

THURSTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Wednesday 6th March 2019 at 7.30pm in the Community Library, Thurston Community College, Thurston.

In the Chair: Cllr. Dashper

Present: Cllrs. Fawcett, Haley, Hasler, Mrs Morris, Mrs O'Connell, Rainbow, Robinson and Thurlbourn.

In Attendance: County Cllr. P Otton; District Cllr. D Haley (in his capacity as District Cllr. for Agenda Item 6); Mrs V Waples, Clerk and 18 members of the public.

1. **OPENING** – The Chairman declared the meeting open at 7.30 pm and thanked all for attending. A statement was read out indicating that, in accordance with the changes in legislation, the public and councillors were permitted to film, record, photograph or use social media to report on the proceedings of the meeting. A full transcript is available from the Clerk.
2. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** –
 - a. There were no applicable apologies of absence.
3. **DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY AND NON-PECUNIARY INTEREST FROM COUNCILLORS INCLUDING GIFTS OF HOSPITALITY EXCEEDING £25** –
 - a. Cllr. Fawcett declared a Pecuniary Interest under Agenda Item 14biii) with regards to financial matters for the Library and would not take part in the vote concerning the financial transactions for the Library. The following local non-pecuniary interests for the Agenda under discussion were declared: Cllrs. Fawcett, Haley, Mrs O'Connell & Robinson as Friends of Thurston Library. There were no gifts of hospitality exceeding £25 declared.
 - b. There were no declarations of lobbying by those Councillors present.
 - c. There were no requests for dispensations for the Agenda under discussion.
4. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING** –
 - a) The minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 6th February 2019 were agreed by all present as true and accurate records and signed as such by the Chairman.
It was noted that the Planning Committee Meeting scheduled to be held on 20th February 2019 had been cancelled.
 - b) Council noted the minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee meeting which took place on 1st March 2019 and confirmed its acceptance that it had complied with Governance and Accountability Guidance and had carried out an assessment of the risks facing the Parish Council and had taken appropriate steps to manage those risks, including the introduction of internal controls and/or external insurance cover where required. The council's Financial Risk Assessment 2019 and Risk Management Strategy 2019 refer.
5. **BUSINESS REMAINING FROM PREVIOUS MEETING** – none that was not covered elsewhere in the agenda.
6. **PUBLIC FORUM** –

COUNTY COUNCILLOR MRS OTTON'S REPORT – Cllr. Otton was invited to submit her report, a copy of which can be seen at Appendix C.

The following items were also mentioned:

 - Shocking Ofsted report on SCC's service for children with special needs. Highlighted issues that needed to be addressed without delay.
 - Potholes – Furze Close – could Cllr. Otton intervene and ensure some action was taken on the state of the road in general.

So signed by the Chairman at the meeting of 3rd April 2019

DISTRICT COUNCILLOR MR HALEY'S REPORTS – Cllr. Haley was invited to submit his report in which he covered the following items:

- Improve facilities at Needham Lakes
- Housing plans for old MSDC Head Office and the old Needham Middle School site – 135 homes and retail unit on both sites?
- CIL bid for Thurston for Bus Stops at £13,000 has been approved/
- Council will live stream Council Meetings for public interest
- One of the MSDC fully funded PCSOs working with Stowmarket SNT and the 2nd is due to start in April 2019. PC should be aware that the posts are in addition.
- 5-year land supply – updated to be provided to the Clerk for circulation. Still have to rely on the judgement of the Inspector for the site in Woolpit who stated that MSDC did not have a 5-year land supply, but it is noted that the mechanisms are in place to show that it can now do
- Rural Strategy Consultation produced by government is being supported by MSDC and comments will be provided on the consultation.
- Budget - Band D 6pence per week for a Band D property. 60% of population in Bands A – C.

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC – *the following comments were made by the members of the public present:*
Youth Shelter –

- Verbally attacked at the youth shelter on two occasions during ½ term; install some anti-vandal paint to stop them climbing on the roof; can the removal of the shelter be considered because of this behaviour.
- Victims of eggs being thrown onto the windows; rubbish strewn about.
- General anti-social behaviour – although not all confined to the Youth Shelter.
- Confirmed that the decision to remove the shelter will ultimately end with the PC and the New Green Trust.
- Meeting held with the PCSO and a PC from Stowmarket SNT in which it is claimed the PCSO had stated that even if he is in the village there is very little that he can do.
- Supportive of Youth Shelter in place – PC and Police need to engage and deal with anti-social behaviour; removing the shelter will move the problem elsewhere.
- New Green Trust and other groups are trying to arrange / create additional facilities for the young people of the village and there needs to be a concerted effort by all to allow such facilities to come forth.
- An explanation was given by the Clerk as to the Section 35 Dispersal Order which was put in place during the ½ term period and that patrols of the village had been increased recently due to anti-social behaviour problems.
- The Chair agreed that it was possibly time for the SNT to come and attend next month's or another month's meeting to try and allay some of the comments being raised by the residents and that such a request would be submitted to the Stowmarket SNT. It was also noted that the level of attendance at PC meetings is rising because of such incidences.
- The Chair made the meeting aware that the Annual Parish Meeting would be held later in the month at the Cavendish Hall and that the PCSO would be in attendance at this meeting and that residents could come along to this meeting and raise issues of concern.
- It was confirmed that a couple of residents had been litter picking in and around the youth shelter and had found some rubbish that might be similar to drug related items.
- Important to educate young people as to how to behave responsibly and in a polite manner.

7. POLICE MATTERS –

- a. Council received the latest Thurston SNT Report detailing the work undertaken over the past month by PCSO Smith which had been produced following reports submitted to the Clerk from PCSO Smith.

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- b. To receive village reports of concern for referral to Police – continuing anti-social behaviour; PCSO last Wednesday did a good job in dealing with a woman in distress and also the incident outside of the Co-Op.
- c. to consider the Youth Shelter located on the New Green bottom car park -
 - to receive a report from the PCSO on the crimes associated with the Youth Shelter -
 - to discuss interim solutions -
 - involvement of Stowmarket SNT to deal with anti-social behaviour -
 - involvement of College regarding surveys and use of shelter – not very positive.
 - Anti-vandal paint – as this does not set it would be most suited to be painted onto higher surfaces and prevent young people from climbing on the roof.
 - locking of bottom car park at New Green Centre – this was now being carried out.

The following comments were received from the councillors present:

- Perception is reality – youth shelter is perceived to be a problem and that becomes a reality. Moving it somewhere else will alienate another part of the community. Surely we are not the only community that has this type of problem?
- Why is the community and parish council trying to solve a problem that is endemic?
- This is a complex problem which needs further assistance.
- If remove it then the ability to congregate will be dispersed. Shelter has been in place for 10 years.
- Need a strategy to deal with facilities for young people in the village – need to take time to create a strategy and timescales but this should be a considered decision and a positive decision and will require input from other agencies.
- SNT involvement is crucial as we need direct input.

Agreement was forthcoming that a group should be set up to look at the complete situation for an effective solution to be managed in a constructive manner and to allow all solutions to be explored.

8. STATUTORY BUSINESS –

- a. To confirm Mrs Barbara Morris as the Parish Council appointed representative on the Cavendish Hall Committee – appointment was agreed by all.
- b. To receive a copy of the Suffolk County Council (Parish of Thurston) (C562 Ixworth Road) (30mph Speed limit and Revocation) Order 2019.
- c. To note further details for the timetable for local elections in England – 2 May 2019 – covering district and parish council elections. The Clerk confirmed the dates for nominations to be received; withdrawal of nominations; date of elections; date of results of election – if contested and dates when the new council took office. It was noted that the District Council elections would be fought on the new wards and the ward for Thurston covered – Beyton; Norton; Stowlangtoft; Thurston, Tostock
- d. To note the web address for access to legal notices or orders for works and events on the public highway for Suffolk – www.roadworks.org.
- e. To receive nominations to the post of Footpath Warden – Cllr. Mrs Morris agreed to take on the role of Footpath Warden.

9. TO CONSIDER MATTERS RELATING TO NETWORK RAIL:

- a. To receive an update on safety works / improvements to Thurston Railway Station - Clerk confirmed that she had heard nothing further from either S Merry at SCC Highways Dept or Network as to progress on the discussions over satisfactory mitigation measures that might be agreed upon.
- b. To receive an update on the measures to mitigate the Thurston Area Noise Complaints with particular reference to freight trains – the Clerk confirmed that she had heard nothing further on this matter.

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10. TO CONSIDER MATTERS RELATING TO PLANNING FOR THURSTON:

- a. To consider the following Planning Applications: *Cllr. Haley did not take part of the discussion and consideration of the following applications.*
- DC/19/00473 –Application under Section 73 of the Town & Country Planning Act – Variation of Condition 2 – (approved plans and documents) of planning permission DC/18/04463- subdivision of garden and erection of 2 No. 1.5 storey dwellings with new vehicular access @ land adjacent Rojulina, Hollow Lane, Thurston
Cartlodge to the front is out of kilter with rest of street scene; request that there is a caveat that it remains ancillary to the host dwelling at all times. Remaining amendments were noted.
It was agreed that the Parish Council would raise objections to the siting of the cart lodge to the front of the grounds on the grounds that this would visually impact on the area in which the dwelling is located.
 - DC/19/00469 – Householder Planning Application – erection of side and rear extensions and changes to fenestration @ Able Cottage, 85 Barton Road
Support as proposal would have no impact on neighbouring properties and there would be no adverse impact on the street scene, aif.
 - DC/19/00611 – Householder Planning Application – erection of a two-storey side extension @ 7 School Lane
Currently single storey flat roof extension and the proposal would improve that which was there. Noted that the footprint was as existing single storey extension. Council agreed to support the proposal, aif.
- b. To note decisions as determined by the Local Planning Authority – Council noted the planning decisions coming forth as detailed at Appendix A
- c. To note responses to previous planning comments submitted as statutory consultees – none received although the meeting noted
- there will be a Planning Committee meeting on 20th March at which the re-consultation documents under DC/18/03547 - Land To The West of Ixworth Road, Thurston, will be discussed. It is believed that the decision date for this application is by the end of the month. It was agreed that the Clerk be asked to flag up to the Acting Chief Planning Officer - Growth & Sustainable Planning the Parish Council's request for this application to go to the Referrals Committee for determination (possible at the end of the month) and not be approved under Delegated Powers.
 - The Clerk was still to contact the MSDC Community Housing Enabling Officer who had visited the PC in January to express an interest in Community-Led Housing and to request further details.
- d. To consider themes for road names for the following development areas: land to the west of Ixworth Road; land at Meadow Lane; land at Barton Road and land to the North of Norton Road – it was agreed to suspend this matter until a further meeting later in the year.
- e. To note the pre-application consultation for the Thurston Primary Academy relocation will run from 4th March – 17th March 2019. Council to consider whether it wishes to submit comments on the plans submitted online: www.suffolk.gov.uk/consultations.
It was agreed that the Council would submit comments and that, given timescales, the Clerk would collate comments received via email and respond accordingly. Comments to be submitted to the Clerk on the plans, via email, by Wednesday 13th March 2019.

11. NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING –

- a) To confirm that in accordance with Regulation 16 of The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations, 2012 (as amended) Mid Suffolk District Council has commenced formal consultation on the Thurston NDP - it was noted that the deadline for written comments to be received by Mid Suffolk District Council was 4.00pm that day. The timeline for the next stages were discussed and it was confirmed that the Parish Council / NP Team would receive a copy of the comments made

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within the consultation period and would have the opportunity to comment on them further and make a decision whether they would request the examiner to make amendments to the NP as written. It was noted that an Examiner had been appointed and that she would be making a prompt start on the examination of the document and supporting papers as written.

- b) Suffolk Design – Parish and Neighbourhood Workshop – 26th February 2019 – to receive a summary of the workshop attended by Cllrs. Hasler and Mrs Morris – both had thought that they would be recipients and did not realise that they were expected to participate within the workshop. 90% were there to find out how the Design Workshop would help produce a Neighbourhood Plan. The promoters of the workshop wanted to know what participants thought on design – comments received cover contemporary; eco-friendly designs; sustainable etc. Agreed by attendees that the workshop was more theoretical and hypothetical.

12. FINANCE (for financial details see Appendix A at the end of the minutes)

- a. To approve the accounts awaiting payment (see Appendix A) including those coming forth - Council approved the items for payments as listed at Appendix A, aif.
- b. To note the accounts paid since the last meeting (see Appendix A) - Council noted the items that had been paid since the last meeting as listed at Appendix A, approval of the schedule by all was forthcoming.
- c. To note receipts allocated since the last meeting (see Appendix A) - Council noted the monies received since the last meeting as listed at Appendix A.
- d. To consider and receive the Bank Reconciliation for the period ending 28.02.2019 - Council noted the bank reconciliation for the period ending 28th February 2019 with available funds being £54,467.10.
- e. To consider the Internal Control Report for the 4th Quarter of 2018-2019 (Paper B) – the paper as circulated was submitted and it was agreed that the council’s system of internal control, such as this document, allowed it to maintain an adequate system of internal control, and provided measures which were designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption. The meeting was in agreement with the findings of the Policy & Resources Committee that the procedure was still effective for a parish the size of Thurston. With reference to the report for the 4th Quarter it was noted that a VAT claim covering the period April to January had been submitted and the control tests had been expanded to cover order books and GDPR requirements.
- f. To consider a request for a donation for the year ending 31st March 2019 – it was agreed prior to granting a request for more information on the impact to the residents of Thurston prior to supporting a request for a donation to Suffolk Age UK. It was further agreed to look at earmarking the balance of the unspent monies in the year-end accounts.
- g. To confirm the appointment of the Council’s Internal Auditor as per the recommendation from the Policy & Resources Committee – Council agreed, having reviewed the Internal Audit Terms of Reference and Internal Audit Plan supplied, to accept the recommendation from the Policy & Resources Cttee, to appoint Mr T Brown, CPFA to carry out the internal audit for the year ending 31st March 2019. It was noted that the Internal Auditor had been provisionally booked to attend the office to carry out the audit on 17th April 2019.

13. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS PREVIOUSLY SUBMITTED – none had been received.

14. REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES AND GROUPS -

- a. Recreational Facilities Committee:
 - i. The schedule of the accounts detailing income received, accounts paid since the last meeting and accounts awaiting payment, was presented to the Council and agreed by all present – see Appendix 14a ii) at the end of the minutes for full details.
 - ii. The Council received the bank reconciliation to date and noted that bank balances stood at £1,322.95. Noted invoices still to be raised for the January to March 2019 for all hirees.

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- iii. To receive any matters coming forth – 1st phase of works to the trees on Church Road carried out during Half Term. 1 quote submitted for minor tree works to trees close to the Cavendish and a neighbouring property. Urgent repair work would be carried out to the roof of the pavilion early part of the following week.
- b. Library Account:
- i. The accounts for the period ending 28th February 2019 were presented to full Council and accepted by all. Bank balances were confirmed as £12,522.15 with cleared available funds being £12,219.59.
 - ii. The schedule of the accounts detailing income received, accounts paid since the last meeting and accounts awaiting payment, was presented to the Council and agreed by all present – see Appendix A 14b ii) at the end of the minutes for full details.
 - iii. To receive any matters coming forth – Bronze Presentation, this had been well attended and sculptures displayed in the Library. Wine tasting event went well. Presentation recently on the future of Library Services – contract comes to an end in 3 years – implications for the support of Suffolk Libraries. Revamping of Children’s Area – there might be a need to call on the £5500 in PC reserves earmarked for Library for Community Based Projects at a later date.
- c. Emergency Plan:
- i. To note a meeting is to be scheduled for March 2019 to discuss the next steps in updating / implementing the plan – suspend until April 2019.
- d. Parish Infrastructure Investment Steering Group:
- i. to receive an update on the assessments of suitable sites within the parish of Thurston for Multi Facility Recreation Use -
 - ii. to note the group is looking at how civil parking enforcement might be of benefit to the residents and businesses of Thurston – the meeting was informed that the group would be looking at a village wide strategy as to how to deal with current parking issues and how to accommodate future issues that will arise with further development and whether civil parking enforcement was the answer.
 - iii. to note the group in conjunction with the Recreational Facilities Committee is commencing work on a strategy for provision of facilities for current and future residents of the village – it had been agreed that to enable the parish council to move forward with the correct type of facilities in the correct location there was a need for an overall strategy for the village. The group would be seeking advice from the NP Professional Partner as to who might be best to approach for this type of work.
- e. Village Guide 2019:
- i. to receive a report from the working group on the production of the Thurston Village Guide 2019 – a number of draft sections had been written or were in the process of being written. The aim was to be with the printers by early May subject to changes around local government. Around 2500 guides to be produced a copy of which will be given to all residents and newcomers. There will be a digitalised copy and the guide would be revised every 4 years.
- f. Councillors Reports –
- i. to note Councillors’ activities/ meetings attended since the last meeting
 - Library Meetings – Cllrs. Robinson & Fawcett
 - P&R Cttee Meeting – Cllrs. Dashper, Fawcett & Rainbow
 - PIISG – Cllrs. Dashper, Fawcett, Rainbow & Robinson
 - Thurston Guide – Cllrs. Fawcett, Mrs Morris, Mrs O’Connell & Robinson
 - VAS – Cllrs. Hasler & Robinson
 - Youth Project Meeting – Cllrs. Fawcett & Robinson
 - Internal Control Audit – Cllr. Rainbow
 - Digital Mapping Course– Cllrs. Fawcett & Robinson
 - Library Bronze Exhibition – Cllr. Fawcett
 - Library events – Cllrs. Fawcett & Robinson

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- Community Engagement Surgery – Cllr. Robinson
 - Suffolk Design Workshop – Cllrs. Hasler & Mrs Morris
 - Recreation Ground Inspections – Cllrs. Hasler, Morris & Rainbow.
- ii. to receive reports from Councillors' on issues relating to the village:
- Issues over planting schemes for new developments and reasons behind why developers try and avoid following such schemes.
 - Road warning sign knocked over at Pokeriage Corner
 - Clearing drains along Barton Road – why not Pokeriage Corner
 - General surface of Barton Road – possible sunken drains
 - White lines faded around potholes on School Lane
 - Footpath 51 – pothole by school.
 - Village Sign on Beyton Road – cut back to allow to be seen.

15. CLERKS REPORT

- a. Delegated powers – the Clerk confirmed that she had dealt with a number of matters under delegated powers: emergency works to pavilion roof; reporting of damaged road signs; potholes reported; request for hedgerow cutting and verge trimming along Beyton Road.
- b. To receive an update on the deployment of the VAS – it was noted that both had been downloaded the previous week. The Clerk was working on the collation of data to share with the Stowmarket SNT to submit a request for further speeding checks. Volunteers requested for the VAS schedule as currently it is only Cllr. Hasler. It was agreed that the Clerk would email the rota out to all for volunteers to assist with the schedule.
- c. Cllr. Surgeries – the following agreed to attend the surgeries all of which would be held in the Parish Council Office: 23rd March – Cllrs. Rainbow and Mrs Morris; 10th April – Cllrs. Hasler and Mrs Morris; 26th April – Cllrs. Haley and Mrs O'Connell.
- d. To note general correspondence received as follows – it was noted that anything that is/was pertinent has/had already been circulated to all.

16. TO CONSIDER SPECIFIC ITEMS FOR THE NEXT AGENDA – none other than standing items.

17. DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS–

- a. to confirm the date of the next Parish Council Meeting which is scheduled for 3rd April 2019.
- b. to note that there will be a Recreational Facilities Committee Meeting on 20th March commencing at 6.30pm in the Community Library, Norton Road, Thurston
- c. to note that there will be a Planning Committee Meeting on 20th March commencing at 8.00pm in the Community Library, Norton Road, Thurston
- d. to note the Annual Parish Meeting will take place on 28th March 2019 commencing at 8.00pm in the Cavendish Hall, Church Road, Thurston.

18. To resolve that under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public and press be excluded from the Meeting on the grounds that disclosure of disclosure of ongoing discussions relating to the lease of New Green Trust and are not in the public interest: none to be discussed

20. CLOSE OF MEETING – there being no other business the Chairman closed the meeting at 10.10pm.

Appendix A

So signed by the Chairman at the meeting of 3rd April 2019

10. Planning:

b) To note the following decisions coming forth:

- DC/19/00362 - Non-Material Amendment for DC/18/01376 – re-positioning of pumping station and substation and minor amendments to house types @ Highfield, Norton Road
- DC/19/00295 – Planning Permission for the erection of front porch and insertion of 1 No window to front elevation @ Medway, 45A Genesta Drive
- DC/19/00101 – Planning Permission for erection of a single storey rear extension @ 4 Sandpit Drive
- DC/19/00197 – Planning Permission for the erection of 1.5 storey dwelling with shared vehicular access @ land adjacent to Rojulina, Hollow Lane

12. Financial Matters**a) Accounts submitted for payment**

	Voucher	METHOD	NETT	VAT	TOTAL
Thurston PCC - Tiny Toes – Donation	640	3281	150.00	0.00	150.00
Wicksteed Leisure – Heath Road repairs	641	3282	830.24	166.05	996.29
Urban Forestry – Tree works to Recreation Ground	642	3283	5637.78	1127.56	6765.34
Gipping Press – NP Booklet	643	3284	361.00	0.00	361.00
T Goodfellow – Village Expenses	644	3285	16.17	3.23	19.40

b) Accounts paid since the last meeting

Salaries – February 2019	636-639	3277–3280	2661.07	0.00	2661.07
New Green Rent – February 2019	632	SO	360.00	0.00	360.00
Plusnet – business account	633	DD	41.55	8.31	49.86
Amazon – Office toolkit	634	CC	20.40	4.08	24.48
Microsoft – Office 365 renewal	635	CC	112.80	22.56	135.36

c) Receipts received since the last meeting

Lloyds – Interest – February	Interest	2.45	0.00	2.45
MSDC – Street Cleansing Grant	Bacs	612.30	0.00	612.30

14a) Rec Ground Accountsi) *Accounts paid since the last meeting: None***Monies received since the last meeting:**

Thurston Football Club	Chq	408.00	0.00	408.00
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ii) *Accounts awaiting payment:*

Caretaker Contract	603	110.77	0.00	110.77
Caretaker Expenses	604	46.82	1.36	48.18
H2O – pressure valve repairs – July 2018	605	146.66	29.33	175.99

14b) Library Accountsi) *Monies paid since the last meeting: None*ii) *Monies received since the last meeting:*

Cavendish Hall – VOCA Event	Chq	151.95	0.00	151.95
Wine Tasting Event	Chq/Cash	420.00	0.00	420.00

iii) *Accounts awaiting payment:*

St Peter's Church – Xmas Tree Festival Donation	129	182.92	0.00	182.92
R Fawcett – Wine Tasting Event	130	400.00	0.00	400.00

Appendix BSo signed by the Chairman at the meeting of 3rd April 2019

Glossary of Common Abbreviations used

Aif	All in favour
AGAR	Annual Governance and Accountability Return
APM	Annual Parish Meeting
BACS	Bankers Automated Clearing Services
BUAB	Built Up Area Boundary
BMSDC	Babergh & Mid Suffolk District Councils
CC	Credit Card
CCG	Clinical Commissioning Group
Chq.	Cheque
Cllr.	Councillor
Cttee.	Committee
DC	District Council
DD	Direct Debit
FOI	Freedom of Information
GPoC	General Power of Competence
HMRC	Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs
HRA	Habitats Regulations Assessment
LAIS (from SALC)	Local Association's Information Services
LGBCE	Local Government Boundary Commission for England
LPA	Local Planning Authority
MSDC	Mid Suffolk District Council
NHS	National Health Service
NP	Neighbourhood Plan
NR	Network Rail
PC	Parish Council
PCSO	Police Community Support Officer
Pdf	Portable Document Format
PIISG	Parish Infrastructure Investment Steering Group
Rec.	Recreation
RFO	Responsible Financial Officer
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
SALC	Suffolk Association of Local Councils
SCC	Suffolk County Council
SID	Speed Indicator Device
SNT	SaferNeighbourhood Team
SO	Standing Order
SPS	Suffolk Preservation Society
TBC	To be confirmed
TCC	Thurston Community College
TNPSG	Thurston Neighbourhood Planning Steering Group
TPO	Tree Preservation Order
TRO	Traffic Regulation Order
VAS	Vehicle Activated Sign

Appendix C – County Cllr. Otton's March Report to Full Council

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2019/20 budget agreed - Suffolk County Council's 2019/20 budget was agreed on Thursday 14 February. This will see an increase in council tax of 3.99%, and savings across the council's directorates totalling £10.1m.

NHS commissioning groups to pick up CAB funding for 2019/20 - As mentioned above, the budget includes a cut to the grant funding provided by Suffolk County Council to Citizens Advice. This grant will be cut by 50% in 2019/20 (£184,000) and removed entirely in the 2020/21 budget. Thankfully, the CCGs have stepped in and agreed to provide Citizens Advice with £184,000 in funding this year, to make up for the 50% funding cut from Suffolk County Council. Although this means Citizens Advice will not lose funding this year, it does not address the longer-term problem of funding in the future. The CCGs have been clear that this funding is only available for 2019/20.

Reduction in 2018/19 predicted overspend - Suffolk County Council's latest budget monitoring report suggests the 2018/19 budget will be overspent by £5.9m. This is a reduction since quarter 2, when they were predicting an overspend of £7.5m. The £5.9m overspend represents 1.2% of the net budget and is made up of £3.8m on base budget and £2.1m on Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) spend. Although it is positive to hear the overspend is reducing, I am concerned by where these savings are being achieved. The majority are due to ongoing staff vacancies at the council, particularly in social work teams. This is clearly not a long-term solution and is a dangerous false economy. Without adequate staff, the county council will struggle to properly and efficiently provide services in Suffolk.

Respublica report into housing costs council £66,000 - Last year Suffolk County Council commissioned the thinktank Respublica to undertake a study into housing growth in Suffolk at a cost of £66,000. The final report was published on 21 February. At just 14 pages long, it cost the authority almost £5000 per page and failed to discuss the issues in any great depth.

School Travel – opt-in for funded transport - Following changes to the school travel policy, which will take effect in September 2019, eligible families must now “opt-in” to receive free school transport – you will no longer be automatically signed up. School place allocations have taken place, and families are being advised to check their transport eligibility. There is still the ability to apply under hardship grounds, and staff to walk grounds. If your child is eligible for free transport, you will need to apply each year. The application window for this year is 1 March to 31 May 2019. There is more information available at www.suffolkonboard.com/optin.

New mental health strategies for Suffolk - Since Spring 2018, the Suffolk and Norfolk Clinical Commissioning Groups have been leading work on developing new mental health strategies for Suffolk. The Strategies seek to describe the future vision for mental health and emotional wellbeing within the context of an integrated physical, mental and social care system and a departure from the way traditional services have been delivered. There is also a strong emphasis on prevention, wellbeing and expanding community/primary care mental health services. The next phase of work will focus on designing delivery plans for the Strategies, including a programme of work and timetable for implementation. At the cabinet meeting I highlighted the work being done at Thurston CC and that the practitioner there was interviewed on BBC Look East.

Review of County Council Boundaries - The boundary commission is looking into a possible review of Suffolk county council divisions.

Thurston Primary School - I will be at the meeting about the proposals for the new school .

Proposal for Cycle Route via Morton Hall - Jean Wheeler and I are pursuing this together with the councillor in the neighbouring division.

Thurston WI - I am delighted to have been invited to the celebration of their centenary on 7th March

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