

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING OF ELECTORS

Acton Village Hall
Wednesday 16th April 2025

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held in Acton Village Hall at 7pm on
Wednesday 16th April 2025

Present: 12 residents (including six Parish Cllrs), District Cllr Malvisi, County Cllr Faircloth-Mutton and the Clerk

1. Welcome

The Acton Parish Council Chairman, Cllr Round, welcomed those present to the meeting.

2. Apologies

Apologies received from K McSweeney, E Clark and C Moss.

3. Minutes

The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 17th April 2024 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

4. Chairman's Annual Report

The Chairman reported on the work of Acton Parish Council throughout the past year.
Report attached.

It was acknowledged that although the clearance work to Footpath 2 beside the village hall was an improvement, attention was drawn to the dangerous tree roots, particularly at the north end. The Chairman replied that that this had been referred to County Highways and a response is awaited.

Asked if there had been a change in the village hall trustees, why there are four Parish Councillors on the village hall committee and why the Charity Commission website did not list the current trustees, the Chairman replied that the Charity Commission website is a work in progress and all members would eventually be added. He further advised that the new village hall governance called for two Parish Councillors to be nominated and currently Cllrs Round and Le Grys were nominated. Other volunteers on the committee might also be councillors but qualified as user group representatives or residents of the parish. He suggested that the village hall committee would consider additional volunteers.

Asked for an update on the gym trail, the Chairman advised that the Planning Officer dealing with the application no longer worked for Babergh District Council. Over recent months, the Parish Council have sent several emails to the Planning Area Manager (who it understands has taken responsibility for the application) and the Planning Director. The emails have requested a status report but to date, nobody had responded. District Cllr Liz Malvisi agreed to help.

The Chairman also mentioned that the Acton Good Neighbour Scheme sent a comprehensive annual report covering the excellent work they achieve within the community. Report attached.

5. County Councillor's Report

Cllr Philip Faircloth-Mutton thanked the Parish Council, the village community groups and the residents of Acton for their hard work over the past year.

Cllr Faircloth-Mutton reported on some highlights of the year and the coming months for both Acton and the County:

- Acton has received more locality budget than any other parish in the last year, which was put towards the SID on Melford Road. The village also received £3,000 of Highways and County budget money for the three new fingerpost signs.
- Acton has received a contribution from locality budget towards improving pedestrian routes and access.
- Arts funding for Babergh was previously £28,000 and was entirely allocated to Gainsborough House. Arts funding has now increased to £45,000, with the additional funding being spent on archaeology projects, The Quay Theatre, and the Heritage Centre in Sudbury.
- The library service is coming back in house from 1st June, keeping all 45 libraries open. All services provided by County Council will continue.
- Car parking charges on Market Hill in Sudbury continue to be fought. Market Hill will remain one-hour free parking. Other car parks are owned by Babergh.
- New SEND Strategy is accelerating cases through the system.
- Cllr Faircloth-Mutton distributed a booklet on the Local Government Devolution Program and clarified the devolution structure and the expected cost savings. Advised elections would take place May 2026.
- Mayor's investment fund: total money still to be determined. The Mayor will have the power to raise council tax precepts.
- Local Government Review: No changes for the Parish Councils, although they could potentially have more powers, which would be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

In answer to questions, Cllr Faircloth-Mutton said:

- The number of Unitary Councils would be decided after each Council had submitted a business case for their preferred option with implementation in 2027 or 2028.
- The council was likely to be based in Ipswich but no decision had been made.
- It is not currently known where the Mayor will sit but it will ultimately be the Mayor's decision.
- The Mayor would be responsible to all residents and businesses in Norfolk & Suffolk.
- As to whether the new system was a good idea, he thought there would be more local decision making.
- In England, mayors are in power for no more than four years.
- It is currently unknown how many District and County Councillors parishes will have to deal with but the area will still be broken down into Wards.
- The structure of the Police Force would be for the Mayor to decide.

- A question was asked via proxy as to when the numerous potholes on the Bull Lane and A134 junction would be taken care of, as the junction is in a very poor state.

6. District Councillor's Report

Cllr Malvisi provided the following information on Devolution:

- Babergh has put in for two Unitary Authorities because the industrial areas, such as Ipswich & Felixstowe, do not understand the rural areas and the issues they face.
- There are big challenges faced by the fire service, as Norfolk and Suffolk have completely different set ups from one another (one owns its equipment and one does not).

7. Update on Local Plan

Cllr Malvisi provided an update on the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF):

- The new NPPF went live in March 2025. Cllr Malvisi advised that the village's Neighbourhood Plan steering group should read the new NPPF and review the changes, especially the *Call for Sites* and if it reflects what the government has issued.
- Cllr round pointed out that the *Planning for the future in Babergh and Mid Suffolk* document states 330 houses for Acton, including 101 houses still to go on the Acton Field.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 7.54pm

Acronyms Used:

Cllr: Councillor

NPPF: National Planning Policy Framework

Signed:..... Date

Acton Parish Meeting – April 2025

Chairman of the Parish Council Report

Traffic in the Village

Traffic driving through and around the village at unacceptable speeds continues to be a concern for residents. Excessive speed is not just a safety concern; it is antisocial and harms wellbeing.

The Parish Council supports Acton Community Speedwatch – a small team of dedicated village volunteers. To help the team in sending the message to drivers that Acton is not the place to speed, please consider volunteering.

The Parish Council now owns and operates three speed indicator signs, for which we employ the services of Sudbury Town Wardens to charge the batteries and deploy the signs on a nine-week cycle.

Last year, Acton Parish Council installed four highly visible village gateways with the purpose of reminding drivers to check their speed whilst driving in the village.

Occasionally, Suffolk Police Safety Camera Team operate in the village.

We have asked Suffolk Highways to consider two more *Quiet Lane* initiatives within the parish. We await the commencement of a new round of installations.

The Parish Council have asked our County Councillor to put Acton forward to be considered for a village 20 mph scheme.

The Council continue to action small steps to remind drivers to: *'Check Your Speed!'*

Acton Wildlife Reserve

We are indebted to Cllr Steve LeGrys and the village volunteers who maintain and improve the Wildlife Reserve at Barrow Hill. This is an important asset owned by the village. A contractor is employed each year to cut back excessive growth, with maintenance carried out by Steve and volunteers all year round.

Acton Field Trust

After many months of research and dedication by Councillors and our Parish Clerk, the Parish Council set up a charitable trust as a route to take ownership of the field between Barrow Hill and the High Street. These sixteen acres of open countryside, are now preserved for current and future residents of the parish. The plan is to preserve its current open field character and

manage it for the benefit of wildlife and our wellbeing, which will require the regular removal of self-seeding saplings. The trust is managed by a volunteer management committee.

Acton Neighbourhood Development Plan

In July 2024, the Acton Neighbourhood Plan was formally adopted. Neighbourhood Development Plans (or Neighbourhood Plans) give local communities the opportunity to develop a shared vision for their area. The plan is *positively prepared* and *adds real value* at a local level.

Neighbourhood Plans have statutory weight and status. Once adopted (*made*), they become part of the development plan for the designated area and, where relevant, will be used to help determine planning applications.

District Community Infrastructure funds are derived from new development. As a parish with a Neighbourhood Development Plan in place, our Neighbourhood share of these funds moves from 15 % to 25 %.

Acton Playing Field and Village Hall Charity - Acton Village Hall

Acton Village Hall is an independent charity operated outside of the of the Parish Council. The governance rules of the charity call for the Parish Council to nominate parish councillors onto the management committee.

It was identified that the hall could no longer operate financially and safely and that the charity's management committee was struggling, as were the finances, bookings administration and maintenance of the property. In the capacity of a corporate body, and recognising the massive benefits the hall and playing field brings to the community, the Parish Council identified a duty to oversee this important village asset. The Parish Council concluded that the hall charity needed urgent administration, financial and management help.

It has been an uneasy process, setting up a new proactive management committee, employing a charity manager, proposing governance changes and providing financial support. Changes eventually took place during the early part of this year, and I am pleased to report that the hall charity now appears to be through the peak of the turbulent times and is now on a positive trajectory. We have in place an enthusiastic charity manager, supported by an active volunteer management committee.

Sudbury Town Warden Service

The service from STWs deteriorated last year, with the service eventually informing parishes that it could no longer meet its commitments. This created a problem for the Parish Council and set about review the task list and to consider different options to replace the warden service.

As a result of the review, STW service is now contracted to service the village's Speed Indicator Signs (SIDs) only. The other tasks originally covered by STW service are now carried out by between LM Ground Care Ltd and our Parish Clerk

Recruitment of Parish Clerk

During the process of recruiting a replacement Assistant Clerk, our Clerk informed the council in January that she would be leaving the post.

We welcome Abbie Lee to the position of Acton Parish Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer. Abbie lives in the Village and will work 20 hours per week for the Council.

Other notable tasks undertaken over the last 12 months:

- Parish Council supported the Village Summer Fete in June.
- Worked with Suffolk County Council to utilise developer funds to upgrade the surface of the footpath from Vicarage Lane onto the airfield.
- Utilising County Councillor Highway funds and Neighbourhood CIL funds, the parish council worked with Suffolk County Council to improve pedestrian access at three locations in the village: 1) Jennens Way/High Street, 2) Kings Close, 3) Barrow Hill/High Street.
- Refreshed the ***pick up your dog waste*** signs throughout the village.
- Installed new dog waste bins at various locations.
- Installed new bench close to the bus stop at Queens Way.
- Planted spring bulbs at the village gateways.
- Installed two new streetlight columns along Sudbury Road.
- Actively supported Acton Speedwatch to encourage additional volunteers to join the team.
- Where growth restricts pavement width, letters requesting residents to cut back hedge growth continue to be sent.
- Installed grass mats to eliminate the muddy area leading on the play area near the school.
- Installed a hard surface in front of the litter bins at the village hall playing field.
- Carried out extensive, hedge, tree and surface cleaning maintenance work to improve the footpath route from the side of the Crown Public House, leading to the village hall, burial grounds and All Saints Church.



The Acton Good Neighbour Scheme

13.04.2025

The Acton Good Neighbour Scheme has been formally operating now for over 6 years. Over this time the GNS has:

- Received **over 330 requests** for support from Acton residents;
- Provided **over 940 free lunches** of soup or sandwich through our lunch club (established in Nov 22).

The AGNS Chairperson and the rest of the committee would like to thank the Parish Council for their continued support for the Acton Good Neighbour Scheme and Lunch Club and the generous financial donation this year towards The Acton Good Neighbour Scheme.

Summary of activity:

The ANGS has provided a range of support for residents of Acton over the last year the most common request for support include:

- Providing transport to medical appointments both locally and further afield;
- Providing transport to vet appointments;
- Delivering shopping;
- Providing reassurance and phone befriending.

We currently have 17 volunteer across the Acton Good Neighbour Scheme and lunch club.

	No. calls received	No. calls unable to support
Jan 2025 - April 25	19	0
Jan 2024 - Dec 24	68	1
Jan 2023 - Dec 2023	73	2
Jan 2022 - Dec 2022	64	0
Jan 2021 - Dec 2021	27 (only 7 calls received before June 21)	1
Jan 2020 - Dec 2020	55	5
Jan 2019 - Dec 2019	32	6

*if support could not be offered this was either because the request was not suitable for the ANGS or a volunteer could not be matched with the request.

Lunch Club:

Lunch club, established in Nov 2022, has grown from stretch to strength over the years. In 2024 we served over 150 more lunches than we did in 2023, and projections for 2025 indicate we could serve close to 600 lunches this year!

Lunch club is an extension of the GNS which focuses on:

- Providing a safe, friendly space for residents of Acton to socialise and meet others;
- To reduce social isolation and loneliness;
- To provide free food in a non judgemental and inclusive environment.

	Free Lunches served	Total number of sessions
Jan 25 - April 25	174	7
Jan 24 - Dec 24	452	24*
Jan 23 - Dec 23	303	24*
Nov 22 - Dec 22	15	3

* included a full Christmas dinner with the trimmings in December.



In December 2024 we held our second Christmas lunch. We served 36 full Christmas dinners to the community. We have received very positive feedback from all those that attended and we are hopeful to be able to offer a Christmas dinner again in 2025. Acton Primary school choir also attended the

Christmas lunch to sing carols to all that attended. A huge thank you must be given to our team of volunteers who helped prepare, cook and serve the dinners.

In December 2024 we were very fortunate to receive a £1000 grant from Suffolk Community Foundation - Private fund - JA Grant Making. This funding is specifically for lunch club and is being used to purchase the food for the regular lunch club and the Christmas dinner. The AGNS Chairperson is required to provide a report to the funders in December 2025 to show how the money has been spent.



Achievements:

- The Acton Good Neighbour Scheme attended a celebration event for Good Neighbour Schemes from across Suffolk. We are awarded a Community Recognition Award, presented to us by Clr Faircloth - Mutton, Cabinet Member for Equality and Communities.
- Successfully completing a funding application to support Lunch Club, receiving £1000 to cover the costs for 2025.
- The Acton Good Neighbour Scheme Lunch Club has been a huge success and is reaching many residents of Acton, providing company and building friendships.
- A leaflet drop is currently being completed around the village to raise awareness of the Good Neighbour Scheme.

Future Activities:

- The number of phone calls to the AGNS phone have reduced and remain quiet. We have a number of regular users but we would like to extend the reach of this part of the GNS. The current leaflet drop will support with this.
- Look to secure further funding for lunch club to be able to offer the service free of charge.