

ASHWELLTHORPE AND FUNDENHALL PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> January 2025 7:30pm  
at Thorpe Hall, Ashwellthorpe

Present: S Allen (Chairman)  
S Tyree (ST)  
C Eastwood (CE)  
J Ives (JI)  
Mrs T Higlett (Clerk)  
District Cllr B McClenning and County Cllr C Rowett  
Three members of the public

1)Apologies.

Apologies from R Burridge, C Wood and R Morris council noted. District Cllr I Spratt had also sent his apologies, but had forwarded a report to council.

2) Declarations of interest for items on the Agenda and Dispensations for Councillors with a Pecuniary Interest.

None

3) Public Open Forum

a) Input from public.

Residents of Old Hall Close advised the council that they had not seen a tree surgeon taking a look at the trees. Chairman advised they should contact the owners of Ashwellthorpe Hall to arrange a meeting to discuss their concerns. JI also advised that the owners were keen to set up a meeting with residents and were quite amicable.

b) Report from District Councillor

Appendix 1.

c) Report from County Councillor

Appendix 2.

Council went onto discuss the importance of adhering to standing orders regarding time allocations for public participation. Standing orders state; ' Public Participation time shall not exceed 15 minutes and no one person shall speak for more than 5 minutes, in both cases unless directed otherwise by the chair.

4) To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2024

These were approved and duly signed

5) Matters arising from the Minutes

To hear an update and to consider any necessary action with regard to the following:

a) Purchase of Noticeboard

Company which had previously supplied had gone out of business. This was for installation outside old village hall. Council will now look for another supplier.

b) Update on bank signatories

This is now complete.

c) Ownership of land on Old Hall Close

Previously discussed in public open forum.

d) Relocation of dog waste bin

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Chairman has repositioned bin away from the highway.

- e) Precept submitted to SN  
South Norfolk Council had acknowledged receipt.

6) Planning

- a) 2024/3835 Proposal: Variation of condition 2 of 2024/2085 - amendments to the design of garage and link it to the house. Location: 69 The Street, Ashwellthorpe. Application Type: Removal/Variation of Condition (S73 / S19)  
Council had reviewed the application and as with all applications it was assessed based on the merits and without prejudice. Members proposed no objection.  
Proposed by S Tyree and seconded by C Eastwood – all in favour.

7) Administrative issues

- a) To discuss frequency of meetings and venue dates.  
Council discussed whether an annual parish meeting would be held this year. Legislation states 'that a parish meeting may be convened by the Chairman of the parish council and any two parish councillors or six electors (LGA 1972, sch 12, para 15). Council stated no annual meeting would be held only the statutory annual parish council meeting in May 2025. Council will continue with eleven meetings a year with no meeting to be held in August 2025. Two meetings will be held at St Nicholas Church Fundenhall.
- b) To discuss working from home allowance for clerk.  
This was agreed as clerk is no longer working from Thorpe Hall. The figure of £10 was agreed to cover all homeworking expenses.

8) Finance

- a) To note councils current financial standing.  
Third quarter accounts Appendix 3.
- b) To approve payments.
  - I. Clerks January salary - £288.75
  - II. HMRC – £72.00
  - III. Omache Gardens - £357.50
  - IV. Thorpe Hall – hire of venue for 2023/24/25 - £225.90These were approved unanimously.
- c) To note direct debit payments.  
N Power £73.20 streetlighting electricity.
- d) To note receipts  
South Norfolk Council £289.00 – reimbursement of planning application.

9) Village matters

- a) Footpaths  
JI advised that the footpath opposite the old village hall was a bit muddy. It has been ploughed across but reliant on footfall to tread it down. Paths across the lower, middle and top are good. These link to the bridal path and link Ashwellthorpe and Fundenhall. There is some damage to paths across the middle field which runs to the Street (end of Fundenhall) this has been caused by farm machinery. Signage has been misplaced on the path which leads back to Fundenhall. Paths through to Lower Wood and surrounding area are fine. The other side of the Street, paths through to Lower wood and surrounding area are fine. Footpath alongside Ollets Farm is very muddy and if you were to slip there is only barbed wire to grab onto, which is in place for securing livestock. The latter stages are ploughed up and reliant on footfall to reinstate.
- b) Defibrillator checks

These have now been carried out and Circuit has been updated by RM.

- c) Noticeboard. Previously discussed.
- d) VE Day. JI proposed looking to see if there are any grants available to enable an event to be held in May 2025. It was suggested that an event could cost up to £400.00. JI also advised that events organised within the village have always been well attended. Council also discussed the potential benefits of hosting future events for the community with the trustees of Thorpe Hall. It was proposed that ST would make contact with the Trustees of Thorpe Hall and report back to council on joint working and hire of venue.
- e) Dog bin installation at chestnuts Coffee house. Council discussed the installation and felt that with the cost of a bin which was in excess of £200 and the long term emptying it would be down to the owners to consider the purchase and installation. Council currently pay £1134.00 per year for twice a week emptying. It was proposed that the clerk would look to reduce this to once a week which would see the cost drop to £91.00 + vat per week per bin.

10) Playing Field/pond – Thorpe Hall

- a) Village pond and overgrown plants  
Council acknowledged receipt of correspondence regarding clearance of overgrown marginal plants. Chair advised he had spoken with Will Hodgson regarding this work and they advised that this does not come under their remit. Council will seek advice on maintenance.
- b) Storm damage to picnic bench  
Tree had come down on the boundary of the village green and destroyed one of the park benches. Council could claim on insurance but decision is to move one of the benches on the playing field to the pond area.

11) Correspondence.

- a) Concerns around the village pond
- b) Norwich to Tilbury Project Update
- c) SN Weekly Planning applications and decisions.

12) General Parish Issues (for information only)

JI advised council that the Ashwellthorpe Horticultural Society had been recognised by the RHS with a framed certificate and a gift token valued at £15.00. They had also received a donation of bulbs from Notcutts garden centre and these will be distributed for planting in the planters and wheel barrows around both villages. Some bulbs have been planted around the memorial trees. There are plans in the Spring to grow plants for restocking in the planters etc. Requests for further wheelbarrows around the village and JI is currently sourcing additional barrows.

13) Date and time of next meeting – 18<sup>th</sup> February 2025

Meeting closed at 21:10

Appendix 1.

District Councillor report

**Grants**

Member Ward Grants for 2024/25 have been used on local projects. Requests for future support with small projects (up to £1,000 usually) to benefit the local community can be made to your District Councillors.

South Norfolk has been awarded c£510,000 for 2025/26 from the Shared Prosperity Fund, around 30% less than last year. Some of this is likely to be available to support larger community grants in 25/26. Details will be available later in the year.

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**Devolution & Local Government Reorganisation**

Just before Christmas, the Government published the English Devolution White Paper outlining an ambitious program to devolve power to Mayoral Strategic Authorities and to reorganise two-tier areas such as South Norfolk, so that services managed by County and District Councils are, in future, managed by a new combined authority.

The County Council has confirmed its interest in joining the Devolution Priority Programme and has requested deferral of the May 2025 County elections. The final decision on elections is expected from Westminster in January. It is possible that the first Mayoral election will be in May 2026.

Whether one combined authority will be the outcome for Norfolk remains to be seen. Plans for reorganisation are required no later than Autumn this year for areas in the priority program.

**Building Futures Apprenticeship Grants – Business Applications Close 31<sup>st</sup> January**

Grants of up to £2,000 are available to businesses looking to take on a new apprentice. As well as financial support, businesses will receive a free skills analysis and practical support to pick the right apprenticeship and provider. For businesses looking to develop green skills, enhanced grants of £5,000 are available 'Dark Green' apprenticeships. For my information and to apply: <https://apprenticeshipsnorfolk.org/buildingfutures>

**Recycling & Bin Collection**

A variety of options are being considered to manage the cost of collections (including food waste from 2026) and to improve the rate of recycling in South Norfolk from 42% to 50%. This may include weekly on-demand collection for textiles and small electricals to most properties, ending side-waste collections (extra waste left next to the bin) and reducing black bin collections to three-weekly. and reduce the level of contamination of recycled items.

**South Norfolk Budget Update**

Lower-tier councils like South Norfolk have been disadvantaged by the Government’s financial settlement for 2025/26. Initial budget estimates for SNC assumed an increase in funding, the proposed settlement is for a £0.5 million reduction in cash funds leading to a shortfall approaching £1.0 million.

This has been more than offset by a guaranteed income of at least £2.1 million in 25/26 for packaging Extended Producer Responsibilities, much higher than earlier estimates. This is a new charge on business which is aimed at encouraging bigger companies to reduce packaging waste and improve recycling.

Longer term financial pressures are expected as this income stream is expected to reduce.

**Planning Consultation – Self-Build and Custom Build SPD**

Cabinet is being asked to approve starting a 6 week consultation on a proposed Supplementary Planning Document on Self-Build and Custom-Build Housing. The Greater Norwich Local plan introduced opportunities for this type of housing on the edge of existing settlements outside of development boundaries. This document is important as it seeks to provide further guidance on where such applications may be approved.

**Landscape Impact of Energy Infrastructure Projects**

South Norfolk has commissioned a report on the landscape impact of new energy infrastructure. The report is expected to form the basis of a further Supplementary Planning Document which may help better manage the sprawl of infrastructure across our District. The initial report will be discussed at a meeting of the Council’s Planning & Economic Growth Committee later this month.

**Rooftop Solar – CPRE Campaign**

South Norfolk Council supported a Liberal Democrat motion to support CPRE’s rooftop solar campaign. The objective of this is to both increase the use of rooftops and reduce the need for the loss of farming land for Solar Farms.

**‘Norwich to Tilbury’ Update**

National Grid has recently announced that it will be taking forward the pylon option for crossing the Waveney Valley. This decision reflects “environmental policy, planning policy and cost”. The recent newsletter confirms that the application for a Development Consent Order will be in 2025.

PylonsEastAnglia are continuing to campaign against the pylon proposals. For further information visit <https://pylonseastanglia.co.uk/actions>

Appendix 2.  
County Councillor report  
Progress report

Not much happened over Christmas, and we have been engulfed by the emergency Council meeting and debates about devolution (see below) since the beginning of January. There are several issues still outstanding, and a few new ones to pick up, so I now plan to get fixed up with some visit dates with Highways and push for progress on things that aren't going well yet.

I've had some answers from the buses team about some of the mysterious new bus stops but some questions remain which I need to follow up. For more things about buses see below.

**Devolution**

Just before Christmas, the government put out a plan for local government reorganisation and restructuring that has sent the entirety of Suffolk and Norfolk into a spin, along with many other parts of the UK. Proposals include elected mayors for large areas (in our case Norfolk and Suffolk together) and unitary authorities that combine the functions of District and County councils, and eliminate the layer of representation that is currently district councillors. Since these are the people closest to the actual places you live, and elected to serve small groups of villages rather than large areas, this seems like centralising power in large authorities, rather than devolution.

There's an option for councils to apply for a fast-track restructure, which can include postponing this year's May elections, so that elections would happen for the new authorities once the new structure is clear. Suffolk and Norfolk County Councils held emergency meetings on 9th January to decide on this with unseemly haste. The same happened in pretty well all county councils across the country. Norfolk County Council voted by a large majority to ask for the fast track process. This would preclude the electorate being consulted, and potentially remove our May elections. All across the country, it seems, Conservative and Labour led councils are not too keen to go to the polls. I spoke against the idea of rushing the reorganisation. I don't see any evidence that going more slowly and carefully would be a disadvantage (rather the reverse). I believe we shouldn't extend the time of people elected four years ago, and we shouldn't deny people the right to elect new councillors now. The councillors elected four years ago don't have a mandate to make these massive changes for Suffolk and Norfolk.

Since so many Councils voted to request the fast-track system, it seems fairly unlikely that the government will say yes to Norfolk, since we don't have the support of the district councils (their leaders seem almost unanimous in objecting, aside from the one where the leader is also a Conservative county councillor: his silence is mysterious it seems to me). The practical difficulties about actually transferring the staff and offices etc are substantial. I've heard rumours that the government will say yes to at most 12 requests for the speedy route. We'll know whether we are on the fast track later in January, but it's possible that acceptance onto that doesn't necessarily mean cancelling elections. We won't know that till February, I think.

Only the Green group voted against going for the fast track and silencing the democratic voice. With the Liberal Democrats we proposed an amendment against cancelling elections, but that fell. It was disappointing that the Lib Dems then none-the-less voted for proceeding with the fast-track application and cancelling elections. The Green group also presented an amendment in favour of fairer voting systems for all new strategic authorities and mayors. That was voted down, despite a number of speakers agreeing that it would help to restore confidence in our democratic procedures.

You can watch the meeting recording on the County Council's youtube channel.

**Buses and roads**

Norfolk has received an allocation of £15.9m for one year (2025-2026) to improve local bus transport. The funding allocation is split £7.4m capital and £8.5m running costs. This comes on top of the £49.5m we won for 2022-2025, some of which has been spent on improving your bus stops and adding new ones, including the mystery stops we've seen appearing recently. The new £15.9m allocation will allow officers to plan for more improvements, but since it is only a year's allocation we need to spend it on things that can be delivered by March 2026 and the money going into running costs (e.g. more frequent buses) would either need to be sustainable after March 2026 or we'll need to find other funding to keep them going. Council officers want to hear our ideas for things to encourage local people to use the bus and make it easy to do so. I'd like to hear your suggestions by the last week of January.

One suggestion we made recently was that all rural bus stops should have a few cycle racks nearby to help you get to and from the outlying hamlets that aren't on the bus routes and leave your bike safely. Bus shelters combined with cycle parking might be good for young people going to school and college. Later buses home so that workers can return after a day's work in Norwich would be useful. Parking provision at Long Stratton to enable people to park and ride has also been suggested by some parishes. Early buses to help children who have to change buses, to go to school or college in Norwich, would be useful.

Please think about what would make you try the buses and what for, and let me know!

**Road repairs**

For road repairs, Norfolk has been allocated more than £56 million for highways maintenance. Please report potholes and decaying road conditions in Norfolk to the county council by completing their online form: [www.norfolk.gov.uk/potholes](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/potholes). Maybe we should also have a focus on wet patches where water is running across the road and freezing into ice rinks.

**Million Trees for Norfolk update**

Norfolk County Council is celebrating reaching 500,000 in its One Million Trees for Norfolk scheme. I think it was probably supposed to be a million by now, but at least 500,000 is a start. Meanwhile we might ask how many trees have been felled for roads and housing, and how much of the new hedges and trees on housing estates and roads have died.

Do you have somewhere you could have a community orchard or spinney, or just a single fine oak tree on the village green? Do let us know and you should be able to get help with the project.

Info from Central Government

**Bird Flu (avian influenza)**

We are in a regional lockdown for poultry to prevent your birds catching bird flu. People with small or large flocks of chickens that are normally free range need to keep them indoors. Guidance on how to prevent your chickens or ducks from getting it, and stop it spreading, is available here.

Appendix 3.

Budget monitoring 1 April to 31 December 2024		Q3 Third Quarter		Jan-25		
Payments	Budget	Actual Spend	Over/Under Spent	Receipts	Budget	Actual
		£	£			£
<b>ADMINISTRATION</b>				Precept	12,090.00	12,090.00
Salaries and related costs	6,000.00	4,660.60	1,339.40	CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy)	750.00	1,448.10
Staff Training	250.00		250.00	VAT refund	1,000.00	
Staff expenses and subscriptions	250.00	135.00	115.00	VAT refund 1/12/2023- 31/03/2024		451.67
<b>OFFICE SERVICES</b>				Land rent	1,400.00	1400.00
Stationery	200.00	104.81	95.19	Other		300.00
Postage		24.00		<b>Total</b>	<b>13,314.30</b>	<b>15,689.77</b>
Software support						
<b>Communications</b>				Opening Balance 1/04/2024		7,676.32
Printing of Village Magazine	1,000.00		1,000.00	Income		15,689.77
Website Host/Licence/Support				Total		23,366.09
Internet for parish office	450.00	311.08	138.92	Payments		13,239.25
<b>Members</b>				<b>Total</b>		<b>10,126.84</b>
Members Expenses				Community Account@ 31/12/2024		10,233.44
Room Hire	300.00		300.00	Less unrepresented cheques		
Members Training		212.00	-212.00	chq:101082		6.00
<b>Professional Services</b>				chq:101083		100.6
Legal & Professional Fees		58.54		<b>Total</b>		<b>10126.84</b>
Audit Fees	400.00	372.00	28.00			
Insurance	750.00	570.58	179.42	£		
Payroll Services				General reserves @ 31/12/2024		3,709.39
<b>Subscriptions</b>				Kept it Going grant @31/12/2024		199.85
Norfolk PTS	500.00		500.00	Community Infrastructure Levy@ 31/12/2024		1,448.10
Subscriptions other inc.ICO	35.00		35.00	<b>Total reserves</b>		<b>5,357.34</b>
<b>Grants and Donations</b>						
Grants s137 (4830 651x7.42 )	50.00	544.48	-494.48	Total		10,126.84
Grants other				Less reserves		5,357.34
<b>Village Maintenance</b>				Balance forecast year end		<b>4,769.50</b>
Street Lighting - repairs/maintenance	500.00	213.30	286.70			
Street Lighting - electricity	500.00	464.96	35.04			
Highways & Road Safety						
Street Furniture purchase	1,400.00	260.00	1,140.00			
Street furniture maintenance	250.00	43.17	206.83			
Dog Waste Bin Emptying Service	1,000.00	1,134.00	-134.00			
Grass cutting	1,000.00	3,205.00	-2,205.00			
Footpath Maintenance	1,000.00	394.63	605.37			
<b>Village Services</b>						
Churchyard maintenance	500.00		500.00			
Dog waste bin purchase						
Defibrillator maintenance						
<b>Other</b>						
D Day Event		97.00				
Planning application		289.00				
Plaques for trees		38.95				
Land registry		6.00				
Plants etc		100.15				
<b>Totals</b>	<b>16,335.00</b>	<b>13,239.25</b>	<b>3,709.39</b>			

