

# 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 25<sup>th</sup> March 2024 at 7pm in Assington Village Hall.

### 10 members of the public were present

1. Apologies for absence  
None
2. Chairman's welcome
3. Confirmation and signing of Minutes of Meeting held on 29th March 2023  
signed
4. Matters arising from the Minutes  
None

### Reports

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

- Library Services – The Council has underlined its commitment to library services in Suffolk, as it approved plans in May to increase its funding to Suffolk Libraries, now an independent charity. This will enable the service to continue operating at its current level, until the end of the contract in July 2024 when a new contract will be drawn up.
- Suffolk Fire Service to bring control room back to the County. SCC Announced plans in June to create a new fire control centre here in Suffolk independently of Cambridgeshire. The company behind a project to deliver a new IT system as a joint venture, initiated in 2019, has run into technical and financial problems, causing a significant delay. This will protect and upgrade the call centre specifically for Suffolk residents.
- £100m broadband investment in Suffolk under government's Project Gigabit Better broadband is on its way for around 80,000 properties across rural Suffolk in a £100 million investment under a £5 billion government infrastructure programme. This will build on our Better Broadband for Suffolk programme which has helped to deliver wider access to superfast broadband to be installed by City Fibre.
- Highways Repairs Following the ever-increasing demand for road repairs, the SCC Cabinet approved an extra £10 million in November to repair and resurface local roads in villages and residential areas across Suffolk over 3 years. This was followed by the Government announcement to invest £609m into highway maintenance in the East of England of which £107.5m has been ringfenced for Suffolk over the next decade, including £3.4 million in this financial year 23/24.
- Almost £1 million extra committed to investigating the flooding following Babet Since the storm, targeted recovery work has been carried out across the county to ensure damaged highway infrastructure is repaired, those whose properties were flooded get help and that investigations can start which will identify how to reduce flood risk. As lead local flood authority, the county council has a duty to investigate significant flooding and establish the source of flooding, factors which may have caused the flooding, the impacts on people, services and infrastructure and any actions which could be taken to increase resilience to future storm events. In any usual year, Suffolk County Council carries out around 3 or 4 of these investigations. Following Babet, up to 100 are likely to be needed.
- Suffolk County Council's Adult Social Care service rated Good overall by Care Quality Commission Following a period of intense inspection by the Care Quality Commission (CQC), Suffolk County Council has become one of the first councils nationwide to achieve this standard. CQC's final report rated the overall quality of Suffolk County Council's Adult Social Care services as "Good" and highlighted areas of strength including, the quality of its leadership, the culture of learning and support for staff, the range of digital care options available under CASSIUS, the

# ASSINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

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

good relationship between social care and health colleagues and locality team knowledge and understanding of community needs. This rating is also a testament to the high levels of financial investment the council has consistently put into Adult Social Care over the years, especially during the dark days of the pandemic, and shows how through imagination and service transformation, they are delivering on the priority of us all to put people's health and wellbeing at the top of your local authority our agenda for adult social.

- Budget 23/24 Overspend Over this last 12 months, budgetary control and forecasting has been a major challenge for the County Council. Special Educational Needs, SEND school transport and care costs are the main factors for SCC forecasting to spend £22.3m over its original £688.1m budget for the 23/24 financial year.
- 24/25 SCC budget Approved with a focus on protecting the most vulnerable adults and young people. Suffolk County Council has confirmed its financial budget for 2024-25. The £752.8m package was approved at the Full Council meeting on Thursday 15 February 2024, with the priority to protect vulnerable adults and children across the county. This represents an increase of £64.7m over the 23/24 financial year. Despite the recently announced uplift in government funding and asking for an increase in Council Tax of 4.99%, it is still not sufficient to cover the rising costs imposed by inflation, or more importantly the increasing levels of demand for services - in particular children's care, special educational needs, and disabilities (SEND) and home to school transport. Focusing on those children who have extremely demanding needs and no-one else to turn to, is the right thing to do. SCC have therefore confirmed that 60 new members of staff will be recruited to drive forward important reform to the way special educational needs and disability (SEND) services are delivered in Suffolk. This includes an increase in permanent SEND staff of nearly 15%. These new posts will support the improvement of the quality and homeliness of assessments, plans, reviews, and communications with families. To provide care and services for vulnerable children and adults, the next two years will see an additional £42.7 million allocated to children's services, and an additional £29.9 million for adult services. However, this means £64.7 million of savings needs to be found at the same time over 2 years which include:-
  - £11 million of staffing costs through changing the way services are delivered and restructuring across the council.
  - £30.6 million of additional savings from an extension of the council's hugely successful Adult Social Care Transformation programme. The council's budget will therefore increase by 8.6% (from £693.0 million to £752.8 million), some of which is generated by a 4.99% increase in the council's share of Council Tax, and additional Government funding. The increase of 4.99% to Council Tax is made up of a 2.99% increase in general Council Tax and a 2.00% increase dedicated to funding adult care. This will see the council's share of a Band B property's bill rise by £1.12 per week, compared to last year.

There is a glimmer of light on the Bramford to Twinstead project due to new technology. Thanks were extended to CCllr Finch

## 6. Mr L Parker (District Councillor)

### May

- Local elections: 10 Greens, 9 Independents, 7 Conservatives, 5 Liberal Democrats & 1 Labour Cllr made up the new Council.
- Coalition agreed between the Greens, Independents and Liberal Democrats with the sharing of leadership across the 4-year term.

# ASSINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

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

- The long running Bellevue House issue appeared settled as contracts were exchanged.

## June

- Council reiterates its objection to pylon proposals.

## July

- Cabinet sets its strategy for the next four years citing climate housing and community at the heart of its priorities.

## August

- Cost of living support for residents reviewed. - £100,000 made available to council tenants, a reduction in council tax for low-income households and £150,000 to households struggling with rent.
- A 30% increase in funding to Citizens Advice Bureaus to accommodate increased cost due to increased demand.

## September

- Inspectors declare the long-awaited joint local plan part one to be sound and can progress to adoption. The plan has been seven years in the making.

## October

- Baberghs new website was launched.
- Storm Babet. Suffolk resilience forum declares a major incident and provides cross agency support to those affected by flooding in the district.

## November

- A consultation begins into measures that might streamline energy efficiency upgrades to listed properties.
- A consultation was launched to help shape the future of Babergh following the strategy announcement in July.
- The joint local plan was adopted at full council.
- There was a call for land to support nature, to increase tree coverage and to improve biodiversity.

## December

- Parking charges are back on the agenda. Babergh Cabinet declares that it needs to consider all options faced with a potential shortfall of £1.8M of funding.

## January

- Babergh urges the government to fix the broken funding for councils after cost of running the council was expected to rise by 12.8% year on year.

## February

- A balanced budget was delivered albeit by use of £1.2 million of reserves.
- The parking charges petition was heard.

## March

- Babergh District Council was named the best council in the UK.
- Parking proposals were considered by the scrutiny committee and will now be forwarded to cabinet for consideration next month.

Thanks were extended to DCllr Parker.

# ASSINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

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

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

What a year we've had. With an elections fiasco in May where Parish Council nominations were "lost" we wondered for a while whether there would be a Parish Council as several of our councillors, including myself and Andrew Hill the Vice-Chair we had apparently not been nominated despite our papers having been delivered by hand. However, the nomination papers were found a fortnight later so here we all are! I would like to thank the Parish Councillors for their tireless work on behalf of the community.

- Our Neighbourhood Plan has proven is 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 properties.
- The National Grid is threatening to overshadow the area with a huge run of pylons and we thank Cllr Howcroft for his work and for mobilising an action group of Southern Parishes in an effort to minimise the disruption both visually and with planned construction.
- We have responded to 16 Planning applications on 14 locations within the village.
- The Coronation celebrations were a huge success and were enjoyed by the whole community. we have Councillor Wiles and his team to thank for their tireless work within the village hall.

I would like to once again thank DCllr Lee Parker and CCllr 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 Clerk and all the Assington Parish Councillors for their help and support over the last year. And finally, my thanks to Dave Crimmin our internal auditor, for ensuring that we comply with legislation.

## 8. Mr B Cowlin (Assington Association)

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

Our editor, Bronwen Stacey, again published 10 editions throughout 2023. Each edition is also published on the Parish Council's website, in full colour.

Thanks again 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.

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 the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month.

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

I am pleased to report to the Parish Council that the village hall is fully compliant with all requirements for health and safety and insurance.

- The terms and conditions have been rewritten for hire of the venue with strong conditions for hire of the football facilities.
- We have engaged with all of our maintenance contractors to have fully compliant risk assessment documentation and inspections.
- The fire risk assessment was undertaken and highlighted an issue with the internal fire doors into the hall and the threshold carpet not meeting regulations. These

# ASSINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

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

issues have now been rectified with new doors and carpet fitted to a high and compliant standard.

- Process has been put into weekly checks for Legionella testing and weekly fire alarm testing that is recorded for official inspection if required.
- A sounder and beacon have been fitted to the front of the building with process of what to do by local residents in the event of a fire as the village hall is not on Redcare at the moment.
- The annual inspection for the childrens' playground has been carried out with no issues found.

We are delighted to have received 2 grants,

- 1 for the refurbishment of the kitchen for £10k from BDC that will be installed in May with an official opening to be arranged, and
  - 2 for EV charging points with a date to be confirmed.
- I would like to thank the Parish Council for the CIL funding for the village food bank.
  - We are also planning a brush and a beer/burger event to give the outside paintwork a makeover.
- Bookings at the Village Hall are increasing with 3 wedding receptions already in place.

Financially the village hall was in credit at the end of the year by £480, considering we have had a lot of expenditure I was very happy with this outcome.

The Jubilee and Coronation events were well attended and there was a great community atmosphere. We also held a 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of The Village Hall Tea that went well, with old residents returning to recapture memories and with some great photographs of years gone by.

It's been a busy 10 months since taking the reigns from Stephen King who encourages me beyond words with support in what I am doing along with the committee members support. A lot in the pipeline for the next 12 months. – David Wiles

Thanks was extended to Mr Wiles

## 10. Mrs B Stacey (Parochial Church Council)

There was a flower count last May to monitor biodiversity and ensure that the churchyard looks nice

Last year there were 5 funerals and 2 weddings, the church community is lively and there is a call for updating the church and plans are afoot to use the base of the tower to enclose a small meeting room, a kitchenette, WC and water/drainage. Whilst it doesn't sound a lot the estimates are £103k +VAT but to include another 11% to allow for inflation prior to gaining funds. Delays are due to the requirement to gain the church equivalent of planning permission, prior to tenders being gained. The work can be started and completed by phase, as the funds are gained to complete the next phase. There is a need for renewed stonework around the porch and a problem with ingress of water when there's a real downpour.

Mrs Stacey was thanked for her report.

## 11. Rev T Box (Baby and Toddler Group)

We meet twice a month on Thursdays during term-time from 9.30 – 11am and have a regular group of about 15-20 parents, nannies and grandparents with a maximum of 25 toddlers and a few babes in arms. They are a really friendly crowd, very inclusive and nobody is left on their own for very long. Most travel in from the villages around, but there are always a few Assington families. The Village Hall Trustees are very supportive and locals from the church help set up every time and often visit and chat too. We miss Juliette

# ASSINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

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

Morrison very much. She co-led the group from its pre-Covid start but now has returned to full time work, Linda Britcher now helps every session, and is invaluable.

Thanks were extended to Rev Box

## 12. Mrs J Cutts (Allotments Association)

The weather was much kinder to us than in the previous years and I feel we all had a good growing year, despite the usual and unusual disappointments.

All plots were tenanted throughout the year but we have been given notice on the following:  
Half Plot 8 – I have requested that this is cleared of weeds and debris by 31 March  
Plot 6 – To be vacated from 1 October. We do have interest in this and a potential new tenant is on the waiting list.

The Parish Council have continued to provide the water to the allotment garden and funded the additional water resource via the CIL fund. The council also funded the broken and loose fence posts. Again our thanks for the completion of both these works. The additional water outlets have made a tremendous difference.

We were not successful in recruiting to the post of Secretary at last year's AGM and despite advertising, the post had remained vacant throughout the year. It is not ideal to operate without a full complement of officers and we were successful in appointing at our AGM this year.

Officers elected at the AGM were as follows

Secretary – Karl Debenham

Treasurer – Lisa Brooks

Chair – Jenny Cutts

I would like to thank the Parish Council Secretary, Christine, for her continued help and support with the Allotment Association.

Jenny Cutts

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

During the last 3-4 months the footpaths have been subjected to extreme weather in the form of heavy rainfall, which we appreciate has made conditions difficult for walking.

### **Annual report for Footpaths:**

*Footpath 021* – Finger post replaced and relocated to try to prevent future damage by parking cars.

*Footpath 020* - Plastic finger sign was vandalized, and its replacement is awaited.

*Footpath 012* – Wooden handrail replacement has been completed. New steps are to be installed as existing steps are worn.

***On a final note – We would be grateful if notices of up-and-coming events were not pinned to the footpath posts, they are expensive items. The Parish Council has recently spent a significant sum of money on two new notice boards at Vicary Estate and The Village Hall, which should be used for this purpose. Also, advertising space is available at the Village Shop***

Footpath wardens suggest PC meet monthly. Noted

## 14. Any Other Business

# ASSINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

*Clerk:* Christine Hargan, 4 Northfield Road, Onehouse, Stowmarket IP14 3HF  
01449 674727 Email: [assingtonpc@yahoo.com](mailto:assingtonpc@yahoo.com)

None