

# ASSINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Christine Hargan, 4 Northfield Road, Onehouse, Stowmarket IP14 3HF  
01449 674727 Email: assingtonpc@yahoo.com

## **Minutes of the Assington Annual Parish Meeting on Monday 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025 at 7pm in Assington Village Hall.**

**6 members of the public and 6 Parish Councillors were present**

1. Apologies for absence  
None
2. Chairman's welcome  
All the community were saddened to hear of the passing of Ian Jordan in February, his personality and hard work within the village and for the Parish Council will be sadly missed. On 30<sup>th</sup> April a memorial service will be held at St Edmund's Church.
3. Confirmation and signing of Minutes of Meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> March 2024  
The minutes were signed by Cllr Thorogood, Chair of the Parish Council
4. Matters arising from the Minutes  
None

### **Reports**

#### **5. Mr J Finch (County Councillor)**

Reported on the ten Key Activities for the year.

New Independent Chair has been appointed to drive forward Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) reform.

- On April 23 Suffolk County Council can announce that Kathryn Boulton has been appointed as the new independent chair of the Local Area Partnership's SEND Improvement Board. Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) provision is delivered by the Local Area Partnership in Suffolk, which includes Suffolk County Council, NHS Suffolk and North-East Essex Integrated Care Board and NHS Norfolk and Waveney Integrated Care Board.
  - The SEND Improvement Board was set up in response to the inspection of SEND services in Suffolk in November 2023
  - Councillors approved an extra £9.1 million for SEND services in July 2024
  - In January 25 - Department for Education welcomes SEND improvements and evidence of impact, but all recognises there are still challenges to overcome.
- Over 400 Suffolk roads set for upgrade as largest ever surfacing project gets underway
  - May 2024 Residents across Suffolk are set to benefit from 421 newly surfaced roads this year (1 April – 31 March) - almost doubling the number of roads completed last year, as Suffolk Highways' largest ever resurfacing programmes got underway. This will be completed in early April 25.
  - East of England local authorities collaborate to appeal for more Foster Families - June 7000 in care - 150 new per month Eleven local authorities across the East of England have joined forces in a bid to collectively recruit more foster carers to look after some of the region's most vulnerable children. Suffolk is taking part in a new initiative for fostering under the banner Foster East. There is an urgent need for foster carers in the East of England with more than 7,000 vulnerable children already in the care of their local authority, and a further 150 children coming into care every month. This has led to having access to powerful new films promoting the importance of local fostering. – on the Suffolk website. Visit [fosterandadopt.suffolk.gov.uk](https://fosterandadopt.suffolk.gov.uk)
- Suffolk County Council Backs Youth Justice Plan with a focus on keeping families together. Suffolk County Council has backed the Youth Justice Plan 2024/25 at a meeting of Full Council on 11th July. The plan has a focus on supporting young people into education, training and employment and reducing the numbers of young people offending, supporting the council's ambition to keep more families together and to keep

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Suffolk safe. Each year the Suffolk Youth Justice Management Board produces a Youth Justice Plan for Suffolk.

- Council's shock at £600m Sunnica solar farm go-ahead in West Suffolk – August 2024
- post election Suffolk County Council has expressed its extreme disappointment that a huge solar farm has been approved in West Suffolk. The Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, Ed Miliband MP, has announced that approval had been granted for the Development Consent Order, as proposed by Sunnica Ltd. The project will see 2,792 acres of solar panels and battery storage, installed across parts of West Suffolk and Cambridgeshire.
- Surrounding 3 villages. → Suffolk residents will be able to access electric vehicles on a short-term basis, from next summer September announcement A trial of electric community vehicles is set to launch next summer in Suffolk, with the tender process beginning this autumn. Plug In Suffolk Car Clubs will be placing sixteen electric vehicles across eight locations in Suffolk which local residents can book by the minute, hour or day. Planned locations include Ipswich, Bury St Edmunds, Newmarket, Sudbury, Needham Market, Stowmarket, Lowestoft and Woodbridge. Members of the public interested in this project are urged to sign up to the mailing list to receive updates as the project progresses – search: Plug in Suffolk Car Clubs - Mailing List.
- Solar Together launches in Suffolk – September 2024 - Residents of Suffolk can come together to invest in renewable energy sources through a group-buying scheme for solar panels and battery storage. Solar Together Suffolk helps homeowners feel confident that they are paying the right price for a high-quality installation from qualified installers. Over 3000 residents had signed up by October 24 Richard from Bures, near Sudbury, recently shared his experience with Solar Together Suffolk and said: "Excellent! Solar Together Suffolk took all the hassle of finding a provider, and the group-buying secured me a better discount than trying to do this on my own. It was a no-brainer."
- Suffolk County Council set on major investment to further protect Suffolk from flooding as it calls on Government to 'step up' - October 24 – 12 months on from Storm Babet.
  - SCC set to agree £1.5 million to deliver first phase of works identified in initial flood investigation reports
  - Authority calls on Government to recognise ongoing impact of Storm Babet and fund £20 million of further prevention work urgently needed
  - Extensive work already completed since Storm Babet including more than 111,000 drains cleared and significant road repairs
- The County Council leaders have proposed one council for Suffolk One council for Suffolk would make delivering public services simpler, cheaper and quicker, and better meet the needs of residents and businesses, county leaders have said. Following a recent government announcement that Suffolk's county, district and borough councils will be replaced with a single-tier system, Suffolk County Council argues that consolidating all services under one unitary authority is the only effective way to deliver against the government's criteria for local government reform The move would see all council services, such as waste collection and disposal, housing, social care, planning, highways maintenance, leisure, school placements and travel and street cleaning, all provided by one authority - rather than the six that currently exist in Suffolk. Bringing together district, borough and county council functions is expected to reduce duplication, lower administrative costs and ensure a more coordinated and cost-effective approach to delivering essential services. The council warns that splitting services among multiple bodies would force the duplication of essential functions - such as social care, highways maintenance and schools - currently managed at a county level. The key benefits of one council are:
  - Simpler for residents – one council would make it easier to understand and contact local government

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- Clearer accountability – there would be less confusion over who is responsible for what
- Better use of funding – a more coherent, strategic, financially sustainable, county wide approach to budgeting
- Better alignment of services – since everything is under one roof, services can be more easily coordinated, creating opportunities to improve services for residents
- More efficient decision-making – with just one council, decisions can be made more quickly
- Stronger leadership – a single, visible and accountable body providing a clear strategic voice for Suffolk. The council submitted its initial proposal to the government by 21 March, with a more detailed business case to follow later in the year. The government will then undertake a public consultation.
- Council's budget prioritises vulnerable residents and essential services Suffolk County Council has unveiled its proposed budget for 2025/26, with a strong focus on supporting vulnerable residents across the county. Under the proposals, the council's net budget would rise by 6.7%, from £752.9 million in 2024/25 to £803.7 million in 2025/26. Key allocations include:
  - £18.1 million extra for children's services, ensuring continued support for young people and families in need
  - £35.2 million extra for adult care, aimed at addressing the growing demand for social care services. To help fund these essential services, the council is proposing a 4.99% rise in Council Tax. This would consist of a 2.99% increase in general Council Tax and an additional 2% specifically for adult care services. In conclusion may I thank all the Parish Council members and parishioners for their support to me during the year. James Finch - 24 March 2025

## 6. Mr L Parker (District Councillor)

### May

- *Food waste collections for Babergh and Mid-Suffolk Residents from 2026 announced*
- *Cllr Deborah Saw Elected as the new leader of Babergh District Council*

### June

- *An additional 47 new electric charge points are now available in Babergh and MS car parks thanks to a £300K grant.*

### July

- *Babergh to clear the way for listed building energy upgrades in a new approach which is the first of its kind in the country.*

### August

- *Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils publish their full response to National Grid's Norwich to Tilbury consultation*
- *Residents in Babergh and Mid Suffolk will not only see the introduction of new weekly food waste collections from 2026, but could also enjoy a 'recycling revolution' under new plans*

### September

- *Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils support five-point action plan being put to the Government urging them to save Council homes.*
- *Extensive repairs required at Sudbury's Kingfisher Leisure pool have been identified*
- *Government scraps the proposed Suffolk devolution deal*

### October

- *The first homes developed at Babergh District Council's former Corks Lane offices in Hadleigh have gone on the market – with the properties hailed as a significant investment in the town's future.*

### November

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## December

- *Babergh District Council's Cabinet is set to consider a 2.99% increase to the district's share of council tax bills - as councillors warn of a £10.9 million budget gap over the next five years due to a 'broken' funding system.*
- *Babergh District Council leader responds to Devolution White Paper*

## January

- *Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils say a huge rise in housebuilding requirements set by the Government has left no option but to review their Joint Local Plan.*

## February

- *The swimming pool at Kingfisher Leisure Centre in Sudbury will reopen this weekend after repair work was completed.*
- *Government launches a public consultation on proposals to create a Mayoral Combined County Authority across Norfolk and Suffolk.*

## March

- *The Leaders of the county's five district and borough councils respond to the decision by Suffolk County Council to submit interim proposals for a single unitary authority, as part of the Local Government Review process, saying there is no compelling case for a mega Council in Suffolk*
- *Work to make council homes warmer and bring down energy bills for tenants across Babergh and Mid Suffolk have received a £2.9m boost in government funding, specifically from the Dept for Energy Security and Net Zero*

**Questions** Are people being asked their opinion on devolution, District and County Councils? It will be run by the government there is a consultation re devolution generally Do the district have any strategy for Alms Houses? Not specifically, they tend to be lumped together with general housing., but they tend to be run by independent trusts

## **7. Mr S Thorogood (Assington Parish Council)**

Well here we are again another year whizzes past at the speed of light. The Parish Council have done their very best to represent you, to help keep our community running smoothly, to help each other and to keep your Council Tax as low as possible.

All the Councillors and indeed the community were saddened by the sudden passing of Councillor Ian Jordan in February whose personality and commitment to the village will be sorely missed. I would like to thank the Parish Councillors for their tireless work on behalf of the community.

I would like to thank our Footpath Wardens Paul and Cynthia Hollingsworth for their hard work over the last 5 years and to wish them well in their retirement.

- Our Neighbourhood Plan has again proven its worth and is being acknowledged by Babergh District Council. It has shielded our village from being over developed as a number of planning applications which were outside of the development area have been refused so the work of the Neighbourhood Planning team really has been worthwhile and hopefully will continue to be so for many years to come. It is an enormous help with planning and means that we now gain 25% of CIL (Community Infrastructure levy) on new build projects.

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- This year CIL money has been used to help the Village Hall with its new kitchen and front door and has promised when required to assist with the installation of an Accessible WC and a Scullery into the Church building.
- The National Grid (NG) plans for a huge revised infrastructure from Bramford to Tilbury have been approved despite the work of Cllr Howcroft and an action group of Southern Parishes. Unfortunately the NG are forging ahead with their original plan
- We have responded to 11 Planning applications on 10 locations within the village.

I would like to once again thank Lee Parker and James Finch for their attendance at our meetings and for their willingness to offer help and advice when needed. I would like to thank the Parish Councillors for their help and support over the last year and the Clerk. And **finally**, my thanks to Dave Crimmin our internal auditor, for ensuring that we comply with legislation.

## 8. Mr B Cowlin (Assington Association)

Assington Association is the not for profit organisation which organises and publishes our village magazine, the Assington News.

Our editor Bronwen Stacey again published 10 editions throughout 2024. Each edition is also published on the Parish Council website.

Thanks to our advertisers and generous contributions from individuals, the Parish Council and organisers of the Horticultural Show, our finances remain in reasonable order. The books have once again been ably audited by Ian Clark.

I am concerned at the number of advertisers who are in arrears and am making strenuous efforts to collect outstanding balances or will recommend to our editor to discontinue their advertisements.

Thanks are due to all the contributors of articles and reports for the magazine, our advertisers and donors and the volunteers who deliver each edition freely to every household in the parish. As ever, our editor, Bronwen Stacey, looks forward to receiving your articles and reports please, by 15<sup>th</sup> of each month

Having been treasurer for 8 years I'm wishing to retire volunteers please.  
Thanks were extended to the editor and treasurer

## 9. Mr D Wiles (Assington Village Charity)

The Assington Village Charity had had a very productive year with projects, compliance maintenance, and bookings. We have been without a secretary for the last 18 months, so I am covering my position as Chairman and the secretary role. We currently have 4 trustees who are recognised by the charity commission, a treasurer and a lettings secretary.

I have been disappointed with donations to the food bank with little being donated.

### Projects

Within the last 12 months the village hall has been fitted with new fire doors, threshold carpeting and, new main doors, and most recently a new veranda roof, with planned and costed re painting of the outside woodwork. This should complete my 2 year target to bring the facility fully up to date. We have a good Wi-Fi secured connection which is also used by The Post Office with no ongoing issues after they installed new software to their system.

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We have our own website launching on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025 for up-to-date information on all aspects of the hall including Booking Forms and Terms and Conditions and up and coming events. We are still awaiting confirmation of the commence date of the charging points installation.

## **Compliance**

All compliance documentation is up to date including up to date Public Liability Insurance. All statutory testing is on a rolling programme and is also up to date for inspection as required. Fire alarm testing is carried out weekly. Cleaning of the facility is carried out by the cleaner and the caretaker. The playground inspection has been completed with no major issues found.

## **Bookings**

The booking of the facility has started to increase with regular Ryes Academy corporate Training events, Local group events, children's parties, and our regular lets. We are hoping that this will increase with the website go live. We are trying to push the venue for outside wedding receptions and parties at a very competitive cost. We are now charging a £250 refundable deposit as we had an incident that nappies and baby wipes were flushed down the toilet costing £730 for removal! The football pitch is now being used by AFC Sudbury for their under14/15 grass roots football home pitch.

## **Summary**

A reasonable year for the charity, our finances are in good condition. Thank you to Assington Parish Council for the CIL funding.

Thanks were extended to Mr Wiles Very lucky to have you at the helm

What are the long term plans for next 5 years, To increase bookings by local people and to create an entertainment committee. In terms of acquisitions maybe a few new tables! Thanks were extended to David Wiles.

## **10. Rev Whiffin (Parochial Church Council)**

Thanks to the councillors both Parish, District and County, the Church exists for the benefit of everyone and is their privilege to serve in major life events whether good or bad,

Followers of Jesus tend to be proactive by their nature, but also they want everyone to explore Jesus Christ, and to enjoy the "Church family" who are a thriving, supportive and fun family to be with.

Safeguarding for 15 years now much work has been done to ensure that the church is as safe as possible, and that policies and procedures are updated.

The project to provide proper facilities in the base of the Tower, has been challenging as it is a listed building, not least because installing utilities and services through neighbouring properties and the churchyard has been difficult. Thanks were extended to Cllr Stacey for spear heading the project.

The Church do not want any hinderance to people in enjoying the facilities or services and look forward to welcoming newcomers and current friends to services.

**Questions** Are there plans for VE day? Yes in Bures on the Common. From 31 December David Wiles becomes standard bearer for Leavenheath but in the meantime is willing and able to serve elsewhere.

How close with the Tower Project? It has gone out to Tender, they will be busy to raise the rest of the funds. Hopefully it will be started within the next year or so.

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Thanks were extended to Rev Whiffin and his team.

## 11. Rev Whiffin (Baby and Toddler Group)

The group continues to run successfully and the Church family are grateful for the support of parents, grandparents, volunteers and children and they would welcome some more volunteers if members of the public have time to offer.

Thanks were extended to Rev Whiffin

## 12. Mrs J Cutts (Allotments Association)

Despite some late spring frosts in 2024 the crops recovered from their hit and we all seem to have enjoyed some good harvests, although the season seemed to be short for many varieties. This did have some impact on the horticultural show as prospective exhibits were no longer available.

All plots were tenanted throughout the year with 3 plot holders resident in Leavenheath. At the time of writing plot 2 is vacant.

Following the rains of winter and early spring 2024, the maintenance of the allotment perimeter and conservation area proved difficult and growth of wild hedgerow became excessive. I am aware that the council were needing to prioritise cutting back at roadsides etc for safety reasons. However the delay in cutting the two areas mentioned above resulted in the conservation area being inaccessible and growth of nettles became invasive on many of the plots adjoining the perimeter alongside the conservation area. We were only able to maintain accessibility of the perimeter area through the endeavours of plot holder volunteers who cut paths through the long grass. May I therefore ask the Parish Council to ensure the perimeter is cut during the growing season and that the circular path within the conservation areas is restored. My thanks in advance for these works.

As with many community bank accounts we were advised by our bankers towards the end of 2024 that our account would be incurring charges from January 2025 which amounted to 12% of our income. Our Treasurer has managed to identify an alternative bank to avoid these charges and she will be contacting the Parish Council for their bank details in order to make electronic rent payments.

Unfortunately the recent winter storms of 2025 resulted in the loss of the poly tunnel on plot 9 and the greenhouse on plot 8. This is obviously disappointing to those plot holders but please do not lose faith!

The Parish Council's provision of the additional water outlets has proved invaluable and certainly made watering during dry spells far less onerous. As is practice, we do turn the water off from November to early March to prevent any freezing.

The following officers were appointed at the Association's AGM on 9 March 2025:

Chairman – Bryn Hurren

Secretary – Karl Debenham

Treasurer – Lisa Brooks

Thanks were extended to Lisa Brooks

## 13. Mr P & Mrs C Hollingsworth (Footpaths Warden)

FOOTPATH 16 – Reported 26.09.24 – Finger post replaced November 2024 (entrance to The Thicks)

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FOOTPATH 20 – Reported 05.02.25 – Finger post knocked over by hedge cutting contractor (Vicary Estate). Still outstanding, despite chasing.

We have continued to straighten way markers, clean signs and remove vegetation so the signs are visible and can be read.

Finally, our request that consideration be given to a short boardwalk being installed in the wet area of The Willow Tree Valley (we receive regular comments on the issue) was raised and discussed at the Council Meeting on 03.06.24. Councillors decided that they were not convinced that it would be a good use of funds and agreed to re-visit the issue in the autumn. This has not happened as no mention has been made in subsequent meeting notes, so presumably the issue has been consigned to history – a great pity as the walk is very popular.

Paul and Cynthia Hollingsworth, 25/03/25

Thanks were extended to the outgoing Footpath Wardens

## **14. Any Other Business**

None

The meeting concluded at 8pm