

THURSTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Parish Meeting of the Parish Council held on Wednesday 18th March 2020 at 6.30pm in the Community Library, Thurston Community College, Thurston.

In the Chair: Cllr. Rainbow

Present: Cllrs. Morris, Thurlbourn (latterly), Towers and West.

In Attendance: Mrs V Waples, Clerk.

1. **OPENING** – The Chairman declared the meeting open at 6.30pm 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) Apologies of absence were received from Cllrs. Dashper, Fawcett, Haley and Turner for personal reasons.
 - b) Council consented to accept the apologies as submitted.
3. **DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY AND NON-PECUNIARY INTEREST FROM COUNCILLORS INCLUDING GIFTS OF HOSPITALITY EXCEEDING £25** –
 - a) There were no declarations of pecuniary interest nor local non-pecuniary interests received. There were no gifts of hospitality exceeding £25 declared.
4. **COVID – 19** -
 - a) Council to consider whether to implement parts of the emergency plan – it was agreed that there needed to be a comprehensive response from the Parish Council which should follow the Parish Council’s Emergency Plan. Further agreed that there would need to be reassurance for residents that such a response was an official response. Information should not only be cascaded to residents but this process should also be used as a conduit for other agencies to get the information out to as wide an audience as possible. Agreed that the Clerk’s paper entitled COVID-19 Information along with the Covid-19 Survey asking for volunteers as well as details of those requiring assistance be printed and distributed to all residents. Cllr. Keith Towers agreed to act as joint overall co-ordinator alongside Cllr. Richard Fawcett and another resident (to be confirmed). Agreement to enact the Emergency Plan would be given by both the Clerk and the Chair of the Parish Council. It was agreed that the Emergency Plan Survey should be distributed via all means possible – e.g. website, in person, “nextdoor” platform aif. It was noted that GDPR will apply for all data collected.
 - b) Council to consider setting up a good neighbour scheme for residents within the village – by cascading the emergency plan it was agreed that this would be covered.
 - c) Council to consider whether further actions should be taken to help the most vulnerable – again it was agreed that this would be covered and be part of the information cascaded up to relevant authorities.
 - d) Woolpit Surgery – as part of their Patient Resilience, the practice would be interested in having one contact point in the village to coordinate medicine collection / drop-off within the village for those unable to access the Pharmacy in Thurston. One person would be required, details of whom would be held by the Doctors Surgery and placed, for the period of the outbreak, on the website to allow all to contact if needed. It was confirmed that the details to be shared would be name, telephone and email address. Cllr. Morris agreed to act as such a contact. It was agreed that the Clerk would contact Mount Farm; Swan Surgery and Ixworth Surgery to see if they are operating a similar scheme, aif.

Signed Chairman

Date: to be confirmed

5. Statutory Functions –

- a) Council to review the scheme of delegation to ensure it is fit for purpose and would ensure minimal disruption to the work of the council if councillors are not able to attend meetings - Council confirmed that the powers specifically delegated to the Clerk/RFO as dated March 2020 were fit for purpose and would ensure minimal disruption to the work of the council if councillors are not able to attend meetings.

Council also agreed to approve advance authorisation of payments occurring on an annual basis for the period 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021 – see Appendix A.

Council further agreed to allow, with reference to para 6.6 of Thurston’s Financial Regulations, the signing of cheques other than at meetings. To allow proper scrutiny of records of payments and the accounts, in accordance with section 5 of the Financial Regulations, any signatures obtained away from such meetings shall be reported to the council at the next convenient meeting.

Council agreed to implement the changes in practice as to how it considers planning application responses and to allow the circulation of comments via email with the final decision being made by the Clerk as to the manner of the response following liaison with the Chairman and Vice Chairman as a form of check/balance.

- b) Council to note that the government is to consider bringing forward legislation to remove the requirement for annual council meetings to take place in person – the Clerk advised the meeting that there were a number of statutory meetings and deadlines that apply to local councils and that there has been no change to legislation or government guidance to amend these statutory duties. Where the law does not provide for a particular scenario (e.g. the holding of the annual council parish or town meeting outside of the statutory timeframe, if the government advises against meetings being held) the Parish Council should be guided by the government as to what should happen. It was agreed to await further advice from NALC and SALC on this matter.

Post meeting note: NALC is expecting government guidance on holding meetings remotely and will produce further guidance as needed. In the meantime, if local councils do not hold meetings and take decisions by email or other remote methods NALC feels it’s likely that afterwards if there were a challenge that the courts will accept that exceptional times called for exceptional measures. In the absence of government guidance, we would suggest for now only taking decisions remotely for truly urgent issues. In this case, local councils should evidence their decision making as best they can, for example by asking councillors to confirm their votes by email to the clerk for the clerk to keep as a record of the decision.

- c) Council to note that the government is to consider bringing forward legislation to allow council committee meetings to be held virtually for a temporary period – the Clerk updated the meeting on the ability to hold virtual meetings: unless the council has delegated to an officer, the law requires decisions to be made by those present and voting at a meeting. Members unable to physically attend meetings may wish to ‘join’ a meeting by Skype, or other electronic means, which could be facilitated by the Council if desired. This would not qualify as attendance and they would not be allowed to vote on any matter. It would be advisable for their opportunity to speak to be only during the public participation session or when otherwise invited to speak by the Chairman. Meetings are also required to be held in public unless the council has resolved that they should be excluded, either because of the confidential nature of the business, or ‘for other special reason’. The Government are apparently considering introducing legislation to temporarily allow meetings to be conducted by Skype or other conferencing technology. This has not yet happened. The council was made aware that some councils have already decided that they have no option but to do this. It was agreed that for the time being the April meeting would stand until further information was forthcoming.

Post meeting note – all meetings cancelled until further notice.

Signed Chairman

Date: to be confirmed

6. Financial Matters:

a) Thurston Parish Council –

- to authorise verified payments – Council approved the payments awaiting authorisation as identified at Appendix B, aif.
- The meeting further agreed that it should post-date salary cheques for contracted hours for April 2020 and that any over-time worked would be settled at a later date.

b) Friends of Thurston Library –

- to authorise verified payments – Council approved the payments awaiting authorisation as identified at Appendix B, aif.
- to receive any matters coming forth - message from Cllr. Fawcett as Chair of the Friends of Thurston Library to be sent to the Groups and Friends of Thurston Library Committee in which he will state that there will not be any meetings of our Friends of Thurston Library Committee nor of the Communications Group. The statement below would summarise the situation and will be in the Thurston Newsletter and is on their social media:

“In the light of coronavirus, Suffolk Libraries and the Friends of Thurston Library have decided to postpone all planned activities and group meetings. At this stage it is not possible to say when they will be able to resume. This advice applies across all libraries in Suffolk.”

The Suffolk Libraries latest advice can be found at:

<https://www.suffolklibraries.co.uk/coronavirus/>

Cllr. Fawcett is still hopeful of showing SCC (Gemma Levi) and Suffolk Libraries (Mike Ellwood) round as there is the opportunity to expand the role for Thurston particularly in relation to ideas of a Community Hub.

c) Recreational Facilities Committee –

- to authorise verified payments - Council approved the payments awaiting authorisation as identified at Appendix B, aif.
- to receive any matters coming forth –
 - Council to note that all hirings of the Pavilion have ceased with immediate effect. Invoices will be settled over the coming weeks by Mah-Jong Club; Football Club and French for Tots.
 - Agreed that the Clerk would organise a skip for the following week to clear the Car Park area at the Recreation Ground. It was agreed that an 8-yard would be preferable. *Post meeting this did not happen prior to the Government’s instructions for a lockdown – suspended until after lockdown.*
 - Recreation Ground Car Park – Clerk to contact Welham Surfacing with the further questions prior to placing the order. *Post meeting this did not happen prior to the Government’s instructions for a lockdown – suspended until after lockdown.*

7. To confirm the date of future meetings:

- Cancellation of the Annual Parish Meeting for 26th March 2020
- Cancellation of the Community Engagement Surgery – 21st March; 8th April and 24th April 2020
- Parish Council Meeting scheduled 1st April 2020 commencing at 7.30pm – to be confirmed once more information is noted.

8. Close of the Meeting – there being no other business the Chairman closed the meeting at 7.22pm.

Signed Chairman

Date: to be confirmed

Appendix A.

Agenda Item 5a) Statutory Functions - as submitted by the RFO to the meeting of 18th March 2020

List of Payments which arise on a regular basis – year ending 31st March 2021

In accordance with Thurston Financial Regulation FR 5.6, for each year the Clerk and/or RFO shall draw up a list of due payments on a regular basis as the result of a continuing contract, statutory duty, or obligation (such as but not exclusively: salaries, PAYE add NI, Superannuation Fund and regular maintenance contracts and the like) for which the council may authorise payment for the year provided that the requirements of Financial Regulation 4.1 (Budgetary Controls) are adhered to, provided also that a list of such payments shall be submitted to the next appropriate meeting of the council.

Council to note:

Payments for salaries, PAYE and NI, Superannuation Fund and regular maintenance contracts will still continue to be made in accordance with Council's Financial Regulation 6.3.

Parish Council							
Frequency Expenditure Incurred	Payment Method	Beneficiary	Summary of the purpose of the expenditure	Nett Amount	VAT Recoverable	Vat Non Recoverable	Merchant Category
Monthly	SO	New Green Community Trust	Rent for lease of Parish Council Offices	375.64	0.00	0.00	Administration
Monthly	DD	Plusnet	Provision of telephone and broadband	Variable	Variable	0.00	Administration
Monthly	DD	Plusnet	Provision of mobile telephone	Variable	5.83	1.17	Administration
Annually	DD	ICO	Data Controller Registration	40.00	0.00	0.00	Administration
Annually	DD	123 connect	Domain Hosting Name Services	99.00	19.80	0.00	Administration
Annually	CC	Microsoft 365	Annual Subscription – Clerk’s laptop	112.80	22.56	0.00	Administration
Annually	CC	Microsoft 365	Annual Subscription – Office Laptop	112.80	22.56	0.00	Administration
Annually	CC	McAfee Livesafe	Virus Protection	31.99	0.00	0.00	Administration
Annually	CC	Adobe Systems Software	Adobe Export – PDF	17.62	3.52	0.00	Administration

Appendix B

Signed Chairman

Date: to be confirmed

Agenda Item 6. Financial Matters – as submitted by the RFO to the meeting of 18th March 2020

a) Thurston Parish Council

Accounts submitted for payment

	Voucher	METHOD	NETT	VAT	TOTAL	POWER INCURRED
Salaries – March 2020	833-837	3569-3573	£5,396.62	0.00	£5,396.62	LGA 1972 s112 & LGA 1972 s151
SCC – Street Lighting & Maintenance	838	3608	£6,584.56	0.00	£6,584.56	Parish Councils Act 1957, section .3 and Highways Act 1980, section 301

b) Friends of Thurston Library –

Accounts submitted for payment

	CHQ No	Nett	VAT	TOTAL
PCC of Thurston – Christmas Tree Festival	152	253.77	0.00	253.77
R Fawcett – Library expenses – cable protector	153	15.98	0.00	15.98

c) Recreation Ground

Accounts submitted for payment

	CHQ No	Nett	VAT	TOTAL
R Cook – Caretaker Contract	636	117.26	0.00	117.26
R Cook – Expenses	637			
Zurich – Village Hall Insurance Schedule	638	404.23	0.00	404.23

Signed Chairman

Date: to be confirmed

Appendix C

Glossary of Common Abbreviations used

Aif	All in favour
AGAR	Annual Governance and Accountability Return
APM	Annual Parish Meeting
ASB	Anti-social Behaviour
BACS	Bankers Automated Clearing Services
BUAB	Built Up Area Boundary
BMSDC	Babergh & Mid Suffolk District Councils
CC	Credit Card
CCG	Clinical Commissioning Group
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
Chq.	Cheque
Cllr.	Councillor
CMP	Construction Management Programme
Cttee.	Committee
DC	District Council
DD	Direct Debit
FOI	Freedom of Information
FR	Financial Regulations
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
NDP	Neighbourhood Development Plan
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
SARS	Suffolk Accident Rescue Service
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
TCC	Thurston Community College
TNPSG	Thurston Neighbourhood Planning Steering Group
TPO	Tree Preservation Order
TRO	Traffic Regulation Order
VAS	Vehicle Activated Sign

Signed Chairman

Date: to be confirmed