

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 30 March 2026 at 7pm in Assington Village Hall.

4 members of the public and 7 Parish Councillors were present

1. Apologies for absence
None
2. Chairman's welcome
The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and the contributors for providing their reports.
3. Confirmation and signing of Minutes of Meeting held on 31st March 2025
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)

A Report for Assington Parish Council Meeting on 30th March 2026 From James Finch – County Councillor for the Stour Valley Tel: 01206 262993 (change) Mobile 07545 423796 Email: james.finch@suffolk.gov.uk

James reported that this would be the last meeting he attends as a County Councillor as he is retiring, the meeting thanked him for all his work on behalf of the community and his attendance at the meetings during his tenure.

- One Suffolk plan revealed saving Suffolk £39.4 million a year with more local services with Local Government Re-organisation. Millions of pounds of public money would be saved and reinvested in frontline services and benefits for the whole of Suffolk, if the Government backs a new plan published today (Monday 8 September). The ambitious proposal will see all of Suffolk's six councils abolished and replaced with one new unitary council - which would deliver both local and county-wide services.

The One Suffolk business case demonstrates that a single unitary for Suffolk will save £78.2 million after the first five years, while three councils would cost an eye-watering £145.3 million more than the current two-tier system. After the first five years, one council would save £39.4 million a year, whereas three would cost £13.1 million more than the current model. The business case is built on rigorous financial analysis of Suffolk-based data conducted by global advisory firm Grant Thornton, rather than generic national modelling. One Suffolk would have the capacity to create real improvements to council services which would benefit everyone, including:

- Improved financial resilience, enabling the unitary council to free up resources for frontline services and keep council tax as low as possible.
- Harmonising Council Tax to the lowest level across Suffolk. Based on current levels this would result in Band D properties seeing a reduction of £245 in Ipswich, £17 in East Suffolk, £29 in West Suffolk, £19 in Babergh and a freeze in Mid Suffolk.
- A new deal for market towns, including Ipswich, backed by a £40m capital investment fund, and a review of car parking charges and markets conducted in consultation with traders, businesses and representative bodies.
- Empowering communities by offering powers and funding to town and parish councils where these councils express a desire for additional responsibilities. Creating a new town council for Ipswich to enhance democratic representation.
- A proactive and revitalised highways service that says 'yes' more - acting swiftly, communicating clearly and delivering more.

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- Creating a unified planning framework that delivers greater consistency, efficiency, and strategic alignment across Suffolk, paired with local planning committees so decisions are made close to home.
- Leveraging technology and innovation to create a modern council prepared for future challenges.
- Building a strong, flourishing, and resilient local economy that serves all residents, businesses, and communities.
- A stronger voice for Suffolk through effective collaboration with the new mayor, focusing on clear investment priorities that maximise benefits. The One Suffolk campaign engaged communities from across Suffolk, with 8,189 responses to our Residents' Survey. This made it the largest survey response rate for the county council in the past decade. Immediately after a Full Council meeting, the Council's Cabinet approved the One Suffolk Business Plan on 16 September and submitted it to Government on 26 September. Government Ministers will be then deciding later this year which proposals to put out to public consultation, before making their final decision in early 2026 ?? March 2026. The response from the Government is still awaited at the time of printing. This is the Business Case

Executive summary and the full report.: One Suffolk Business Case The Government has now announced its decision on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) in Suffolk in 2028, opting for three unitary authorities despite clear evidence that this is not the best outcome for Suffolk. This is a major milestone in the future of local government in the county and reshapes how councils are structured and how services are delivered across the county. Each of the three new unitary councils will cover their own new geographical area: West Suffolk, East Suffolk, and South Suffolk and Ipswich.

- New SEND school and centre of excellence to be built in Bury St Edmunds Run by Eastern Education Group and funded by the Department for Education, the school in Glastonbury Road will provide 90 places for students aged 14 to 19-years-old with special educational needs and disabilities In a first for Suffolk, the new school will also become a centre of excellence and hub for SEND guidance, offering expertise to mainstream schools. Examples of this approach include providing outreach staff to work with mainstream schools and offering specialist expertise and training opportunities. This hub model is increasingly encouraged by the Department for Education and is reflected in guidance from Ofsted around inclusive practice and system leadership. It launches Suffolk County Council's ambition to implement this model across the county with a number of other education settings. This news comes just a week after it was announced that Suffolk County Council and Unity Schools Partnership will open a new SEND school in Saxmundham for 126 students with severe learning difficulties. Both new provisions have been agreed by Suffolk County Council in line with its SEND sufficiency plans, which outline how specialist provision should be delivered across the county. This new special school in Bury St Edmunds will share a site with Chalk Hill School special school which is due to open in Easter 2026. Chalk Hill will occupy the former Horringer Middle School building, while the second school will be built by the Department for Education on a field on the site. Eastern Education Group will run both schools.
- Suffolk County Council's chief executive, Nicola Beach to step down Nicola will leave at the end of March 2026 and the process to appoint a new chief executive will begin shortly. Reflecting on her decision, Nicola said: "Serving the people of Suffolk has been a great privilege and I am immensely proud of what has been achieved together over the last eight years. Leaving this job has not been an easy decision, and I have thought long and hard about it. However, I believe this is the

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right time to hand over leadership to those who can steer and support colleagues through local government reorganisation over the next two years, whatever option the Government decides to implement. "I would like to thank all of my colleagues, Matthew Hicks and his Cabinet and all councillors for their support and I wish them the very best for the future. I do not have another role lined up – I am simply looking forward to a new change of pace and lifestyle, enjoying this wonderful county and taking time to travel and see family and friends." Cllr Matthew Hicks, Leader of Suffolk County Council, said: "Nicola has led the council through an important period of change and achievement. She is very well-regarded, hardworking and has an exceptional knowledge of the complexity of public service, plus an unfaltering desire to deliver the best services for the people of Suffolk – the county that she loves. "Under her tenure and with strong political leadership, Suffolk County Council is well positioned to rise to the challenge and opportunity of local government reorganisation. Her legacy will be enduring and deeply felt. I want to thank her for her outstanding leadership and dedication, and I wish her all the best for the future.

- New Suffolk Exhibition Shines a Light on Disability Beyond Labels explores themes of visibility, independent living, discrimination, and making change happen. Understand how national campaigns, and social and political changes have impacted lives in Suffolk. As well as discovering the histories of organisations, schools, and charities that work with and support local disabled people. Made possible by The National Lottery Heritage Fund, this exhibition is co-curated by local community groups and Suffolk Archives and has enabled communities to share and celebrate their lived experience. Beyond Labels celebrates disability while sparking conversations about accessibility, equality, and the work that's still needed. The exhibition will explore local stories such as the actions taken by parents after their children were labelled "uneducable" following the Education Act 1944. Lived experience of disability is more and less visible in the historical record at different points in time. Wartime experiences are highlighted in a range of archival records, covering topics such as shell shock, or PTSD, long term health conditions, and individual stories such as that of Frederick Pigeon. Frederick was wounded during World War One, had his right leg amputated and was later fitted for an artificial limb. After the war he settled in Blythburgh where he married Ellen. Coming up to present day the exhibition will explore hidden disabilities which are not always visible but have an impact on an individual's day-to-day life, promoting awareness and understanding.
- Public's chance to try the ADAstra trial driverless shuttle Residents across Suffolk are being invited to see for themselves how self-driving shuttle technology could shape the future of local travel
- and to have their say on how it should work for their communities. Suffolk County Council is holding two events where the public can ride on the ADAstra prototype, ask questions and share their views. The council wants to understand not just whether autonomous shuttles are acceptable, but how they could best serve local needs as part of the wider transport system. The events take place at:
 - Mildenhall Hub, Sheldrick Way, Mildenhall IP28 7JX 9.30am–2pm, Saturday 7 February 2026
 - East Point Pavilion, Royal Plain, Lowestoft NR33 0AP 10am–2pm, Saturday 28 February 2026 The council has been working with design experts Smart City Consultancy to assess the technical, operational, and regulatory requirements of incorporating autonomous shuttle services into a potential future network of mobility hubs across the county. Shuttles could potentially link future residential developments with strategic bus routes, improve accessibility, and support sustainable transport especially in rural areas. Shuttles could travel shorter routes to feed main bus and train service

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corridors where the frequency of buses and trains could be increased, and journey times can be shorter. Councillor Chris Chambers, Suffolk County Council Cabinet member for Transport Strategy, said: "Autonomous vehicles are not trying to replace cars, they are a means to fix specific, expensive gaps in transportation.

- Virtual Fostering and Adoption Sessions for the Stour Valley Fostering is a flexible role with options for short term care from a weekend a month to longer term opportunities, all providing life-changing support for local children. If you want to find out more about what it's like to foster or adopt with us, please call a member of the team on 01473 264800

My Priorities Education

- Supporting Vulnerable People
- Jobs and Growth - Localism and the Stour Valley
- Building on Suffolk's Strength all underpinned by strong financial management and fair council tax.

6. Mr L Parker (District Councillor) District Councillor Annual Report

Reporting Period: 31 March 2025 – 1 April 2026

This report summarises key developments and announcements published by Babergh District Council during the past municipal year. It provides parish councils and residents with a brief overview of district level activity which may affect local communities.

APRIL 2025

The Government consultation on Norfolk and Suffolk devolution proposals concluded.

The consultation explored the creation of a Mayoral Combined County Authority covering both counties, transferring certain powers from central government to a regional authority. Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils considered their responses through Full Council meetings.

MAY 2025

Consultations were launched on a review of the Council's Licensing Policy and on revised Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) charging schedules. CIL is used to collect contributions from developers to fund infrastructure such as roads, community facilities and green spaces needed to support new development.

JUNE 2025

The Council approved updates to the Community Infrastructure Levy expenditure framework. This framework guides how CIL funds are prioritised and allocated to infrastructure projects across the district.

JULY 2025

Consultations continued on the revised Licensing Policy and proposed CIL charging rates, allowing residents and organisations to comment on the proposed changes.

AUGUST 2025

The five district and borough councils in Suffolk jointly launched the 'Three Councils for Suffolk' proposal for local government reorganisation, proposing three new unitary councils replacing the current two - tier structure.

SEPTEMBER 2025

Work continued on the review of the Joint Local Plan with Mid Suffolk District Council. Evidence documents including the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment identified potential sites submitted for possible future development.

OCTOBER 2025

A Schools Green Skills Summit brought together students from across Suffolk to debate climate change and sustainability challenges while promoting green careers.

NOVEMBER 2025

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The Hitcham Neighbourhood Development Plan was formally adopted following a successful referendum. Neighbourhood plans form part of the statutory development plan and guide planning decisions locally.

DECEMBER 2025

Residents were encouraged to apply for Warm Homes Suffolk funding to improve home energy efficiency, including insulation, solar panels and heat pumps.

JANUARY 2026

The councils called on Government to strengthen regulation governing the spreading of sewage sludge on farmland due to environmental concerns. Babergh and Mid Suffolk also supported Ipswich's bid to become UK City of Culture 2029.

FEBRUARY 2026 – COUNCIL BUDGET 2026/27

In February 2026 Babergh District Council approved its 2026/27 budget, designed to maintain key services while responding to continuing financial pressures facing local government. Council agreed a 2.99% increase to the Babergh element of Council Tax, which is the maximum increase permitted without a local referendum.

For a Band D property the Babergh portion of Council Tax will increase from £193.73 to £199.52

per year – an increase of £5.79 annually, equivalent to approximately 11p per week.

District councils receive less than 10% of the total council tax bill, with the majority going to Suffolk County Council, the Police and Crime Commissioner, and town and parish councils.

MARCH 2026

Plans progressed to deliver a new café and toilet facilities at Belle Vue Park in Sudbury as part of wider park improvements. Work also continued on the Community Governance Review which considers parish boundaries and governance arrangements.

CONCLUSION

Over the past year Babergh District Council has continued work on planning policy, environmental initiatives, community funding programmes and preparations for potential local government reorganisation in Suffolk. The Council remains committed to working closely with town and parish councils to support strong local communities.

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

Well here we are again another year flies past.

The Parish Council have done their very best to represent you, to help keep our community running smoothly, to help each other where possible and to keep your Council Tax as low as possible.

This year the Parish Council said goodbye to Helen Wallace who is now enjoying her retirement with her partner and dog, we thank her for her work over her 10 year term as a councillor. Every cloud, as they say has a silver lining. The Parish Council has welcomed two new Councillors, namely Kim Howard and Mark Armitage and we look forward to working with them.

We also welcomed a new Footpath Warden, Nettie who unfortunately is standing down due to family responsibilities. So if you are aware of a keen hiker who would be willing to report issues on the paths please volunteer to the Clerk.

- Our Neighbourhood Plan has again proven its worth and is acknowledged by Babergh District Council. It continues to protect our village from being over developed as a number of planning applications which were outside of the development area have been refused. We continue to gain 25% of CIL (Community Infrastructure levy) on new build projects. The

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Team are working again to update the Plan in order to integrate the Government's statutory requirement of additional houses in villages and towns across Suffolk.

- This year CIL money has been used to subsidise Council Tax on maintaining standards in the village for items such as grass and hedge trimming, emptying dog and litter bins, to pay for street lighting and to pay for refurbishment of the promissory path in The Street.
- The National Grid works on the infrastructure from Bramford to Tilbury are underway and despite our best efforts have created mayhem on community roads.
- We have responded to 21 Planning applications in 19 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 Clerk (and the Temporary Clerk for standing in and helping us out this evening) 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.

Mr J Stacey (Assington Association)

The Assington Association continues to manage the funding of 10 editions of the Assington News each year, produced by Bronwen Stacey as Editor.

On the 1st October 2025 I took over from Bob Cowlin as the Treasurer.

In the period from March 2025 to February 2026 the cost of producing Assington News was £2,244.38, made up of £2,134.35 for printing, £40.28 in bank charges and £69.75 for postage costs. Copies are no longer posted to advertisers, they are asked to check the copy that is put on the Parish Council website. The few other copies that were posted are now delivered by the Treasurer by bicycle!

In the same period the income from advertisers was £1,341.50. The number of advertisers is reducing with the increasing use of on line advertising. The shortfall of £902.88 was covered by generous donations, which totalled £1,882.37. This included the contribution from the Parish Council, donations from individuals, plus other sources such as the profit from the Horticultural Show.

The balance of the Assington Association account at the end of February was £3441.29.

Mr D Wiles (Assington Village Charity)

Assington Village Hall Annual Report

The last 12 months have been a challenge with the cost-of-living crisis and potential hirers being very selective on where they go to use facilities as the hire cost plays an ever-important consideration and not so much the condition or location of the facility. Taking this into consideration we have not increased the hire charges, and they remain very favourable to residents and competitive with the other local village halls. We very much appreciate the continued support of the organisations and groups that continue to use the hall, with the Reyes School and Lapwing hiring several times a week. We are now getting more enquiries and bookings for children's parties and have two weddings this year. We have no football hirers this year. The hall is already booked for the village fete and the 49th Horticultural show.

We now have a secretary who does an excellent job for us. The hall remains compliant with all regulations for a public facility; our health and safety documentation is up to date along with

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statutory maintenance testing. All risk assessments are current and cover all areas of the facility. We had a major heating breakdown that was due to the age of the original equipment in the loft space which hit us with a 3k invoice but is all working efficiently now. Thomas is on top of the grounds maintenance .

We have replaced the veranda roof as it was in poor condition and are sourcing quotes for the internal decoration of the facility. Just before Christmas we installed BT infinity into the hall after the withdrawal of county broadband without notice to us!

We are sourcing resident feedback that is vital to be able to apply for a grant for an outside gym facility at the rear of the children's playground. We have advertised on social media (on all 3 Assington sites) which at 92 respondees has been good.

We have until the end of May to submit the application to be checked on all the criteria required and sent before Council Cabinet in September. Hopefully if it is granted the facility will be installed ready for next spring. We have purchased 10 new round tables to use for functions that we received at a discounted rate from The Stoke by Nayland resort.

Fly tipping of bottles has been an issue and the playground gate being broken twice.

Our accounts are in good order and are submitted annually for audit as required by the charities commission and the hall is fully insured, and minutes for the previous AGM submitted also.

We have vacancies that we are struggling to fill being a caretaker and cleaner, and the chairman's position, hopefully we might get some response from advertising.

I would like to thank the Parish Council for their continued support.

In summary a reasonably good year but I think hard times ahead.

8. **Rev Whiffin (Parochial Church Council)**

No report recieved

9. **Tricia Box Assington Baby and Toddler Group**

Since September our lower numbers have slowly risen again, with a maximum total of 15 babies and toddlers one week in the autumn. That was a particularly busy morning for Barista Bill and Tricia Kemp, his great assistant, as they made endless mugs of tea and coffee and then bowls of snacks and drinks for all the little ones after story and song time!

We have a central core of Assington families and it is such a joy to ensure they all get to know one another - one of the main reasons we exist as a Group! The children are brought along by their mothers, their grandparents or their nannies, in almost equal number.

The toddlers have fun drawing, painting or making something with Anne Johnson. Once they each prepared an apple crumble to take home!

Every storytime, Tricia includes a Bible story or perhaps a prayer or a simple worship song.

Many grateful thanks to all our helpers including the wonderful White family who set up the hall with toys before we arrive!

10. **Mr B Hurren (Allotments Association)**

Although we are now approaching our spring planting season, work on the allotment is rather limited at the moment to planning what we might like to do, if ever it stops raining!

We have first of our twice yearly meetings in village hall Sunday 29th March 10.00.am.

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This is to appoint officers for the coming year, look at maintenance issues and requirements for the coming year.

Elected officers

Bryn Hurren

Chair.

Karl Debenham Secretary.

Lisa Brooks Treasurer.

Maintenance.

We have 7 broken perimeter fence posts, an ongoing problem, we are quite happy to raise a working party to install new posts, if provided.

I understand that you have had an estimated water invoice from Wave for a period when the water is turned off, I have taken accurate reading and your clerk is aware.

We have a full house again this year with 15 tenants on the 12 plots, 3 are sharing plots that are split to form 6 half plots, each full

plot measures 15 X 12 yards and is approximately one third of the size of the original stated size to feed a whole family.

The fee per full plot is £35.00 and £17.50 per annum for a half plot.

We have one local person on the waiting list and if anyone else wants to put their name down, then please get in contact with any plotholder or let me know. I usually try to be on my own plot on Sundays, so pop in and have a look around. Or just knock on the door of no. Ten

I have noticed that we are getting consistent dog fouling on the path, leading up to and past the allotment gate and while trying to adjust the entrance gate recently, I put my foot in it and created a nasty smell. Please bag it up and take it to nearby Poo-Bin.

This is very anti-social and responsibility of dog owner to clear up after Rover's walkies. We have young children and toddlers visiting the allotment gardens and passing now.

Thanks to all involved in creating and maintaining this brilliant facility.

Bryn.

barnworkshopuk@gmail.com

07771 508348

11. Any Other Business

None

The meeting concluded at 19.56pm