that has been achieved. My belief is that there is "*always good that comes out of bad*".

➤ **Resurfacing of 25% of the Suffolk Highway**

On 5th August it was announced that Suffolk Highways completed its 1000th resurfaced mile following the Council's commitment to relay new road surfaces on a quarter of Suffolk's road network. In 2017 Suffolk County Council's Cabinet committed to resurfacing 1,000 miles of road across Suffolk over a four-year period in a bid to improve the quality of roads and reduce the number of potholes.

➤ **Electric Vehicle Charging Points**

In September it was announced that 100 fast charging points for electric vehicles were to be built in rural parts of the county. The council have reached out to interested parish and town councils and non-profit organisations to put in fast chargers where there are currently none. The funding will cover the installation and set-up costs, meaning very little expense for the hosts and possibly creating a source of income for them. The up take has been good.

➤ **Fostering and Adopting in Suffolk**

In October the Council launched Adopt East, a regional adoption agency which has been established to recruit adopters across the East of England. Adopt East will work across local authorities to find families for children who are waiting to find their forever home. The target has also been doubled for increasing number of new foster parents from 30 to 60 for 2021/22 as a result of the predicted extra numbers required following the Pandemic.

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➤ **Choice of Schools for September 2021**

On National Offer Day 98.57% of Suffolk children were offered a place at one of the schools preferred by their parents. Suffolk County Council received 7,602 applications from parents indicating which primary school they would prefer their child to join in September 2020. Some 7,116 children received offers for their first preference school and 7,493 children received an offer for one of their three preferred schools.

➤ **Suffolk' Response to the Climate Emergency**

In response to its declaration of a climate emergency, SCC aims to lead the way with an unparalleled range of activities and policy changes to support its ambition of being a 'net zero' authority by 2030. The council's cabinet reviewed and agreed an extensive programme of recommendations to achieve this ambition including dozens of changes and new ways of working. Being 'net zero' means the council will remove its carbon emissions where it can; if it is unable to do so, it will compensate for those emissions

➤ **Investment in Suffolk's Natural Environment**

The County Council will be investing in tree-planting, restoring hedgerows, and improving roadside verges for wildlife. £228,000 from the Suffolk 2020 Fund will enable Suffolk County Council to enhance its work to protect and encourage biodiversity in the county. The authority will do this through a number of new schemes, as well as building on existing work.

➤ **Suffolk Archives New Home "The Hold" Welcomes First visitors in 2020**

Monday 28 September saw the public able to access The Hold, Suffolk's flagship new heritage facility on Ipswich Waterfront. This versatile new building will be the permanent home of the Suffolk Archives Ipswich branch and is shared with the University of Suffolk, who have dedicated teaching spaces within the building. The creation of The Hold, and its associated countywide programme of events and activities, has been made possible thanks to a grant of £10.3m from The National Lottery Heritage Fund, and further funding support from other national organisations and local Suffolk heritage groups.

➤ **Better Broadband for Suffolk reaches 100,000th customer as the 3rd phase contract is agreed with the UK Government.**

By June 3, more than 100,000 households across Suffolk were using faster broadband, thanks to the council-led Better Broadband for Suffolk programme. The partnership - between Suffolk County Council, Openreach, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership (NALEP) and local councils – has made faster broadband available to around 150,000 premises so far, since being launched in 2010. It means the current total superfast broadband coverage in Suffolk now stands at more than 98 per cent coverage.

The team has plans to go even further, after today announcing an additional phase of work, to provide connectivity to approximately 5,000 more premises, including over 550 businesses, in some of the most rural parts of Suffolk under Phase 3.

➤ **Suffolk County Council secures £3.1M for building decarbonisation initiative.**

Suffolk County Council (SCC), working in conjunction with property specialists Concertus, has secured £3+M of funding from The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) to promote capital energy efficiency and heat decarbonisation projects within buildings used to provide frontline public services. Working with Concertus, the council has been preparing a range of packages to support the decarbonising of various buildings in the Council's estate including applications for the council's headquarters at Endeavour House in Ipswich, four rural fire stations, Beacon House, Waterloo Centre and Leiston Children's Centre. All this is to help reduce the County Council's running costs for the future.

James Finch, County Councillor for The Stour Valley Division – March 2021

6. Cllr Parker, Babergh District Councillor

Reported on a busy year that was COVID intense. All staff are still working remotely and this has worked remarkably well with virtual meetings adopted as the norm. A variety of schemes had been implemented to help the community;

- £21m was made available to businesses,
- home not alone initiative
- 45 new built homes in Sudbury with 158 new homes planned in the next year,
- introduction of Sudbury virtual high street, helping retailers through lockdowns
- 1st bio diversity,

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- Kingfisher £2.4 m refurbishment,
- Abbeycroft,
- Covert Refuse collection lorries to run on hydro vegetable oil
- CIL funding
- CIFCO £1.6 m income and expecting, £1.9 m next year
- Babergh were shortlisted as finalists to council of year award.
- Finally surplus budget only in August last year, thanks to support of central government, with forecast of £4.5m budget. Challenging decisions have had to be made including the introduction of parking charges in Sudbury.

7. Police report - There is no Police report, but comments from the floor reported that Ryes school has attracted less attention than in previous years.

8. The Chairman gave the Parish Council report.

There was no APM meeting last year due to lockdown, but lack face to face meetings has not impeded progress in the community. Support has been fantastic through the pandemic to ensure that no one was missed in the village. There were lots of volunteers but few requests for help. Planning the village grows at a great pace, the nursery school caused a lot of concern and we will all be pleased to draw that to a conclusion. Parish Councillors have been drawing on a lot of precious time, and we will all be sorry to see John Symonds resign after approaching 40 years service, he has been a huge asset both in the village and as the Parish Council, sorry to see him stand down. Thanks are extended to members of the community for their tireless work Paul, Cynthia and Rose, thanks to Lee and James, thanks to Clerk, Jane were grateful to all she did, Mel and me.. , finally thanks to Simon White all seems to have gone well with him

9. Mr Cowlin reported on the Assington Association – Which was read by Cllr Stacey
The ASSINGTON ASSOCIATION Annual Report for 2020.

The Assington Association is a not for profit organisation which funds our village magazine, the Assington News.

Our Editor, Cllr Stacey, published 10 editions throughout 2020, including several pages of colour photos of the Horticultural Show in the October edition. This year each issue has also been published on the Parish Council website, in colour.

Thanks again to the advertisers and generous contributions from individuals, the Parish Council and the organisers of the Horticultural Show, our finances remain in reasonable order. Our income from all sources exceeded expenditure on printing etc this year by about £250, but there have been a number of advertisers not renewing for 2021, which is causing concern, largely due to Coronavirus affecting their businesses. I confirm the books have again been ably audited by Ian Clark.

Thanks are due to all the contributors of articles and reports for the magazine, and to the volunteers who deliver it around the village. As ever, Bronwen, our editor looks forward to receiving your articles and reports, please, by the 15th of each month.

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10 Mr King reported for the Assington Village Charity.

The first Lockdown against the spread of Covid-19 began on 23rd March 2020 which closed the Playground so joyously opened a fortnight previously. All lettings for the Hall and Playing Field were cancelled, apart from the Post Office which remained open on Wednesday mornings.

At the virtual AGM on 6th May 2020, Claire Osborne took over as Charity Secretary and the current Chair Stephen King, and Treasurer Sue Sadler-Brunning, agreed to continue in post, as did all the other members of the committee. Our Independent Auditor welcomed a business plan submitted by Dr John Symons to fulfil our responsibilities to the Charities Commission. The Charity benefitted from £2155 income from investments (a drop of 18% from 2019) and with the aid of Government Grants we reached year ended 31st December with a net profit of £8772. In September, the Charity bank accounts were moved online with two signatories required for each payment, speeding up the transfer of monies and avoiding any physical contact.

At the end of June, the Playground was re-opened and in August the Horticultural Show took place in a marquee on the Playing Field.

On September 1st at a virtual committee meeting, it was agreed to re-open the hall as soon as possible under strict social distancing and cleaning rules. Nettie Osman volunteered to oversee the provision of supplies and signage to comply with Covid-19 regulations in the Hall and Playground. At a further meeting held at the end of September, each new letting was asked to produce a Risk Assessment for Covid-19 regulation compliance, and the Post Office reverted to Monday and Wednesday opening. In October the hot air recycling heating system was replaced by floor standing convector heaters to prevent aerial transmission of the virus. There followed two bookings from the HappySounds Community Choir and the Yoga Group who met until Lockdown #2 started in November. The outlook for fully re-opening the hall looked increasingly unlikely as Christmas approached, and Lockdown #3 confirmed the worst.

During the year, the Playing Field was cut and pitch-marked by Thomas Wallis in preparation for a team from Hadleigh Football Club. They were unable to play despite several attempts because the restrictions were too limiting.

I am grateful for the support of our current committee through this most difficult year. My special thanks are to our Caretaker Paul Battle and Cleaner Stephanie Gould who between them have checked and cleaned the systems in the hall and kept us safe. I would also like to thank Nettie Osman for her tremendous help in making the hall and playground Covid-secure.

With the possibility of Lockdown #3 easing off our AGM is scheduled for the middle of May. Every effort will be made to hold the AGM in the hall, with suitable social distancing. At this meeting, the term of office of all members of the committee comes to an end. They may be re-elected or re-appointed. All residents of the area age 18 and over can attend. We will be looking for at least two new members to replace Nettie Osman and Wesley Benton who have resigned through pressure of work.

11. Mr Symons report on the Parochial Church Council - emailed after the meeting

This year has presented great challenges and also opportunities for the church. For much of the year the church building has been closed, and during the time in the autumn of 2020 when we were allowed to worship within the church there was no singing, but mask wearing and social distancing.

There have been no weddings in church and in Assington, no funerals; and the major events (carol service, church fete, etc.) didn't happen. All very different both for how we express our faith and for how we managed to pay for the infrastructure on which we rely, the church maintenance and the cost of our clergy.

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However, the lockdown has also enabled us to improve greatly our skills at on line services, seminars and talks, no longer limited by concerns of travel we are able to reach a wide audience. Those of us that regularly attend church here have not only continued to meet and worship with our friends here but have enjoyed services and events from all over the world.

We certainly hope to soon return to our lovely church but hopefully will also continue to use these new opportunities to reach, or be part of, a much wider audience. John Symons

Cllr Stacey reported that early in 2020 a grant had been obtained which enabled all the downpipes and hoppers to be replaced, also the vestry west roof was repaired and made watertight. Since lockdown, during which no services were held, services resumed in the summer on alternate weeks. The church was unable to hold Christmas Services due to the second lockdown, and we are currently in the process of deciding whether we are able to hold an Easter Sunday Service. Maintenance-wise the Churchyard has continued to be mown regularly by volunteers, with only one major cut in the autumn, which takes the donation from the PC."

Ms Grant on the Neighbourhood watch scheme in Barracks Road, Assington. Neighbourhood Watch Report March 2021

1. Fire Hydrants at top of Marshall's Green and at the Threeways Green 'triangle': The former has been further knocked back and down so is invisible while the latter is in danger of again being knocked over.
2. Two pedestrians walking (distanced) were almost run over by a very large vehicle travelling around a bend at "about 40 miles an hour".
The driver of the vehicle was also shocked and did an emergency stop.
3. Litter on the verges and the roads (Marshall's Green and Barracks Lane) remains a persistent problem.
Simon King and residents of both Lanes regularly pick up the litter (wearing gloves) and dispose of it more appropriately in bins.
4. Comments on the condition of the roads and verges continue to be made.
In places, the tarmac has separated from the verge so creating a 'ditch' - a hazard for cars, cyclists and horses forced to the side while avoiding an oncoming vehicle.
Concerns have been made regarding the danger to the brook which runs beneath Barracks Lane.
5. Some months ago heavy rain caused overflowing of the road drainage grills at the bottom of the Barracks Lane/Marshall's Green Footpath steps.
A passing pedestrian observed diesel was floating on top of the water. The pedestrian reported the incident to a member of the Assington Parish Council.
6. Assington Autos: Recently a break-in was attempted in the early hours of the morning.
Entry was gained by means of a ladder over a roof and according to Fred Cook a sledgehammer was used to attempt the break-in.

12. Mr King gave the report on behalf of the Allotment Association.

Last year was notable for the outbreak of Covid-19 which has governed our lives ever since. The first period of lockdown started just after our AGM on 8th March 2020, so we were able to hold the meeting in person. Stephen King was re-elected to the Chair, Claire Osborne as Secretary and Lisa Brooks as Treasurer. All were elected unanimously.

All twelve plots were taken for the second year running and a waiting list began to accumulate. The weather was thoroughly unsettling all year. There was either too much rain, too much sun or too much wind, despite which, a successful Horticultural Show was held in August in a

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marquee at the Village Playing Field, organised by Bryn Hurren and Lisa Brooks. Bryn won the prize for Best Allotment.

The pond was completed, and hedgehogs were introduced to the site to help combat pests. The second meeting of the year in October was virtual, held online via Zoom. The Parish Council agreed to continue to support the Association in maintaining the rent at £360 for 2021/22, provided most of the plots were taken by residents of the village. The Council also continued to pay for the water supply and the upkeep of the land surrounding the site. A revised Tenancy Agreement for 2021/22 will be issued.

The Association is extremely grateful for the support from the Parish Council. The allotments have been a great help as a distraction from the difficulties of living with the pandemic. In lockdown, social distancing at the site is easily maintained, and visits to the plots can be counted as exercise, work or getting essential supplies!

13. Ms Hollingsworth made the following comments on the Parish footpaths.
- FP16 - notified of fallen tree blocking footpath. Landowner was contacted and quickly made the way passable again
- FP12 - At The Street, the steps and finger post were replaced
 - FP 8 - near the village hall entrance, the finger post that was rotten and had been knocked down, was replaced
 - FP12 - At 3-ways both flights of steps were refurbished
 - FP13 - at The Street, the top rung of the stile was removed to make passage across easier
 - FP12 - midway along near the junction with FP20, the low level stile was replaced by David Hodge, the landowner
 - On A134 opposite entrance to Marshalls Green Road, the finger post was replaced, as it had been knocked down
 - On A134 both sides of the road at Home Farm, FP15/22, both finger posts replaced as rotting through at bases
 - We have clipped around finger posts, to make them more visible and have litter picked the high use areas frequently

Items outstanding:

We have made a request to Suffolk highways to provide a solution to the very wet, boggy area from the kissing gate to the bridge on FP 20

Unfortunately the footpaths have become very muddy and worn this year, due to COVID 19 leading to more people walking the footpaths than usual, combined with a high winter rainfall.

We have passed on our thanks to Eugene Corkhill for the works that he has carried out this past year.

14. Cllr Wallace reported on the Neighbourhood Plan.
- In 2020 the Neighbourhood Plan regular team meeting were disrupted by the Covid 19 lockdown regulations. However communication continued successfully by e mail between the group, Places4People consultant Ian Poole and the Parish Council and in August 2020, the draft plan was ready and submitted to Babergh District Council.

Following this the plan has gone through the necessary consultation period, however delays have occurred as a result of Covid 19. The independent examiner's report, which was due in December 2020 was subject to such delays and so the examiner could not do a site visit until February 2021 and the completed report was received in March 2021.

The examiner has made modifications to some of the policies in the draft Neighbourhood Plan and lays down her evidence and rational for this in line with national legislation. Subject to

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making these modifications the plan is assessed as meeting the basic requirements and the examiner has recommended to Babergh District Council the plan can go forward to referendum.

The next stage is to work with Babergh District Council to make the necessary changes and produce the final NP document. If all can go to plan then the referendum could be as soon as June 2021.

The Neighbourhood Plan team have worked tirelessly to get to this stage and I would like to thank the members for their continued commitment and support. In addition I would like to thank the Parish Council for their prompt responses when needed and on going support. Together we are in the final stages of achieving our ambition of a functioning document and working towards our vision for Assington as stated in the plan:

In 2036 Assington will remain a rural and attractive village, having protected its countryside setting by ensuring that new development is in proportion to and respectful of the character of the village, while at the same time maintaining a thriving, vibrant and open community.

15. There was no further business and the meeting closed at 7.55 pm.