

THURSTON PARISH COUNCIL – Leisure and Environment Committee

Minutes of the meeting of the Leisure and Environment Committee held on Wednesday 19th July 2023 at 6.00pm in the Community Library, Norton Road.

In attendance: Cllr. B Rainbow (Chair), E. Bond, B Morris, J Hay, P Smith and T Welham.

Also in attendance: Mrs A King, Deputy Clerk and 4 members of the public.

1. **Chair's Welcome** - the Chair opened the meeting advising all that the Protocol adopted by the Parish Council for reporting at Parish Council Meetings, would be enacted for this meeting. A copy of the Protocol is available from the Clerk or can be downloaded from the website: <https://thurstonparishcouncil.uk/parish-council/policies-procedures-and-strategy/>
2. **To receive Apologies of Absence** – Cllr Cornell sent their apologies due to personal commitments, these were accepted by all.
3. **Declarations of pecuniary and local non-pecuniary interests:**
 - a) To receive declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests and other registerable interests and non-registerable interests as detailed in Appendix B of the LGA Model Code of Conduct – none received.
 - b) To note the determination of requests for dispensations in accordance with council's Dispensation Policy – none received
4. **To consider and approve the minutes of the previous meetings:**
 - a) 31.05.2023 and 23.06.28 – Leisure and Environment Committee - approval of the minutes as an accurate record of the meetings that took place was given by all present, aif. The Chair signed the minutes in accordance with legislation.
5. **To receive comments from the members of the public present:**
 - a) **On the agenda under discussion** – None received.
 - b) **On any other matters relating to recreational matters within the village of Thurston** –
 - Requests were made to consider the erection of benches in the residential open spaces. This will be an agenda item for discussion at the next meeting.
6. **To approve the nomination of Cllr Welham to carry out monthly risk assessment reports for Thedwastre Play Area/New Green Open Space and to receive nominations for a councillor to take over the Heath Road risk assessments to replace Cllr West:**

Cllr Welham was approved and will take over the risk assessment reports for Thedwastre Park Area/New Green Open Space. The clerk is to send out the template to work from. Cllr Bond volunteered and was approved to take over the risk assessment reports for Heath Road.
7. **To receive and consider matters relating to the Monthly Risk Assessments Reports:**
 - a) **To receive updates on previous works highlighted in the Monthly Risk Assessments for action.**
 - Heath Road Play area: It was confirmed that the re-fencing would start next week and graffiti has been cleaned away.
 - Thedwastre Play Park Area: No updates to receive.

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- New Green Open Space: No updates to receive.
 - Recreation Ground Play Area: The play equipment has been cleaned.
- b) To consider matters on the Monthly Risk Assessment Reports for the following and agree appropriate actions arising:**
- Heath Road Play Area: Nothing to report.
 - Thedwastre Play Area: Weeds/long grass around some equipment, needs cutting back.
 - New Green Open Space: Weeds/long grass around some equipment, needs cutting back
 - Recreation Ground Play Area: Nothing to report.
- 8. To continue discussions regarding the proposed trail camera installation, taking advice from Cllr Hay's experience:** After discussion regarding position and security it was agreed that this project would be put on hold until after all the plans for the wildlife garden had come to fruition.
- 9. To note the invasive weed at the Churchyard has been cleared by M&TJ's:** This was duly noted. It was agreed that M&TJ's would be contacted in the autumn to combat the 'autumn flush' that will require more cutting back to keep it under control.
- 10. To discuss the wildlife garden, following a site visit and report from Suffolk Wildlife Trust. To make a definitive decision regarding the management of the area and work to be carried out in the short and medium term, and agree the proposal be put forward to New Green Trustees for their input:** After much discussion and input from a trustee of the New Green it was agreed that the following proposal be put forward:
- The pond is no longer functional and will be removed
 - Removal of the liner is a big task and would require machinery. Developers would be approached to see if they would be willing to help with the task (although it was agreed that this would be unlikely).
 - Plan B would be to slash the liner and remove sections to enable drainage.
 - Sub soil would be placed on top to enable a planting substrate for a wildflower meadow.
 - Removal of the Dogwoods and Blackthorn trees and suckers.
 - Signs would be erected at each entrance to welcome visitors into the garden.
 - A lectern board would be erected inside the garden detailing a brief history of the garden, what is growing in there and what visitors are likely to see at certain times of the year.
 - More benches to be placed in there for visitors enjoy a quiet space, contemplation area.

A working group will be formed to help with the project, DofE volunteer, ATC and scouts will all be approached. M&TJ's will be contacted to establish if they have the machinery needed to collect grass in the wildflower area.

The clerk is to put some basic costs together for this project, but it is hoped that volunteers and donations will keep costs low.

Moving forward the proposal will be submitted in writing to New Green for their input, although it was confirmed that a verbal report would be given at the meeting planned for 20th July. If their response is favourable, the committee will make a recommendation to council to carry out this work.

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11. To review existing plans that had previously been proposed for Heath Road, and to organise a site visit at Heath Road with Kompan to discuss possible options for future development: It was agreed that the current Heath Road play area was in need of an overhaul. Whilst it was acknowledged that the future of Heath Road is not clear in terms of play area, the council discussed what they would like to see on the site if they were able to extend the area of land they currently lease.

- The area would include a mix of recreational facilities and appeal to a wider range of ages.
- The landscape would focus on nature and woodland.
- The area would take on a parkland feel with separate areas accommodating different groups.
- Den making area.
- Woodland walks/nature trail.
- Zip lines.
- Topography would include mounds and hillocks to create character.
- Large level pitch area for 'kick abouts'.
- A fenced off area for young children to play in safely.
- High Lodge style design.
- Walsham le Willows was cited as a good example of a nature area, and the clerk is to investigate further.
- Hags – Inspired by Nature Wooden Playgrounds are to be approached for ideas as are Kompan. The clerk is to contact them.

12. To discuss possible loneliess/isolation focussed projects that could be explored and taken on to enhance the leisure and environmental aspects of the village – Whilst the councillors were keen to explore this further, it was acknowledged that a lot of the loneliness that was experienced by residents was likely to their lack of mobility and inability to get to clubs and groups. The idea of a sponsored bus was put forward, but concerns were raised as to the viability of it, and the commitment of volunteers to run it. It was agreed that the clerk would approach other parishes to see how they handle loneliness, and to report back at the next meeting.

13. Date of next meeting – 27th September 2023 commencing at 6.00pm in the Thurston Community Library.

14. To resolve that under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public be excluded from the Meeting on the grounds that publicity would be prejudicial to public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted – None to be discussed.

15. Close of meeting – there being no further business to transact the Chair closed the meeting at 19.05.