

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Wednesday 19th March 2015 at 8.000pm in the Cavendish Hall, Church Road, Thurston, as prepared by the Acting Clerk to the Council.

The Chairman of the Parish Council, Cllr P Robinson, took the Chair.

In Attendance: Parish Cllrs. D Ames, S Campbell, C Dashper, R Fawcett, Mrs A O'Connell, Mrs J Service, M Wallace, Vicky Waples, Parish Clerk; County Cllr Penny Otton; District Cllr. D Haley and twelve members of the public.

1. Opening and Welcome -

The meeting was declared open at 8.00pm.

2. Apologies for Absence - PCSO Claire Cox; PC Annelly Miles; PCC of St Peter's Church; Thurston Under 5's; District Cllr. S. Powell; Parish Cllrs. B Rainbow and M Thomas

3. Minutes of APM 19th April 2014 - These having been previously circulated were unanimously approved as a true record of the meeting.

4. Chairman's Report - *a full copy of this report is available from the Clerk to the Council.*

The Chairman of the Parish Council delivered his report in which he outlined the Parish Council's activities over the past year. Thurston Parish Council is made up of a full complement of 11 volunteer councillors. I would like to thank Chris Dashper (our Vice Chairman) for chairing the TPC meetings when I was unable to attend. I would also like to thank all the councillors for their support and humour over the past year - without this, we would not have achieved the things we have. There are two people who I owe a special thanks to, the first being the Clerk Vicky Waples, who has supported and guided me through my first year as Chairman as well as Councillor Richard Fawcett. I was voted into the role of Parish Council Chairman, last May, and as you may remember at the time our then Clerk Kathryn Savage had been on long term sick leave, and we had Vicky as our temporary Clerk. During the year Kathryn decided that to return to her position as Clerk to the Council was not a viable option, she decided to take early retirement. We then had a vacancy for a Parish Clerk, which as you can see Vicky accepted this permanent position. We are well supported by our Suffolk County Councillor Penny Otton and our Mid Suffolk District Councillors Derrick Haley and Sam Powell who attend most of our monthly meetings and are always ready to help with advice, support and sometimes even money. The Parish Council office is open every Tuesday and Friday where residents can raise queries or obtain information on council activities. Our monthly Parish Council meeting is held on the first Wednesday of every month in the Parish Council Office Meeting Room. Anyone can attend the Parish Council meetings and raise a matter in our open forum. Many of you will know that we match-fund our very own Police Community Support Officer for Thurston. We now are lucky enough to have had Claire Cox in this position for over two years. The money for half her salary is taken from the Thurston part of our council tax.

Although the accounts for this financial year are not yet completed, I can tell you the expenditure for the year is on budget despite some unexpected costs, which included the salary for two clerks from April to August. The organisations we supported this year include New Green Community Centre, the maintenance of the church yard of the St Peter Church, the village library and The Blackbourne Centre. Thurston Parish Council also continues to fund the public liability insurance for the annual firework display which brings the village together for a very enjoyable and professional event and to provide funds for their charitable work. Once we have completed the end of year accounts the final figure will be published on the Village Website with a hard copy available from the Parish Office. This year there have been changes in legislation which has meant we have updated many of our working policies and procedures and in some cases produced new ones. We have almost completed this task and any outstanding changes will be ready for the new council after the May 7th election.

We have been working on the Thurston Neighbourhood Plan throughout this year with the help from residents who form the steering committee and more will be covered on this later in the agenda. The questionnaire that was completed last year has now been analysed and the results will now be collated and policies generated to be put into the plan. There was an obvious gap in information for housing, so we are creating a housing needs survey which we hope will be sent out at the beginning of April. This is important to ascertain the type of

accommodation the residents and their families will require. More information on this will be sent to everyone, via the Village Postcards. One of the statutory roles played by the Thurston Parish Council is in planning applications. As a statutory consultee, the PC Planning group meets regularly to discuss every planning application. Over the past 12 months, this group has assessed 40 Planning applications for building in and around Thurston. We may not always recommend what residents would like, but we are required to assess each application on a set of policies that are in the local plan, and our comments must be based on these policies not on our personal feelings. Also during last year we organised two litter pick days, which was well attended, and I would like to thank all those who came along and helped, especially Jannette who provided and served the refreshments. We have listened to residents comments on the issue of litter in the village and within the last couple of months we have employed a permanent litter picker. Initially this role is for 5 hours per week, but we will review this after 3 months. We may look at other village duties if this initiative proves a success. You would have noticed the Under 5s building was completed and it commenced operation in September. Many of you are aware that we hold the Quality Council Logo and have for many years. During 2014 the criteria for the Quality Awards have changed and become more challenging for councils to achieve the Quality Council Logo. There are three levels, Foundation, Quality and Gold. We have been awarded the Foundation level which demonstrates that the Council meets the minimum requirements for operating lawfully and according to standard practice. Our aim for next year is to achieve the Quality award, which demonstrates that the Council has achieved good practice in governance, community engagement and council improvement. For the 2015/16 financial year the Thurston Parish Council took the difficult decision to raise the precept (the part of the council tax that pays for grit bins, bus shelters, seats, recreation grounds maintenance, litter bins and dog litter bins and some of the street lighting in the village) from £58413.00 to £60379.00. This represents £1.24 per year for a band "D" property.

5. **Report from County Cllr Mrs P Otton** – *a full copy of this report is available from the Clerk to the Council*

A14 - both Suffolk CC and Mid Suffolk councils have rejected the plans for a toll as part of the plans to improve the A14. She was pleased to put my name to the letter to the MP asking him to get the Highways Agency to remove the concrete parts of the road and thus reduce the noise. There would be a presentation by the Fire Service "Fire Safety in the home" in Thurston on 27th November at the New Green Community Centre. A working party has come up with suggestions for implementing mandatory 20mph's in certain locations. These will be only considered if 2 out of 3 of the criteria are met. The portfolio holder has said that he would like to have mandatory 20mph around schools but this has yet to be agreed. Following a meeting with the parish council and the highways it was agreed to put 30mph roundels on Beyton and Barton roads. It was also hoped that something would be done at the junction of Fishwick corner after a series of accidents. The County Council has agreed to fund several apprentices across the county. They will need to work with the schools to make this happen. She had raised the issue of lack of transport for those young people in very rural areas. There is a scheme for mopeds but not everywhere. The Explore card is now up and running so we need to make sure this is being taken up. Plans for the conversion of Beyton into the 6th form centre are progressing. There is concern that this will result in more school busses onto the Thurston site, particularly as some pupils who travel by train will not arrive in time for the new start times. THURSTON UNDER 5's - at last work has started on the new building. The RAISING THE BAR report on education has been considered and the County has asked for some clarification on why they did not choose a rural county rather than Hackney to partner with, however the very latest Ofsted report has severely criticised the council's progress on raising the attainment level of some pupils. She has asked for the cuts to the Learning and Improvement service to be re-instated. Following unprecedented rainfall and winds the county council has been faced with numerous problems on the highway and loss of power supplies. Now that hopefully we can see better weather she has asked that all roads are swept in order that any drains etc. are un-blocked. Following her interview on BBC Look East in July, regarding children who are not being educated in schools I am pleased that now all such premises are registered and inspected.

2 new "broadband boxes" have now been installed in Thurston and Norton. She mentioned that she was pleased to have been able to help with the purchase of new tables at Cavendish Hall from her Locality Budget and concluded that she was very pleased to be able to be at the official opening of the new facilities at New Green including the new parish council offices and to have been able to help with the cost of the refurbishment from my locality budget.

6. **Report from District Cllr D Haley & Mrs Powell** – *a full copy of this report is available from the Clerk to the Council.*

Cllr Mr Haley was invited to submit his report in which he mentioned that both Mid Suffolk District Council and Babergh District Council were moving ahead with the joint delivery teams which would result in close working relations between the two councils. This work was ongoing and would result in an integrated workforce with each retaining its legal identity. Unfortunately this had resulted in a reduced workforce – a saving of £1.8m had been achieved. This was in light of reductions in central government funding which had produced challenges for Mid Suffolk in terms of income. The Council's income source came from central government funding; council tax; retention of a share of local business rates; new homes bonuses and a variety of other grants. Mid Suffolk like other districts was aware that it was facing a growth in an aging population and that estimates for growth over the next 15 years was between 80 and 100K. The main priority for the Council for the coming years was to build new Council houses and he was aware that this policy had been lacking over the past few years.

7. **Report from Mid Suffolk South SNT** - *A full copy of this report is available from the Clerk to the Council.*

A written report had been submitted by PC Miles and PCSO Cox in which it was reported that there had been 43 crimes between April 2014 and March 2015. For Mid Suffolk SNT as a whole crimes recorded were 754 which was a decrease of 13%; sanctioned detections recorded 140 which was a decrease of 8%; community resolutions recorded 150 which was an increase of 3.1% and crimes solved recorded 190 a decrease of 5%.

General news from the SNT covered warnings over the following scams: bank card with people being asked for their pin number or being asked to withdraw money from their account and hand it over to 'the police' for verification; landline calls with fraudsters blocking landline calls unless sums of money are paid to release the phone due to outstanding bills. The meeting was reminded of the numbers to use for non-emergencies: 101 and that the local SNT's website could be found at:

<http://www.suffolk.police.uk/saferneighbourhood.aspx>

THERE FOLLOWED A SHORT INTERVAL DURING WHICH THE LADIES OF THURSTON EVENING WOMEN'S INSTITUTE SERVED REFRESHMENTS

8. **Reports from Parish Council Representatives -**

a) Thurston Neighbourhood Plan - the questionnaire that was completed last year has now been analysed and the results will now be collated and policies generated to be put into the plan. There was an obvious gap in information for housing, so we are creating a housing needs survey which we hope will be sent out at the beginning of April. This is important to ascertain the type of accommodation the residents and their families will require. More information on this will be sent to everyone, via the Village Postcards.

b) Recreation Ground Trust – Cllr Dashper, Chair of the Trust thanked all the regular users, the Caretaker and the joint members of the Recreational Ground. He reported that the pavilion and grounds were well supported by Thurston Football and Cricket Club and that the Trust was looking at ways to increase the use of the pavilion. There were a number of options for redeveloping/renovating the pavilion by accessing \$106 monies currently held by Mid Suffolk for Thurston and an application would be submitted for works to the Changing Rooms as quotations had recently been sourced for some works. He thanked his fellow Trustees for their work on the Recreational Ground Committee and concluded by stating that the Trust had a more positive outlook for the future.

c) Library – it was reported that Thurston Community Library was a joint use library located at Thurston Community College and part of Suffolk Libraries and that the past year had been a very good year. There was a dedicated librarian in place and an active Friends of Thurston Library Group. The library was now open for longer hours thanks to financial support from the Parish Council and the Friends of Thurston Library. It was reported that the library had attracted 17,000+ visits over the past year. Thurston Library has expanded its horizons over the past year with ereaders; numerous activities; an Ancestry Club and an outreach library in the Thurst Café. In the coming year there was the opportunity to rethink the space used by Children's Centre and what the library should provide for in the future. There were a number of activities being planned for the coming year as well as discussions for an increase into the library's opening hours.

d) Footpaths – Cllr Mrs Service, as the Council's Footpath Officer reported that all the Parish's footpaths were still being walked regularly and all appeared passable. All dog walkers

are being asked to please remove anything their pets may leave behind and please take it home or put it in the nearest bin, which also applied to walkers in general to take their litter home. Thurston has a great network of footpaths locally for us to all enjoy. There are footpath leaflets in the Parish Council Office should anyone require any and also if anyone notices anything that needs attention during their walks please contact either her or the Clerk.

e) Thurston Relief in Need Charity - Cllr Mrs Service reported that the unfortunately the re-cycling bins were removed at the end of last year, a great disappointment to the Charities as the money these brought in was distributed to a number of residents at Christmas, so 2014 was the first time for many years this wasn't done. All options for replacement sites have been explored but sadly there were none suitable or available. Even though the Trust was unable to make the Christmas payments there is a small income from land rental and shares. This gives the Trust the opportunity to help any local person who approaches the Trust for assistance. Regular notices in the Newsletter are placed giving the names of the Trustees who can be contacted in confidence.

9. Reports from Village Organisations

a. Thurston Community College – a report was submitted by the Assistant Principal in which she mentioned that due to the school being split over two sites a number of travel arrangements had changed and were being trailed. The college was reviewing bus pick-up times and discussions had been held with the PCSO; Highways and the PC over the best way forward. It was felt that the system that had been implemented was the best solution but it would need time to fine tune and iron out any of the difficulties around congestion. It was agreed that the system implemented within the school gates worked well but the issue of buses arriving early and parking up still needed to be addressed. The school in line with current legislation was offering wrap around services which involved a breakfast club at 7.45am and a homework club and enriched clubs after school. During break-times students were encouraged to socialise and play on the back grounds to the college. 4 of the students at the college had been involved with the project to redesign the library and 2 had been actively involved with the MSDC Achievement Award on the judging panel. It was also reported that the College was the only school in Suffolk to be awarded 'Champion' status for the government's flagship National Citizenship Service programme and that to date over 70 students from Year 11 will take part in the government run programme which gives students the opportunity to take part in a unique range of outward-bound activities, skills-building and volunteering within the local community. She concluded that the College had been pleased to support the NP Steering Group by putting out the Youth Questionnaire to all students and agreement had been reached that there would be a two way link from the College and the Village's websites.

b. 1st Thurston Scouts – the leader of the Scouts reported that the troop was the largest in the District and County and had grown once again over the past year. A range of activities had been accessed by the group ranging from Abseiling to Zorbing! This was its 50th year and various activities would be held over the summer to celebrate this event which would include a family camp and water sports. Currently there was a team of 10 leaders and more would be welcome to join. The group ranged from 6 – 14 with a number of young leaders ranging from 18 – 25.

c. St Peter's Church – the past year had seen a significant change with the retirement of the Reverend Gates. The Rural Dean and other retired clergy had managed to keep the Church going and it was hoped that appointments for the new vicar would be made in April. Thanks were offered to the Parish Council for its assistance with the upkeep of the Churchyard and its promise of a donation to the cleaning of the War Memorial.

d. Cavendish Hall – the Chairman of the Cavendish Hall mentioned that it had been a challenging year financially not least with the loss of the TUF's rent. The hall had been refurbished with the assistance of a grant from County Cllr. Otton's Locality Budget as well as donations from other sources. The hall had been refurbished both inside and out. The current Chairman would be standing down during the coming year as she felt that having overseen three refurbishments she was now due a break! She mentioned that the committee would therefore be looking for a new Chairman and a new secretary.

e. New Green Centre - a Trustee of the New Green Community Trust reported that to celebrate its 25th Anniversary there would be an event on 3rd May which would include a BBQ lunch; Craft Fayre; Hog Roast; Kaylie Dance and a Fund Run.

f. Thurston Pre-School – a brief report was submitted by the Chairman of the Pre-School in which it was mentioned that over the past year the committee and staff had worked tirelessly to ensure that the Pre-School was up and ready on time and that he would like to extend his

gratitude to the Parish Council for its support for the pre-school which he hoped would continue.

g. Methodist Church – it was reported that services took place every Sunday at 2.45pm in Methodist Church at The Planche and that the current Reverend would soon be replaced by Rev. Debbie Borda.

h. WI Afternoon – it was reported that this was a very successful group with 30 members. There were speakers each month and the group met every 3rd Thursday of each month.

i. WI Evening – it was reported that this group met at the Cavendish Hall on the 1st Thursday of each month and had been doing so since 1919. The group had celebrated its 96th birthday the previous week and had 45 members. A handicraft group met monthly and a variety of speakers had attended meetings over the past year. At Christmas party gifts had been handed out at the Women’s Refuge in Bury St Edmunds. The group had also helped with refreshments at a number of events held in the village. The Thurston WI belonged to a local group of WIs known as the Thedwastre Group and to help celebrate the 100 Centenary had taken part in a Baton Relay.

j. Thurston Primary School – a written report had been received from the Head Teacher in which it was reported that the academic year had been a busy one. The school had retained its Year 6 cohort for the first time which had resulted in a roll of 204 pupils with a maximum of 30 pupils allowed in each class. The school continues to prove to be popular with application in year made often for classes already full. Links with neighbouring schools and colleges were strong and it had sustained good links with Thurston Community College focusing this year on our pupil’s smooth transition, continuity of assessment and involving pupils of other age groups in initiatives which have included a Christmas lunch and concert, an art show focusing on Remembrance and competitive sports events. The school continued to keep its links with the Thurston Lunch Club, St Peter’s Church and welcome visits from the local librarian, Network Rail Safety and PCSO Claire Cox. A number of educational visits had taken place during the year with further ones planned for the summer. In the autumn the school had been successful in its bid for funding for permanent PE resources to be installed on its playground which was well used when the wet weather prevented them from using the Recreational Ground Field. The school was forging closer links with Great Barton, Rattlesden and Woolpit Primary Schools and it had applied to the Department for Education in order to convert the schools into a Multi-academy Trust. The aim was to have this complete conversion in the autumn terms and reassurance was given that this would not affect the unique identity of Thurston Primary but will ensure support with teaching and learning and collective procurement.

10. **To receive issues from members of the public present** – there were none raised.

11. The Chairman having thanked everyone for attending the meeting, and the WI for providing refreshments, and there being no further business, the meeting was declared closed at 9.35pm

Signed.....

Chairman

Date.....