

Ilketshall St. Andrew Parish Council

Minutes of Annual Parish Meeting Monday 12 May 2025, 7.00 p.m., held in the Village Hall

1. Welcome.

Four Parish Councillors (Ian Braid (IB), Penny Ward (PW), Colin Ward (CW) and Rod Apps (RA)) were present. There was one District Councillor present (Toby Hammond (TH)). There were 3 members of the public present.

2. Apologies for absence.

Apologies were received from Gerald Godfrey, which were accepted. Ian Braid, as Vice-Chair, chaired the meeting.

3. Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 7 June 2024.

These Minutes were confirmed as being correct, and were signed by the Vice-Chair.

4. Declaration of Interests, Pecuniary and other.

There were no declarations of interest.

5. Report from the Chair of the Parish Council.

Ian Braid delivered the following report on behalf of Gerald Godfrey, the Chair of the Parish Council:

Since the last Annual Parish Meeting held on 13 May 2024, the Parish Council has continued to operate on the principle of holding Council meetings every alternate month. Meetings of the Parish Council were held in May, July, September, and October 2024 and then in January and March 2025. The Parish Council has benefited from a full complement of Councillors (7) at one point during the year, but two resignations in the latter half of the year has resulted in the number of Councillors falling to 5. A near-100% attendance of Councillors at the meetings has been attained. The Parish Clerk resigned in November 2024, and Rod Apps took back on the role of Parish Clerk.

Apart from the routine business of the Parish Council (comprising, for example, monitoring planning issues and reviewing Planning Applications, responding to highways issues, monitoring the condition and safety of the Play Area), the main area of attention of the Parish Council over the past year has been the HGV and speeding problem on Top Road/Ringsfield Road. With the assistance of parishioners, a 'Community Speedwatch' group has been established, and since late 2024 has been regularly monitoring Top Road for speeding vehicles, recording the details, and passing those details to the police. With the assistance of grants from funds administered by the County and District Councillors, the Parish Council was able to purchase a new Speed Indicator Device which it is hoped will be installed on Top Road shortly. Unlike the existing Speed Indicator Device which is shared with Ringsfield and Weston, the new one will be owned by the Parish Council in its own right, and will therefore be a permanent fixture, although switching between the two ends of Top Road.

The resignation of the Parish Clerk resulted in a decline in the financial requirements of the Parish Council, which then led to a significant reduction in the precept to the Council Tax for properties in the village in April 2025. The precept for 2025-2026 was therefore set at £3,000, equivalent to £24.95 per annum for an average Band D property, which represents a reduction of almost £40 relative to 2024-2025. The reserves held by the Parish Council will nevertheless allow for the appointment of a professional Parish Clerk should this become necessary, and overall the Parish Council is in a sound financial position.

At the current time, the main project that the Parish Council has identified for 2025/26 is the enhancement of the Play Area, which is intended to involve replacement, and installing additional, items of equipment along with replacing the gates to the Play Area.

As mentioned previously, the Parish Council is now short of 2 Councillors. These can be filled by means of 'co-option', which essentially means that if anyone wants to become a Councillor, they can do so by simply saying they wish to do so – and without there being any election. The Parish Council very much hopes that there will be two parishioners willing to become Councillors to fill the vacancies.

5. Reports from District and County Councillors

Toby Hammond provided an update on the issue of local government reorganisation, including that of mayors, in Suffolk and the wider area, along with information about the Suffolk Library service being taken in-house. A further item was the increasing concern within Ringsfield & Weston regarding the speeding and HGV issue in the village, particularly near the primary school, and the initiative within that village to secure a 20mph speed limit in the village.

6. Public Opportunity for questions to Councillors

A member of the public asked about the progress of the application for “adverse possession” of the Village Hall car park. It had recently been ascertained that the car park was not within the curtilage of the Village Hall, and therefore that it actually Common land, which provided uncertainty regarding possible future developments on the site, insurance, etc. RA reported that he had commenced the preparation of the paperwork for submission, but had run into a number of issues, primary amongst those being the determination of the value of the car park. A valuation is required for submission of an “adverse possession” claim, but given that the car park was Common land with no known owner, it could not be sold, and therefore the valuation was problematic. RA reported that specialist advice might be needed with respect to the issue.

A member of the public asked a question about the bus stop on the main road, at the bottom of Top Road. The point was made that there was no actual physical bus stop sign on either side of the road, let alone anywhere for buses to pull in, with the consequence that it was not clear where the actual bus stop was. Some bus drivers were unaware of the fact that there was a bus stop at that location. It was clarified that the website for the bus operator **did** identify that there was a bus stop at this location. RA undertook to raise the issue with the County Councillor (Judy Cloke) given her experience with dealing with these sort of issues, particularly since the location of the bus stop was actually in Ilketshall St. Lawrence (rather than Ilketshall St. Andrew).

There was a discussion around ways in which the format of the Annual Parish Meeting could be developed in order to increase the attendance and participation at the meetings, which had averaged less than 2 people in recent years. RA noted that the “no alcohol” restriction associated with Parish Council meetings was actually a restriction on the **location** of Parish

Council meetings (including Annual Parish Meetings), with the Local Government Act 1972 specifying that licensed premises should only be used if cost or distance ruled out alternatives. The possibility of including some food provision, of having a quiz or a free raffle, was also discussed. The Parish Councillors agreed to consider alternative ways of developing the format of the Annual Parish Meeting with a view to implementing some changes for the meeting due in May 2026.

The Annual Parish Meeting closed at 7.35 p.m.