

THURSTON PARISH COUNCIL

Parish Council Office
New Green Centre
New Green Avenue
Thurston
IP31 3TG

Tel: 01359 232854

e-mail: info@thurstonparishcouncil.gov.uk

website: <http://thurston.suffolk.cloud>



Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Thursday 20th May 2021 in the Cavendish Hall, Church Road, Thurston as prepared by the Clerk to the Parish Council.

The Chair of the Parish Council, Cllr. C Dashper, took the Chair for the Meeting.

In Attendance: 8 members of the public; County Councillor Penny Otton; District Councillors Harry Richardson and Wendy Turner; PCSO Smith; Melanie Johnson, Leader of 1st Thurston Scouts, Ellie Longman, Library Manager of Thurston Community Library.

1. Opening and Welcome by the Chairman of the Parish Council – the meeting was declared open at 7.00pm and all were thanked 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. To receive apologies for absence: Richard Fawcett (Chair of Friends of Thurston Library); Pat Sadler & Irene Churchus (Church Wardens); Helen Wilson (Principal Thurston Community College); Paul Wade & Roger Smith (Chair & Vice-Chair of New Green Management Trust); Sgt James Rolfe & PC Stefan Henriksen (Stowmarket SNT); Cllrs. Hay, Haley and Cornell.
3. To confirm the minutes of the APM of 28th March 2019 – these having been previously uploaded onto the website were unanimously approved by the meeting.
4. To receive a report from PCSO Matthew Smith of the Mid Suffolk SaferNeighbourhood Team –

Dates are from 1st April 2020 – 31st March 2021: - Crimes:

Thurston (covered by Stowmarket snt)	Vehicle Crime (Theft from, Theft of & Damage including Attempt)	Criminal Damage (Buildings, Other)	Burglary (House, Other Buildings including Attempt)	Theft (Other)	Other (Including no publicity crimes)	Total
Year 2020 - 21	5 (decrease of 9 from 2018-19)	14 (increase of 7 from 2018-19)	1 (decrease of 8 from 2018-19)	8 (decrease of 4 from 2018-19)	20 (increase of 20 from 2018 -19)	54 (increase of 4 from 2018-19)

(This includes crimes that occurred at Thurston Community College)

(Please note crime statistics can be adjusted and reclassified and are only correct at point of research, please contact crime admin team for official records)

What is pleasing to see is that 3 out of the 5 categories have seen a decrease of crime in Thurston and the village remains significantly lower in crime than most towns and villages in Suffolk. Also within these figures above are crimes which have taken place at Thurston Community College. Where there has been a significant increase is other crimes which are not for the public domain and in particular the increase of crimes occurring on social media. As a result the overall figures for crimes in total for Thurston have increased by 4 since the 2018-19 figures.

Anti-Social Behaviour in Thurston: During the Summer period of 2020 and also towards the winter months at the end of that year police were receiving several reports of anti-social behaviour, criminal damage and possible drug use by Cavendish Hall and also the Pavilion which is used by the football and cricket clubs of Thurston. Issues of youths congregating in these areas along with vehicles parking up and meeting other local youths drinking alcohol, leaving lots of litter and signs of drug use were being reported to police. When available police officers on late shifts were asked if they could patrol this area which was then turned into official briefings to officers who were tasked to patrol at certain times on certain days. We also used the help of our Kestrel team which comprises of a Sgt and Police Officers who do overt and covert operations to be proactive in combating drug crime and other community issues. This started to have an affect but more significantly was when the parish council then placed CCTV cameras on both Cavendish Hall but also on the pavilion which has seen a positive improvement as police has seen a noticeable decrease of reports of anti-social behaviour in this area.

Policing during the pandemic: Since the pandemic of Covid-19 police have played a vital role in how the UK has had to adapt to this terrible virus and more importantly how people have had to change their day to day lives. The constabulary were no different in that it had to find new ways in how the organisation can operate whilst still keeping their own colleagues safe but also keeping the public safe. A large amount of staff who were not front line were told to work from home, only those who are front line were permitted to work at stations but even then officers were asked to work differently. During the pandemic officers have been required to wear PPE in the form of masks and gloves when coming face to face with members of public which would mean being within 2 metre's of them. If a member of public was known to be positive with Covid-19 then officers were then being asked to wear a full biohazard suit with googles and gloves and a dedicated Covid19 team was set up purely to deal with any reports of someone who had Covid-19 or if there were any sudden deaths linked to Covid-19 which needed police response. All officers were being asked that if any enquiries that could be done over the phone or by email should be done that way to reduce the risk to both staff but also to members of public of spreading Covid-19 in the community. All police engagements and events were cancelled with communities and it has only been in the last few months when restrictions have eased that these engagements has started to come back.

Part of the government's plan to tackle the spread of Covid-19 throughout this whole pandemic has been for police to enforce social distance restrictions where necessary, this has been a challenging task as whilst during the first lockdown the vast majority of the public adhered to the restrictions in place, naturally as the pandemic went further and further into the year and into 2021 public patience at times was tested which meant more reports of covid-19 breaches of guidelines occurred and more resources were needed. Thankfully here in Suffolk whilst there have been several reports of breaches of covid-19 guidelines in the county the huge majority of people have responded well to the restrictions and this hasn't been any different in Thurston. Thankfully I have only had to engage and educate a few members of public in the village and have not had to enforce any kind of fine on individuals. Suffolk Constabulary has always prided itself in that engagement and education would always be the first way for officers to deal with any individuals breaching the guidelines and only as a last resort have any officers then had to enforce a fine.

The following officers are now part of the safer neighbourhood team covering the Mid Suffolk locality:

- Inspector for Stowmarket SNT: Inspector Neil McKay
- Supervisors for Stowmarket SNT: Sgt James Rolfe 636 & Sgt James Tallowin 253
- Police officers for Stowmarket SNT: PC Holly Allen 225; PC Matt Lakin 246; PC Jayne Gardiner 70; PC Colin Gedney 663; PC Chloe Levett 1107; PC Hannah Castleton 847
- Link Police Officer for Stowmarket SNT: Vacant at this moment in time
- Link PCSO's for Stowmarket SNT: PCSO David Harvey 3098; PCSO Abigail Durrant 3287; PCSO Phillip Brill 3210
- Fully funded PCSO for Thurston: PCSO Matthew Smith 3204

With each of these police officers and link officer roles the fully funded PCSO for Thurston can look for assistance in tackling a specific incident which they would oversee. When Norfolk Constabulary decided to remove all Police Community Support Officers beginning the 1st April 2018, understandably concerns were raised if Suffolk Constabulary would do the same. As at this present point in time Suffolk Constabulary has decided to not follow Norfolk in getting rid but to reduce Police Community Support Officer numbers however it is important to note that the constabulary is still facing the real challenges of a reduced budget by central government in the next few years and the role of Police Community Support Officers will be continually reviewed.

Fully Funded PCSO - Since 1st January 2017 PCSO Matthew Smith 3204 has been in the role for Thurston, the fully funded role requires the officer to help out with enquiries to do with crimes, such as taking on house to house / CCTV enquiries, reassurance visits to victims, tackle anti-social behaviour concerns and provide crime reduction advice in the village as well as provide inputs at both Thurston College and Thurston Primary School. The officer reports to the parish council on a weekly basis about any crimes or issues raised to the police by members of the public which may be beneficial for the parish council to be made aware of as well. The officer will also report general patrols undertaken in the village.

Street surveys - have once again started in the village from April 2021 which are done by PCSO Smith 3204 to allow residents to raise any concerns or issues which they might not want to contact the police directly with by calling 101.

If there are any new businesses or possible clubs and activities which you would like the fully funded PCSO to be involved with they can contact Stowmarket.snt@suffolk.pnn.police.uk or contact 101 and ask for PCSO Smith 3204.

5. To receive a report from the Chairman of the Parish Council Christopher Dashper - the Chairman of the Parish Council delivered his report which is as follows:

Good evening and welcome to the 2021 Thurston Annual Parish Meeting and the Chairman's report.

The last time we held an Annual Parish Meeting was more than two years ago, in March 2019.

It would be an understatement to say that a lot has changed since we last met. Our Neighbourhood Plan had not been approved in March 2019, major housing developments around the village had yet to build any actual new homes, the site for the new primary school had not been confirmed and who could have predicted that a global pandemic would devastate world economies, cause 165m infections worldwide and result in 3.5m deaths to date.

The coronavirus has affected all our lives and our thoughts are with those who have lost family and friends to the disease or have been impacted in other ways because of the impact on other health and community services and the downturn in the economy.

For the Parish Council the past year has been one of adapting to changing circumstances, delivering our functions and services regardless of the restrictions in place, maintaining our meeting schedules through virtual communications and home working. This week marks the return to in-person meetings for the council for the first time since March 2020 and for some members of the council the the first opportunity to meet in person.

As we emerge though from what is hopefully the final period of lockdown, we look forward to a return to normal life in as many ways as possible. We will welcome more

new members to the community in the coming year, continue to work with existing developments in the village and manage the impact of future proposals. New facilities will open for the community and our existing services and infrastructure will continue to be developed to ensure that Thurston remains a thriving community, able to support the needs of both existing and future residents.

Moving on into the main body of the report, this is my opportunity for a number of important thank you's.

A thank you first to all the members of the council who have committed their time and energy to the parish this year. We currently have 10 councillors working to try and achieve the best for the village.

Since my last report, councillors Richard Fawcett, Anne O'Connell, Ian Hasler, Peter Robinson and Alastair Angus have left the council, while Sarah Cornell, Julian West, Keith Towers, James Hay and Nigel Turner have joined.

My thanks again to Vice Chairman Brian Rainbow, for supporting myself and Vicky, Clerk to the Council and to all the councillors, including Barbara Morris, John Thurlbourn and Derrick Haley chairing or serving as part of our committees including Planning, Recreational Facilities, Emergency Planning and our new Environment Awareness and Climate Committee and Youth Council, helping to support the development of the village, ensuring that Thurston offers the best environment possible for those who live, work and attend school here.

To Steve, our litter picker for maintaining the public areas and to Trevor our village handyman for maintenance and repairs around the village.

Thanks also to our Suffolk County Councillor, Penny Otton and Mid Suffolk Councillors Wendy Turner and Harry Richardson for their support on county and district issues including road infrastructure and planning.

And to our Clerk. Despite the lockdown periods, there has been no let-up in the work, expectations, or requirements of the council, indeed the volume and breadth of work of the council appears to increase continuously. Vicky has continued to ensure that the council maintains and exceeds the standards expected of us in all aspects including financial management, health and safety, our role as a statutory consultee on planning matters and in professionalism in delivery and working with other organisations and stakeholders.

I am very pleased to report that during the year we recruited a Deputy Clerk, Antonia, who already has experience as a parish clerk and has assumed some of Vicky's responsibilities such as providing clerk support to some of our committees, allowing Vicky to concentrate on matters including planning and the overall operation of the council. Antonia has settled in quickly despite the difficult circumstances and is making a significant contribution to the day-to-day work of the council. We also acknowledge our previous Administrative Assistant, Angela Dean, who left the council last year.

In planning matters, our Neighbourhood Plan was overwhelmingly approved at a referendum by the parish and subsequently adopted by Mid Suffolk District Council in October 2019. The Neighbourhood Plan will help to support sustainable development in the future by becoming a key reference for planning applications. Although we were disappointed when other residential developments, including additional homes along Ixworth Road and Beyton Road received planning permission in early 2020, a key test will be a judicial review of the Beyton Road development and we expect to hear more on this soon. Payments from the Community Infrastructure Levy or CIL are now being received by the parish and this funding will increasingly support the cost of essential infrastructure necessitated by the growth of the village. Finally on planning, the new primary school is quickly taking shape on Norton Road, with completion scheduled for summer 2021.

We are pleased to be able to support local organisations each year with small grants so that they are able to provide services to support our residents. Organisations supported over the last two years include New Green Community Trust for maintenance of the open space and for improved CCTV, The Cavendish Hall, The Recreation Ground Charity, St Peters Church with maintenance of the Church Yard, Friends of Thurston Library, Royal British Legion, Ixworth Patients Association, Mid and West Suffolk Citizen's Advice

Bureau, Suffolk Accident Rescue Service, EACH The East Anglia's Children's Hospitals, Headway Suffolk, Suffolk Age UK, the Fresh Start/New Beginnings charity, Suffolk neighbourhood Watch Association and Tiny Toes Toddler group. Organisations within the village who provide services to local residents, can apply for a grant using a simple application form available from the Clerk and the request will then be considered by the Parish Council. Requests for grant support from organisations based outside the village including regional groups may be considered where there is or has been a recognisable benefit to Thurston.

Thurston Parish Council has a number of responsibilities many of which have a financial implication, including maintaining the village sports, recreational and play facilities and equipment, some street lighting and general village maintenance and litter clearance. The village also fully funds its own Police Community Support Officer for Thurston, Matt Smith. The combined cost of these services along with the core running costs of the parish council is supported by the annual precept, funded by the Council Tax paid by each household. For 2021/22 the Parish Council has determined to keep any rise in the precept to a minimum and it will therefore increase by 1.3% - £1.13 per annum or just over 2 pence per week for a Band D Property. As income to the parish has risen as a result of the receipt of funds such as the Community Infrastructure Levy there is a greater emphasis on accountability and ensuring financial information is provided in a transparent and concise manner. All papers including those relating to finance are uploaded to the website for perusal by Councillors and members of the public ahead of all meetings.

Our monthly Parish Council meeting is held on the first Wednesday of every month at the Library. Anyone can attend the Parish Council meetings and raise an issue or an area of concern in public forum. The public are also invited to attend our other committee meetings planning meetings, the majority of which will be held at the Library. The dates of all of these meetings are advertised on the notice boards around the village and on the Thurston website. Until Covid-19 social distancing requirements are fully lifted, there may be restrictions on the numbers able to attend meetings.

Moving forward, key tasks for the council in the coming year include:

- Partnership working with the Library for acting as a conduit for signposting newcomers and existing residents to services and facilities within and without the village and the new Thurston Guide for Residents will complement this process.
- Update and reissue the footpath map
- Increase the social media presence of the council including maintaining a Facebook page
- Revamp of the village website to incorporate additional local information
- Taking on responsibility for the clearing of footpaths rather than scheduling works by SCC Highways

Addendum to the report:

I would like to take the opportunity to pass on thanks to everyone involved in the delivery of the Thurston Covid-19 Emergency Plan, which, through a network of local volunteers, so successfully supported many in the village forced to self-isolate during the pandemic. Local coordinators helped to organise and prioritise the volunteers, supported by Councillor Keith Towers, Mr Richard Fawcett and Mr Graham Dixon with overall delivery managed by Vicky, Parish Clerk. The scheme was one of the quickest in Mid Suffolk to respond to the emergency, largely due to the numbers of volunteers who so readily came forward to help, including offering support with shopping, collecting prescriptions and providing overall support to residents unable to leave their homes

6. To receive a report from County Councillor Penny Otton – County Councillor Penny Otton was invited to submit her report in which she drew the meeting's attention to the following –
ELECTION - following the election I will again be part of a Green, Lib Dem and Independent group as this will have 15 councillors, we will be the second largest group and therefore the main opposition. Over the most challenging of years, the LDGI Group

have worked hard to continue holding Suffolk County Council's administration to account. We have adapted to the new way of working on-line and have been present at every Scrutiny, Cabinet and Full Council, representing the people of our divisions.

Suffolk County Council Budget 2021-22 - The Suffolk County Council Budget was voted through Full Council on February 11th. A council tax rise of 3.99%.

LDGI Group Budget Amendment - The LDGI Group submitted a budget amendment to Full Council. The key change proposed by the LDGI Group was to authorise the use of the full 3% social care precept, unlocking the maximum available funding without impacting SCC's reserves. This would generate an extra £3.452m

Motions over the past year from the Liberal Democrat, Green and Independent Group - My Group proposed four motions to Council in 2020-21:

- A call for the Council to publicly oppose EDF Energy's proposed Sizewell C development and retract any 'in principle' support for nuclear power.
- A 20mph scheme to reduce speed limits in all suitable residential areas from 30mph to 20mph, for a price of £4m. Communities would have been able to opt out.
- A biodiversity motion that would implement a new biodiversity strategy.
- A carer's motion that will create a database of both paid and unpaid carers and offer increased support.

The first two motions were rejected, though the Council backtracked on Sizewell C just two months later and now states that they cannot support the build in its current form. The biodiversity motion passed.

Biodiversity strategy adopted - At Full Council on the 3rd December, Suffolk County Council unanimously passed a motion that will see Suffolk County Council developing a biodiversity strategy and embracing biodiverse land management practices. The motion was proposed by the LDGI Group and supported by all other groups.

LDGI Group motion on carer's database receives unanimous support - At Full Council on March 18th the LDGI Group presented a motion designed to improve the county's support offer for carers. The motion will see the Council working with Suffolk Family Carers to form an opt-in register for paid and unpaid carers, who will be offered increased support including advice, signposting to key services, and the option to be consulted on key policies affecting carers.

Calls for road closures during lockdown to enable walking & cycling - The LDGI Group called on Suffolk County Council to close roads that are used by residents to get their daily exercise, to ensure that walkers/cyclists can exercise safely and maintain social distancing.

Cabinet approves 5-year cycling plan for Suffolk - In June 2020 the Cabinet approved a 5-year cycling plan for Suffolk, which identified 148 potential routes to be prioritised. This is as a result of a motion proposed by the LDGI group in July

2018, which called on the council to produce a strategic costed 5-year cycling plan.

Climate emergency recommendations published - In July 2020, the Cabinet approved the recommendations of a cross-party policy development panel outlining how the council should respond to the climate emergency and reduce emissions. This followed a motion from the LDGI group in March 2019, which declared a climate emergency and committed the council to be carbon neutral by 2030.

Automatic number plate recognition camera project (ANPR) - Suffolk County Council is working with the police to run a 2-year ANPR camera trial in speeding hot spots across the county. The cameras will be used to help detect and deter speeding offences that have been highlighted in towns and villages and educate drivers on the importance of road safety. An ANPR camera will be installed at a site where it has been identified by a local council, with support from their county councillor, so if Thurston wishes to do so I am more than happy to support.

Rail Crossing - despite being allocated £100,000 CIL money to develop a plan to make the crossing safe we are STILL WAITING to hear back from Network rail.

Highways - The result of the numerous planning approvals have resulted in serious problems for the roads and infrastructure in Thurston. It would take all night to report

on the numerous highways' issues, including getting Meadow Lane re-instated, to resolve the state of the roads across Thurston, including flooding and graffiti on signs. I am proud to have taken part in a protest against the tree felling on Ixworth road, which goes against both councils' commitment to biodiversity. Locality Budget - I was happy to support the cost of the defibrillator, the computer for the Smart Screen at the library and the café at New Green to help during COVID and my first after election is for a wild life garden at the college.

7. To receive a report from District Councillors Harry Richardson and Wendy Turner -

District Councillor Harry Richardson was invited to submit his report in which he drew the meeting's attention to the following:

As Mid Suffolk District Council did not meet in April I have included below a summary of the major updates across the district:

Business grant to boost economic recovery in Mid Suffolk - A significant new funding scheme to deliver an economic boost and support recovery from Covid is now available to businesses and not-for-profit organisations in Babergh and Mid Suffolk.

The Back to Business Grant is a one-off payment of up to £25,000 to support businesses in their recovery from the impact of Covid 19 and improve their long-term sustainability through resilience and diversification projects. This is designed to support local post covid economic recovery by encouraging projects that enhance visitor experience or increase footfall in town and village centres.

Priority will be given to organisations working in a partnership approach to local projects delivering economic recovery, projects that support job creation and opportunities to improve to business resilience and sustainability. This grant fund is also open to businesses and organisations who are seeking to grow or diversify their business, create more jobs or increase productivity. Businesses or organisations trading from Mid Suffolk, that meet the criteria, can apply for the Back to Business Grant online with a project outline or summary of activity that will be supported by this funding.

New 24-hour gym - Work has begun to transform a former Aldi store into a new 24-hour gym - breathing new life into the vacant unit and boosting council plans for a vibrant and thriving town centre. Mid Suffolk District Council bought the empty unit in Gipping Way in September 2018 for £1.7m. The unit had previously been an Aldi, a Family Bargains and a Poundland, but had stood empty for 18 months when the council stepped in to help the town centre's regeneration. PureGym received planning permission in late 2019 to run a 24-hour gym in the unit, creating 13 full-time and two part-time jobs, but original timescales were then delayed by Covid. This week however, the new tenant arrived on site to begin the long-awaited transformation, with facilities expected to include weight and exercise machines, free weights area and activity area - available to members 24/7.

The new Stowmarket site is also being promoted on PureGym's website ahead of its opening later this summer. As well as increasing the choice of leisure facilities in the town, the building includes a further vacant space still available to let and paves the way for improvements to the neighbouring Union Street West car park - with new surface, lighting and updated pay and display machines.

Mid Suffolk communities receive close to £1 million in grants - During the year, council officers have worked with clubs and organisations in the district to identify need and ensure that vital grant funding has made a real difference to Mid Suffolk's communities. The council has also acknowledged the key role of community groups, along with town and parish councils, in easing the challenges faced by residents during coronavirus, and a new dedicated Covid-19 Emerging Needs Grant opened last May to help the district through the peak of the pandemic. More than 60 organisations benefitted from over £100,000 in funding, including good neighbour schemes, foodbanks and community outreach projects. The pandemic also highlighted the importance of securing bright and healthy futures for Mid Suffolk residents, with grant funding approved for walking routes, leisure equipment and local sports clubs over the past twelve months. This includes over £50,000 in Section 106 funding - collected from developers when they

build new homes in the district – towards new play areas in Badwell Ash and Elmswell, along with capital grants of £36,500 for Mid Suffolk tennis clubs and a £2,000 discretionary grant to establish a new ParkRun at Chilton Fields. Elmswell also benefitted from Section 106 funding of £76,585 to facilitate the extension of the village's Blackbourne Centre – providing five different spaces for community use to accommodate a wide range of needs. Numerous other community venues across Mid Suffolk received funding for much-needed improvement works, with £28,000 in capital grants approved for Haughley's Ron Crascall Pavilion – forming a key part of the project to regenerate and revitalise King George's Field.

The Museum of East Anglian Life – Suffolk's largest independent museum, set in 75 acres of beautiful Stowmarket countryside – also received a capital grant of £18,400 towards various improvement works to support its community-focused initiatives, whilst the town's community centre secured £17,340 in Section 106 grants to fund accessibility improvements.

District Councillor Wendy Turner was invited to submit her report in which she drew the meeting's attention to the following:

Governance - Due to the Covid 19 emergency, there were no Council meetings from 23 March 2020 until the new Government legislation to allow virtual meetings was approved in May. Council staff have been working from home where possible and all Council and committee meetings are currently being conducted virtually using the Teams platform. The Annual Council meeting was deferred until September. The Green Party councillors formed a political group with the Liberal Democrat councillors, so we now form 50% of the total number of councillors. The chair of the Council is from the Conservative and Independent group.

Budget and investments - The COVID pandemic is continuing to have a financial impact on the Council's budget. There are already losses of approximately £1M with projected losses of a further £1M during 2021/22. The Government has provided support but not sufficient to cover all the losses. Despite having about £10M in reserves the Council increased Council Tax by 1.66%. It has been agreed that £4M of the reserves are to be allocated to the following departments Communities, Housing, Economy and Well-being. The new rules about PWLB loans for the 'invest to save' scheme, have not halted the current round of acquisitions, but in future the Council will have to fund such activities in other ways.

Climate Change and Biodiversity - The Climate Change working group made a number of proposals to Council, including projects such as Solar Carport at the Mid Suffolk Leisure centre site. Work is also underway at the leisure centres to reduce the carbon footprint. The waste fleet are to be converted to use biodiesel fuel. There is to be a biodiversity mapping project across the district and the public realm team to be hoping to work with parish councils to promote more tree and hedgerow planting.

Housing - Council housing rents are set to increase by CPI+1%, which is on average £1.25 increase per week. Garage rents are to remain the same. Sheltered housing service charges are to increase by £1 per week, and sheltered housing are to remain the same as last year. In principle 'right-to-buy' receipts are to be retained for use to develop and acquire new council dwellings.

There is a programme of decarbonising Council dwellings. This year (20/21) 62 Air Source Heat pumps, 169 boilers have been installed in Council properties and there are a further 200 planned boiler installations over next year at a cost of £1.8m. A pilot project in Harleston is underway to test various schemes to find out the most suitable approach for our housing stock.

Planning - The Regulation 19 Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan was agreed by both Councils and is now awaiting a response from the Planning Inspectorate. It is hoped that this will be able to proceed to adoption this year.

Development in Thurston village has continued apace throughout the pandemic.

- Persimmon Homes
- Linden Homes
- Hopkins Homes

- Bovis

Pending

- Gladman
- Bloor Homes

Supporting the community - Many community groups have struggled during the pandemic, but I was pleased to support the following organisations in the Thurston Ward with my locality budget this year.

- Thurst Café
- Thurston Cavendish Hall
- Thurston Relief in Need Charity (TRINC)
- Norton Speed Cameras

Community grants of over £150k have been awarded to community projects throughout the district as well as £100k specifically targeted at COVID related support groups.

Due to the COVID pandemic MSDC officers are working with SCC officers and Woolpit Health Centre to bring forward the construction of the car park on the Old Stowmarket Road development in Woolpit in order to assist with the roll out of the COVID vaccination programme. An application for CIL funding is due to be made for this project.

Mid Suffolk District Council information is available via www.midsuffolk.gov.uk or by phone 0300 123 4000. I would like to thank the Parish Councils for all their work done throughout the year.

8. To receive reports from Parish Council Representatives -
 - a) Recreational Ground Trust (304946) - the Chair of the Recreational Facilities Committee (RFC) was invited to submit his report in which he reported that:
Over the last two years the RFC has continued with the upkeep of play equipment & play areas at Heath Road, Thedwastre Park (New Green) & The Church Road Recreation Ground. In addition, a Gym Trail at New Green has been added. This was made possible with donations & grants from New Green Trust, Fun Run, The National Lottery, MSDC & SCC Councillors Locality Budget & the Parish Council. Also, at New Green a new community shelter has been installed, paid from the Neighbourhood CIL Fund. At the Recreation Ground the Car Park has been re surfaced & CCTV installed to monitor activities around the Pavilion, Cavendish Hall & The Car Park, including ANPR, also paid for from the Neighbourhood CIL Fund. Over the last 12 months the Pavilion has not been used by any of the former organisations due to Covid restrictions, but now restrictions are being lifted the Football Club are using the changing rooms & the French for Tots Club has returned for two mornings a week during term time, all bookings for hiring of the Pavilion are in line with current Covid Rules. External repairs are being carried out to the Pavilion including a new roof which should be complete early June.
Unfortunately, the four developers at present building in the village so far have had little engagement regarding play equipment & open spaces, but we will continue to hopefully achieve a positive outcome for the village.
A survey has been carried out on the trees on & around the Recreation Ground & this highlights works that are required to some of the trees. Six new benches & some new signs have been purchased for the Recreation Ground & are gradually being installed.
 - b) Thurston Footpaths - Cllr. Barbara Morris, the parish council appointed Footpath Warden, was invited to submit her report in which she drew the meeting's attention to the following report:
Thurston is fortunate to have a wonderful network of footpaths leading to the countryside and neighbouring villages. For many years Jannette Service and her husband Barry have monitored these footpaths on behalf of Thurston Parish Council and were instrumental in compiling the current footpath map. The new Parish Council Climate and Awareness Committee have begun to compile a new local footpath map leaflet which will contain more information about what you may expect to see while walking our village footpaths. The current footpath leaflet is available from the Parish

Council office and the Library. This leaflet gives details of 5 circular walks but these can lead into other parishes, including Pakenham, Norton, Tostock, Beyton. You can walk as far or as little as you wish. During the last 18 months whilst people have been restricted due to the Coronavirus pandemic, the footpaths in the village have been used far more and in places became quite muddy. It is, however, important that users keep to the footpaths as well as keeping their dogs under control to avoid damaging farmer's crops. We need to remind users to make sure any litter is taken home including used dog waste bags so that we protect our valuable countryside. It is appreciated that a number of residents use the opportunity to pick up any litter when going for a walk.

- c) Thurston Tree Warden – Cllr. Barbara Morris, the parish council appointed Tree Warden, was invited to submit her report in which she drew the meeting's attention to the following report:

Suffolk Tree Wardens have been caring for the trees of Suffolk for nearly 30 years. Suffolk was one of the first counties to set up a network of parish Tree Wardens. Throughout Britain, District Councils are finding they no longer have resources to support and train parish Tree Wardens, thus District Councils in Suffolk have had to withdraw their support for Tree Wardens. In response to this and with the support of Suffolk County Council the Suffolk Tree Warden Network was established. Their aim is to have every parish supported by a Tree Warden. The STWN are a very supportive group and although, during the last 12 months they have been unable to organise conferences there have been regular Zoom meetings. The STWN and the Woodland Trust joined forces a number of years ago to provide an opportunity to plant trees in local parishes and/or towns. These trees can be planted in private gardens as well as open space, following permission obtained from the landowner. Farmers can also obtain trees from this initiative but must apply individually. The trees I acquired last year have been planted in local gardens. Over 100! It is hoped in the future that some more trees can be planted on the green spaces to be found in Thurston, once permission has been obtained. This scheme, hopefully, will take place again next year and, in addition to trees, I shall be ordering hedgerow plants. Suffolk County Council support this scheme. An initiative that the STWN have introduced this year is asking tree wardens to collect local tree seed and establish a local tree seed nursery. I have started a small nursery and I have had rather poor results. Success with field maple, horse chestnut but not much else. I found more young oak trees in my garden planted and forgotten by jays and squirrels, than germinated in my pots! STWN hold regular Zoom meetings where we can discuss our successes or other wise and all the data is collected and recorded from each Parish. We would like to find a permanent site for a tree nursery within the parish and it would be good if someone interested in taking on this project could be found. Sadly, throughout the last 18 months, Thurston has lost a number of trees, some of which along the Ixworth Road resulted in Thurston being portrayed in the local press and television. Extinction Rebellion got involved, halted proceedings and in the end had some success. But most including several mature trees were lost. Other mature trees have been lost in the village mostly from private gardens. Hedgerows too have been removed mainly associated with the new developments. The Neighbourhood Plan has an Environment Policy document which will help to add protection to Thurston's green spaces, trees and hedgerows. The new developments will be required to plant more trees and shrubs and create green spaces but also should retain, where ever possible, our current trees and hedgerows.

9. To receive reports from Village Organisations

- a) Thurston Relief In Need Charity (TRINC)– the Chair of the Charity was invited to submit his report in which he commented that:

There are currently 4 trustees including myself as the village is without a vicar who would normally be one of our number. The charity in its present form was incorporated in 1986 out of several older charities, the earliest dating to 1662. The charity is to be managed for the benefit of residents who find themselves in need

by making small grants. The demand for this is very small due to welfare state provision. The principal asset is approx. 9 acres of land in Heath Road which generates a small rental income. A decision was taken some time ago to look at better using the land. –A number of schemes have been evaluated over the last few years. The current proposal for an extra care scheme is seen as being suitable for a number of reasons, one of which is that there is no requirement for open market housing to fund it. The Thurston Neighbourhood Development Plan specifically mentions addressing the housing needs of older people – sections 5.10 and 5.11 are particularly relevant. The current position is that the charity has made an agreement with Housing 21 – a not-for-profit provider of extra care housing. A public consultation has taken place and H21 are finalising their planning application for such an extra care scheme. The trustees of TRINC have given an undertaking that they will not develop the site for open market housing despite it being identified in the draft local plan for such development. A variety of community focused uses will be considered in due course once the outcome of the H21 planning application is known. This should become clearer later this year.

- b) Thurston Community College – *The Head of Thurston Community College had submitted a written report which stated:* This past year has been full of continuous change for the College, and we have responded as necessary, sometimes with plenty of notice to change our practices and sometimes with little or no notice. The College as a community has adapted accordingly and both staff and students have become adept at finding solutions to the challenges facing us all on a day-to-day basis. The highlight from the year has been the manner in which students, and in particular those within the examination year groups, have continued to set themselves aspirational targets and have maintained their commitment to their studies. This has all been within the context of a very uncertain future for the students involved. The resilience demonstrated by our students throughout the pandemic has been remarkable and we are extremely proud of them. The trust between staff and students has been even more discernible than ever as the process of awarding final grades has evolved and developed over the course of the past 12 months or so. The College has remained open throughout the year. During each lockdown period the College has provided supervision on both campuses, Thurston and Beyton, for the children of critical workers and essential services as well as for vulnerable children. For those children studying at home the College provided remote lessons so that students could continue to have access to learning resources and their teachers. When all students returned in person to their lessons at the College campuses, COVID safe measures were always in place. We have confidence in our COVID processes and procedures, and this confidence is grounded in the fact that we have experienced very low numbers of staff and students who have tested positive for COVID. For each individual case of a positive COVID test the College has been able to clearly identify the ‘close contacts’, and as a result a very limited number of staff and students have been required to self-isolate. The measures we have in place are clearly working. The College continues to send regular updates from the Principal for the Thurston newsletter to publish on the village website, in order to keep the community informed of the many activities and events in which our students and staff are involved. Celebrating good news and achievements with ‘our neighbours’ is always a pleasure, and we thank the residents of Thurston for offering us the opportunity to share our news with the community. At the close of this academic year we will be saying goodbye to our Principal, Helen Wilson who is leaving the College after 16 years of leading the College. Helen has successfully led the College through immense change and development and will leave the College in an exceptionally good place for her successor to inherit. A new era begins for the College in the next academic year, and we are confident this will bring forth further achievement as we build on a very firm foundation of success.
- c) Thurston Primary Academy – *a late report is to be submitted*

- d) St Peter's Church – *The Churchwardens had submitted a written report which stated:* - We have been unable to hold a full schedule of the services, enjoyed by many, over the past year or to hold any social events but we are hoping that we can get back to what will pass for normal, over the next few months. However, you will all be aware that we do not have a Vicar for our joint parishes at the moment. We are therefore dependent on our wonderful retired clergy to take services for us and for the time being there is always a Sunday service at either St. Peter`s or Holy Innocents. Details can always be found in the Thurston Newsletter, on the Church notice board or on-line. As this year progresses we hope to join the rest of the village in getting to meet our many new residents and planning events that everyone can join in.
- e) Cavendish Hall – *a late report is still to be submitted*
- f) New Green Centre – *The Chair of the New Green Management Trust had submitted a written report which stated:* Like many other organisations the past year has been extremely traumatic, open -close -open -close - and when open with restrictions, however unlike most organisations during the summer lockdown the trustees were delighted with how popular the open green spaces became. The new trim trail has proved very popular especially the swing, however with success comes problems, and this has been the abuse by some with litter generating complaints. As a result of this, and with the area not being covered by the council employed litter picker, we are engaging our own so that residents can continue to enjoy this facility. As the grounds have become more mature, so have the trees of which some required expensive lopping during the year. Costs continue to increase every year, from an area that generates no income to contribute. Hall occupancy has obviously fallen considerably over the year compared to previous years however we continue to attract hirers who are providing facilities for all age groups to participate and enjoy.
- g) Friends of Thurston Library – i) Report from the Chair of the Friends of Thurston Library - The Friends of Thurston Library remain one of the most active Friends Groups across the 44 libraries of Suffolk, although COVID-19 has meant no events or club and activity groups could take place in the library. We are particularly grateful to Vicky Waples for continuing to look after the accounts of the Group. We are delighted to welcome Ellie Longman as our Library Manager following Cathy McDonald's retirement. Ellie has plans for the library which will widen the offering made and strengthen the library's place in the community. Within the group we have many people who do a great deal including Peter Robinson as Vice Chair and Ann Verity as Secretary, and those who seek opportunities to run activities. We remain grateful for the support of the Parish Council, District and County Councillors. The Parish Council continues to support Suffolk Libraries with an annual grant; Suffolk Libraries acknowledges their thanks in the Suffolk Libraries Annual Report. Meetings of the Parish Council, and the Council's committees will be held in the Library in the coming year. During the year, our County Councillor, Penny Otten, has generously financially supported the work of the library for which we are very appreciative. A major initiative to welcome Newcomers to Thurston is under way, working with the Parish Council. On and around Suffolk Libraries Day in March 2021, the Friends Group, with Ellie's support, raised over £500 for Suffolk Libraries, which is an Industrial and Provident Society, a not for profit, independent and charitable organisation set up in 2012 to run the library service for Suffolk. We hope to recommence events, and club and activity groups in the library at the earliest opportunity. Working with other groups in the village has been a major feature of the Friends' work and we hope to continue this, for example by running the Christmas Tree Festival again if at all possible. ii) Postscript to the Library Report – The Friends of the Library and Thurston Parish Council are planning a Big Weekend for the village with various fun events on 25th and 26th September. It will be an opportunity to welcome newcomers and also a welcome back form lockdown for all residents. We have made a start by contacting a few key groups e.g. Pre-School, the Friend of Thurston Primary, New Green, The WI and the Cavendish Hall.

Hopefully there will be opportunities for all clubs and organisations in the village to get all involved. An announcement will be in the next newsletter and social media platforms. iii) Report from the Librarian Manager Ellie Longman – I have been in post now for 3 months and I would like to take the opportunity to thank the Friends, the customers and the wider community for the wonderful welcome I have received despite the unusual circumstances. Thurston Library is quite special place and I am looking forward to providing new opportunities to increase its use further when it is safe to do so as well as continuing the core service offer. Some of these new opportunities include the use of the interactive screen and the I pads recently donated by Linden Homes – such as setting up a Dementia-friendly group. I have already been using the Library Social Media sites to connect with the community, with regular Baby Bounce, Thurston's Thursday Bakes and Saturday Storeytime posts, all things I am looking to offer physically rather than just virtually once able with plans for more once we have these up and running. At this moment in time, it seems likely that we will be able to run the Annual Summer Reading Challenge across Libraries, therefore offering opportunities again. Both for previous volunteers and new candidates. The theme this year is 'Wild World Heroes and although it may be a little different from previous years, we hope it will be just as beneficial. I have been increasing and refreshing the stock levels and also looking how the space can be better utilised with the current village expansion in mind. The Library will also play a role within the 'Big Weekend' being planned to both welcome newcomers and celebrate the 'return of community' to Thurston in the Autumn.

h) 1st Thurston Scouts – The Group Scout Leader was invited to submit her report which covered the following:

Well - what a year! With no face-to-face Scouting allowed, Zoom became the 'new normal' way of delivering Scouting to our young people. Zoom was definitely not welcomed by all (adults and young people alike), however in order to continue delivering a level of Scouting to our young people we had no choice other than to embrace it. A huge learning curve for the leaders (and a whole new language) It was lovely to see the children's faces – as well as each other, and that is what kept us going, but it was no substitute for face-to-face contact and only a fraction of our previous membership joined us. Our young people have managed to do Treasure Hunts, Fitness/Yoga, been to a Hedgehog Rescue Centre, First Aid, had a drum lesson, Navigation/Map Reading, Escape Room, Campfire Songs, lots of baking, science experiments, discovered the origins of our clothes....

Group events:

- Last summer we joined Bury St Edmunds District Scouting for 'Camp at Home', with lots of activities with the parents taking on the role of the Leaders. We even managed to throw a necker 'virtually' from person-to-person, from Group-to-Group, right across the District.
- As Scouting did not allow us to parade to the church or attend the Remembrance Service, I laid a wreath the day before and families made small poppy crosses which they placed by the war memorial on their daily walks.
- We purchased an online Pantomime which I live-streamed over zoom on various days/evenings over the Christmas period
- In April we had another District 'Camp at Home' to celebrate St George's Day and we all renewed our promises at the District Virtual Campfire. St George flags were located at various places throughout Thurston (and across the District) to enable 'campers' to find them and have their pictures taken with them.

Memberships/Finances:

- From March 2020 to April 2021 our youth membership numbers reduced dramatically down to 37 when we were able to return to face-to-face Scouting (previously 90-95), We are now back up to 50 having been able to take some 'new' ones off our 'Want-to-Join' list.
- With a number of expenses still having to be covered, and the resources needed to provide weekly online Scouting and no income from Membership Fees or

fundraising activities, we have run at quite a loss, which was partly off-set by our Gift Aid claims.

We have recently managed to start meeting again face-to-face, but initially with reduced session times, therefore we will be continuing to run at a loss for a few more months until we are able to increase our numbers and session times again.

Leadership - the number of adult Leaders have not changed much over the year. We will be losing one of our new adults in September as he is due to start University in September and we will also be losing 2 long-serving leaders in December 2021 as they have given notice of retirement. Therefore, we desperately need to recruit some new regular adult help, particularly with Beavers, but also in Cubs. My huge thanks goes to all those who have stuck with us and helped us to continue scouting in Thurston.

- i) Thurston Evening W.I. – as with other organisations, we have not met in person for over a year. We have used other means of connecting and catching up with members. A welcome back is planned in September with the popular soup and chat lunches. This is in direct response to the Loneliness Campaign being supported by the WI nationwide.

- 10. To receive issues from members of the public present –
 - a) Existence of surface run-off water in the attenuation ponds on the new developments is now a concern given the level of water that is collecting in the ponds following recent rainfall. *The Chair of the Council made the meeting aware that it was the Parish Council's understanding that the areas should be fenced off and that the Parish Council will ensure this is pursued by each of the developments undertaking work within the parish.*
- 11. As there was no further comments from members of the public in attendance, the Chair closed the meeting at 20.10 by thanking all for attending.
- 12. Date of next meeting – to be confirmed but all were made aware that it would need to be between 1st March and 1st June 2022.

So approved and signed by Christopher Dashper, Chair of the Parish Council at the meeting of 19.05.2022