

Thurston Parish Council 3 Year Business Plan

May 2019 – May 2022

Vision:

Thurston Parish Council aims to provide a positive and reliable organisation to meet the needs of the parish through its commitment, its awareness of the needs of the parish and active communications within and for the parish.

It seeks to promote, maintain and improve a good quality of life by using the keen knowledge of the needs of groups and individuals within the parish and by making efficient and positive use of its income. It will also strive to be pro-active in the introduction of measures that will enable the community as a whole to live healthily and safely together.

What is Thurston Parish Council?

Thurston Parish Council is the first tier of local government closest to the community, with an important role to play in promoting the parish by representing its interests. Within its limited remit, it provides and monitors efficient services and amenities to meet local need, influences other decision makers and strives to improve the quality of parish life. The council represents the views of its community to improve or provide cost effective services and amenities. These can range from crime prevention measures, providing litter and dog bins, maintaining bus shelters and recreational facilities, to having the right to be notified of, and comment upon, planning applications.

Residents have the opportunity to elect 11 parish councillors every four years. The Council elects a Chairman and Vice-Chairman annually and reports to the electorate at the Annual Parish Council meeting in May. Councillors are unpaid and receive no allowance for their duties other than travel costs for duties beyond the parish. Details of all councillors can be found at the following website page: <http://thurston.suffolk.cloud/parish-council/>

How the Parish Council operates.

The Parish Council will carry out its statutory duties as required by:

- Meeting 12 times per annum to deal with the business of the Council and running these meetings within the Standing Orders of the Council. *One of these meetings will be the Annual Council Meeting of the Parish Council at which the Chairman for the coming year will be elected.* All full Council meetings are open to the public with a period set aside for members of the public to address the Council. The meetings take place in Thurston Community Library to allow good access and adequate meeting space.
- The Council has its own Standing Orders and Financial Regulations, which lay down the rules by which we operate and conduct our business. Our Standing Orders are based on a model prepared by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC).
- All Parish Councillors are expected to adhere to the Suffolk Code of Conduct which has also been adopted by the Council's Committees. Working Groups on which the Parish Council are represented are expected to work to terms of reference agreed in Council.
- The Council will hold an Annual Parish Meeting in March each year to review the activities of the previous year and give an opportunity for residents to raise issues of concern.
- The Parish Council aim to promote the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the Parish and to contribute to a sustainable and inclusive community.
- Having been the 1st Parish/Town Council in Suffolk to achieve Quality Status, the Parish Council also will work towards further development of the Council under the concept of the Local Council Awards Scheme and to achieve appropriate awards for the benefit of the Parish of Thurston.

Business Plan Objectives

Parish benefit: – to represent Thurston Parish and to improve the facilities and infrastructure for the parishioners within Thurston. This will be achieved by being a professional and competent Parish Council, which is open and accountable and ensures sound financial management of Parish Council resources.

Village administration: – to ensure the ongoing administration of Thurston Parish and the facilitation of the Parish Council's activities. Be a good and fair employer by providing fulfilling work opportunities and conditions for staff. Continue to seek and improve established channels of communication and find new ways of engaging and communicating with the residents of Thurston.

Council development: – to provide Councillors and the Parish Clerk with the education and knowledge to enable them to contribute to the advancement and improvement of Thurston Parish. To ensure Councillors have the opportunity to keep abreast of new opportunities and policies. To improve Council services to the public by encouraging members and staff to develop their skills through appropriate training.

Financial planning and control: – to ensure the ongoing financial viability of Thurston Parish Council and provide high quality, efficient, cost effective and sustainable services. To ensure the Financial Budget is monitored on a regular basis to ensure any anomalies are highlighted to the Parish Council for appropriate action. A financial report will be presented to the full Council each month at its meeting.

Strategic planning/Key projects: – to ensure Thurston Parish Council has a long-range plan for the future the following objectives will be included in the Parish Councils 3-year Business Plan.

- Ensure continued communication with County and District Councils to agree areas for devolved powers to the Parish Council to include:
 - Road Verge & Hedgerow maintenance.
 - Grass cutting.
 - Weed control on Pavements.
 - Edge maintenance or skirting of carriageway.
 - Cleaning of traffic signs and bollards.
 - Work with County and District Councils to ensure the maintenance of widely used but increasingly inaccessible Public Footpaths.
- Improvement of Communication and engagement by the Parish Council, by introducing social media streams such as Twitter. This will provide a more professional approach by Thurston Parish Council to the community of Thurston and beyond.
- To continue to address concerns by residents on speeding and to continue to monitor the data from the Vehicle Activated Signs (VAS) that are situated on Barton Road and Beyton Road. Having the two machines, will enable the Parish Council to continually monitor both sites without having to transport the machine from one location to another.
- Share the data provided by the VAS machine, with Suffolk Highways and Suffolk Constabulary.
- Investigate what steps can be taken to provide traffic calming measures in appropriate areas, particularly once significant development along Norton Road and Ixworth Road has been completed,
- Formulate a Parish Infrastructure Investment Plan (PIIP) to allow appropriate infrastructure to be provided within the village once the funding stream under the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) becomes available.
- Ensure that the PIIP is reviewed on a regular basis to ensure compliance with the CIL regulations and is of relevance to the parish.

Communication and Engagement: – To provide a channel of communication for the views and expressions of the local community and to be responsive to its needs and aspirations. The Parish Council will ensure that the Parish Clerk receives the relevant training on Desktop Publisher and social media (Twitter). This will ensure the communication/engagement to residents is improved, whilst providing reports on the Parish Council and Neighbourhood Plan in a professional manner.

Thurston Parish Council Committees and Groups

The Recreation Facilities Committee: Thurston Parish Council is the sole trustee of the Thurston Recreation Ground Charity. The Recreation Facilities Committee has been established to formally manage and operate the Recreation Ground and the Pavilion and to maintain the parking area and to oversee the recreational facilities within the parish.

The Policy & Resources Committee: has been established to propose the budget each year and to monitor the routine expenditure and investments. Also, this Committee has delegated powers for managing, maintaining and improving the performance of the statutory powers and the functions and related work of the Parish Council which includes, ensuring the Quality Council certification requirements is of a satisfactory standard and for ensuring the Parish Council acts in a manner appropriate to this certification.

The Emergency Plan Committee: This group is responsible for ensuring the Thurston Emergency Plan is maintained and relevant on a yearly basis.

The Planning Committee: The Parish Council is a statutory consultee in the Mid Suffolk Planning process. All planning applications within the Thurston Parish are examined and commented on by this group on behalf of Thurston Parish Council. The Planning committee has been granted full-delegated powers to make Council decision regarding responses to the appropriate authorities.

The Friends of Thurston Library Committee: Was established following the announcement by Suffolk County Council that it was not going to run the library service in the future. The function of the Friends of Thurston Library Group is to facilitate the ongoing provision of a library service for Thurston and provide support for improvements to the Library in order to encourage new and existing members into the Library.

The Neighbourhood Planning Steering Group (NPSG): was formed as part of the Localism Bill where Parish Councils are encouraged to develop their own formal, legal plan for the future of their village. As part of this, once the Neighbourhood Plan has been adopted, there will be an on-going review protocol. This group, once the Thurston Neighbourhood Development Plan is passed at referendum and adopted by the Local Planning Authority will become an advisory group to the Planning Committee with a remit to provide commentary on the implementation of the neighbourhood development plan and to review the plan ensuring that it is compliant at all times with national and local policies.

The Parish Infrastructure Investment Steering Group (PIISG) : was formed to assist the Parish Council in ensuring that the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) income is spent on projects that have been identified as providing, improving, replacing, operating or maintaining infrastructure that supports the development of the Parish Council's area or anything else concerned with addressing the demands that development places on the area. Input to the discussions regarding infrastructure required within the village will also be received from the recreational facilities committee.

Individual members of the Thurston Parish Council are also represented in the management of several village and County organisations. These include the Suffolk Association of Local Councils, The Cavendish Hall Management Committee; New Green Community Trust and Thurston Relief in Need Charity. Other Council members are responsible for single issues including public footpaths, transport liaison, councillor training.

Business Plan Objectives

1. Parish Benefit

Action	Measure
Ensure continuing engagement with other Thurston village groups	Councillors to be involved at a management level with key village groups.
Manage/monitor Village Website	Update as required.
Ensure continuous communication and engagement with residents	Regular monthly surgeries and public meetings throughout the year. Introduction of a Twitter Accounts. Ensure Village Website as operated by the Parish Council is up to date at all times.
Donations to parish organisations	Donations considered on request.
Ensure engagement with all age-groups within the village	Establish a youth council to allow young persons under the age of 18 to engage with the decision-making process of local councils

2. Village Administration

Action	Measure
Functional Council Meetings in place	Hold 12 meetings per year and an Annual Parish Meeting
Council transparency to the Parish	Public sessions are available in all meetings, meeting minutes available on the village website and from the Parish Council office.
Ensure all actions from the Parish Council meeting are completed	Completion is monitored at each meeting.
Ensure meeting statutory obligations	Annual Parish Meeting held along with 4 other Council Meetings throughout the year.
Liaison with Suffolk County and Mid Suffolk District Councils	County and District Councillors attend monthly Council meetings and give reports and answer questions.
Liaison with Stowmarket Saferneighbourhood Team (SNT).	Ensure that the council has a regular activity report from the parish funded PCSO. Act as a liaison point between the public and the SNT.

3. Council Development

Action	Measure
Ensure Parish Council Clerk has the relevant qualifications	The Parish Council Clerk must have at least the training listed as Quality Council requirements.
Ensure all Councillors have received Basic Training as standard	Ensure all Councillors receive an individual training record. This will be provided to Councillors each year. As a minimum all new councillors should attend Councillor Training with Suffolk Association of Local Councils (SALC). All members of the Planning Committee shall attend a Training Course on Planning provided by either the local authority or (SALC).
Maintain compliance to ensure retention of Local Council Award Scheme Quality Level	Achievement of Local Council Award Scheme "Quality" status continues to be monitored to ensure compliance and work towards the Gold Award.

Maintain links with SALC to ensure the Council has the best advice	Ensure representative attends SALC Area Meetings.
Provide Councillors with the education and knowledge to enable them to contribute to the advancement and improvement of Thurston Parish Council	Provide all Councillors with information packs to ensure compliance with statutory instruments and financial regulations. Provide the opportunity for Councillors to request individual training requirements as necessary.

4. **Financial Planning and Control**

Action	Measure
Set and monitor annual operational budget	Budget to be set to inform precept requirement for following year. Annual precept form to be submitted to MSDC by the deadline. Actual to budget monitoring reports to be presented to full Council Meetings on a quarterly basis in accordance with Council's own Standing Orders.
Perform internal quarterly audits	The Parish Councils Internal Control Officer will provide an audit report detailing actions to be completed by next internal audit.
Ensure external audit submitted by the deadline	Ensure all external audit actions are completed.
Develop investment strategy and monitor investments	Most appropriate returns on funds invested to be reviewed at Policy & Resources Committee Meetings.

5. **Strategic Planning**

Action	Measure
Ensure continuing engagement with SCC and MSDC	SCC and MSDC Councillor attendance and input at Parish Council meetings.
Ensure the Parish Council continues to respond to all planning applications as a statutory consultee	Planning Committee has full delegated powers to respond on all matters concerning planning for Thurston. The NPSG, once the neighbourhood plan is made, will provide additional commentary to this process where appropriate. The PIISG will provide additional commentary to this process on appropriate infrastructure where appropriate.
Facilitate the work required to ensure that the Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) proceeds to Referendum Stage	Plan timescales updated and reviewed on a regular basis. Complete publicity for the referendum on the Thurston NDP (expect September 2019). Ensure engagement with public communication on progress of the Neighbourhood Plan. Once the Plan is made, ensure reviewed on a regular basis.
Ensure succession planning for Chair & Vice Chair	Ensure Vice Chair is encouraged to lead meetings throughout the year.
Update 3-year Business Plan	To be reviewed annually. See Strategic Planning and Key Objectives above.

Appendix 1: THURSTON PARISH COUNCIL – SUMMARY OF ACCOUNTS FOR 2018 / 2019

	General Account	General Account	Recreation Ground Account	Recreation Ground Account
	2018	2019	2018	2019
Opening balance	58,089	62,851	1,109	1,191
Plus receipts	111,981	109,434	7,910	7,715
Less payments	107,219	136,502	7,828	7,738
Closing balance	62,851	35,783	1,191	1,168

Appendix 2. THURSTON PARISH COUNCIL SUMMARY OF ANNUAL BUDGET FOR 2019-2020

CATEGORY	BUDGET 2017-18	ACTUAL 2017-18	BUDGET 2018-19	ACTUAL 2018-19	BUDGET 2019-20
EXPENDITURE					
STAFF COSTS	25924	35526	35740	42771	42288
STEET LIGHTING	7000	4844	7000	5670	6000
VILLAGE MAINTENANCE	40120	41073	39678	48586	43570
ADMINISTRATION	9760	11449	10054	12863	14067
HEATH ROAD	1155	760	1155	1546	1155
SUBSCRPTIONS/DONATION	6730	5158	6730	8659	6730
NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN	5270	2260	8270	10254	2270
MISCELLAENEOUS: VAT		4296		6153	
RECREATION GRD TRF		598			
PLANNING ASSISTANCE		1255			
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	95959	107219	108627	136502	116110
INCOME					
PRECEPT	90959	90959	94067	94067	96889
GRANTS	0	10686	10290	7000	5084
S106 /CIL MONIES	0	0	0	1630	
INTEREST/VAT RECLAIM	0	10336		6737	
MOVEMENT FOR YEAR	+ 5000	- 4762	+ 4270	27068	14137
- (TRANSFER TO RESERVES)					
+ (TRANSFER FROM RESERVES)					
TOTAL INCOME	95959	111981	108627	136502	116110

Appendix 3. Areas of Active Involvement for 2019 - 2020.

This Business Plan is to be reviewed annually in July. The areas of active involvement will relate to the budget which is set in December of each year and finalised the following January. This will also include projected expenditure for the forthcoming year as well as regular items of expenditure to ensure the smooth running of the Parish Council. Some of the projects and matters coming forth have arisen from engagement during the development of the Thurston NDP; Parish Council meetings; Annual Parish Meeting and visits to the Parish Council Office.

The Parish Council will continue to monitor the areas of active involvement for 2019 - 2020 and will add any new matters as required during the year. As some of the areas covered in the Business Plan are ongoing and will cover more than one financial year, the Parish Council will review the Business Plan on a six-monthly basis thereby ensuring that it is updated regularly and that any further appropriate actions identified during the six-monthly period are included or, where appropriate, are signed off as having been completed actions.

AREAS OF ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2019 - 2020				
Issue Raised	Consultative Work Carried out	Result of consultative work	Budget	Review
<p>Policing - December 2016 Parish Council informed of the cessation of match funding dedicated PCSO role for Thurston – impact in Thurston on community safety; traffic issues and safety amongst vulnerable residents.</p>	<p>Public meeting called in January 2017, residents invited by means of a postcard invitation to discuss impact of no dedicated PCSO for Thurston. Residents to be asked via meeting whether they wished to full fund a dedicated PCSO for Thurston.</p> <p>During 2018-19, the PC was involved in Project2025 which involved a review of the funded PCSO role in Suffolk.</p>	<p>Agreement forthcoming for full funded PCSO to be added to the Precept for 2017-2018 & 2018-2019.</p> <p>At budget setting meeting for 2018-2019, Council agreed to enter into a further 2-year agreement to fund a PCSO for Thurston commencing April 2019. Six-monthly reviews written into contract.</p>	<p>£34,000 + £3,300 car for year 2019-2020 With a six-monthly review. Any percentage increase to be funded as part of percentage increase in precept.</p>	<p>2-year contract.</p> <p>Six monthly reviews with Stowmarket SNT to discuss effectiveness of dedicated PCSO for Thurston.</p> <p>Weekly reports by PCSO to Clerk which are presented on a monthly basis at Parish Council Meetings for review by PC as a whole.</p>
<p>Libraries - January 2016 Council informed of SCC's reduction</p>	<p>Request from public at Thurston Library AGM for continual</p>	<p>Agreement by Parish Council at budget setting meeting of January 2018 to continue to support Library.</p>	<p>£2700 for 2019-20</p>	<p>Formal review at Council budget setting meetings in December 2019 and January 2020.</p>

in funds to libraries of 11% over 2 years	financial assistance from the Parish Council in ensuring the continuity of Thurston Library			
Suffolk Policing Review and community concern that speeding issues within the village will not be dealt with by PCSOs unless comprehensive evidence can be obtained.	At Public Meeting held in January 2016 to discuss the Suffolk Policing Review, residents to be asked whether they wish to fund a number of village projects such as traffic calming and village signs.	During 2017-18 a second VAS was purchased along with enhanced data collection (Bluetooth) for location along Barton Road. The original VAS will be located on Beyton Road. Agreed in 17-18 for enhanced Bluetooth data collection to be added to the original VAS on Beyton Road – work carried out in 2018-2019.	£Nil budget for 2019 -2020.	Parish Council to continue to discuss effectiveness of the machines at each location with Stowmarket SNT and Suffolk Road Safety Team.
Concern at lack of funding available from Highways to ensure Hedgerows are maintained and kept clear of pedestrian footpaths	At Public Meeting held in January 2016 to discuss the Suffolk Policing Review, residents to be asked whether they wish to fund a number of village maintenance projects such hedge cutting	On-going discussions with Highways as to devolvement of powers to deal with such matters. Litter Picker employed by Council as well as a Village Handyman to carry out small maintenance works.	Village Maintenance Budget - £3850 Litter Picker being part funded by claims against Mid Suffolk's Street Cleansing Grant.	Ongoing review with Highways during grass cutting season and ongoing discussions regarding devolvement. Provisional contract issued by SCC Highways in Spring 2019 to be reviewed by Policy and Resources Committee during 2019. Formal review at Council budget setting meetings in December 2019 & January 2020
Asset maintenance	At the community engagement surgeries held in 2016-2017, concern at the maintenance of the Council's assets such as	Agreement that on-going maintenance is carried out on an as and when basis	Play equipment maintenance budget – Thedwastre Park - £1,500; Heath Road - £500	Monthly internal inspection reports and Annual Inspection Report due Summer 2019. Formal review at Council budget setting meetings in December 2019 &

	play equipment			January 2020.
Under Localism Act, agreement in 2013 given by community for the Parish Council to set up a Steering Group to take a Neighbourhood Plan forward.	Regulation 14 and 16 consultations undertaken during 2018-2019. Examination found that the Thurston NDP met the basic conditions and subject to amendments being implemented, should proceed to referendum.	Currently Clerk and Co-Chairs Neighbourhood Plan Team involved with the Parish Council in responding to the 3 significant applications granted outline planning permission 2017 on reserved matters.	Part of Clerk's salary £4000 to cover work required	Referendum anticipated September 2019.
Concern at the level of localised flooding and effectiveness of dealing with localised emergencies	Ongoing issues raised by individuals at community engagement surgeries.	Review of the Emergency Plan	Budget for 2018 - 2019 of £500 & balance of £500 from 2017 -2018.	Emergency Plan Group to meet in during 2019 to review existing procedures and plan and cascade of information.
Planning Applications submitted to Local Authority	Contribute to planning process for Thurston in conjunction with the Local Plan for Mid Suffolk	Ongoing process dependent upon Local Plan and planning applications	Part of Clerk's salary	For 2019-20 the Council will continue to respond to all planning applications submitted relating to Thurston and surrounding areas. Ongoing discussions are being held with MSDC/BDC over the emerging new Local Plan.
Parish Council and Village Website	Continue to ensure that the Parish Council and Village Website is updated on a regular basis	Ongoing on the part of the Parish Council in light of the 2014 Regulations and to ensure that the Council is open and transparent in its dealings as a public authority	Part of Clerk's salary and volunteering time from a member of the public	Review on a monthly basis to ensure information is updated and relevant.
Engagement with Public	Community Engagement Surgeries	Community engagement surgeries to ensure continued engagement and communication with public	Parish Councillors; NP Steering Group Members; County & District Cllrs &	Monthly surgeries to be reinstated with Parish Councillors; NP Representatives; PCSO; County and

			PCSO Smith	District Cllrs. in attendance.
Good Governance of the Parish	Elections; SALC & NALC Membership; Policy & Procedures Review	All policies and procedures to be reviewed on an annual basis or as and when legislation requires. Councillors & Clerk to have own training records and to receive annual updates on changes in legislation	Part of Clerk's Salary. SALC & NALC Budgeted Fee: £1,000; Election budget: £1404 held within Reserves.	Formal review of all policies and procedures by Policy and Resources Committee during Autumn 2019. Annual review of training records September 2019 to be carried out by Clerk to the Council.
Accountability of Parish Council's finances	Review and monitoring of internal control systems	To ensure financial records are kept and produced in accordance with the guidelines laid down in the Governance & Accountability Guide (2019)	Part of Clerk's Salary & 1 Parish Councillor.	Quarterly reviews on internal control systems to be carried out by non-signatory Councillors: June, September and December 2019 and March 2020.
Contractual and employment obligations	Council to ensure that its complies with employment law and health and safety issues	Ongoing as part of review of working environment and workload for the Clerk	Parish Council Chairman & Vice-Chairman	Annual review of Clerk's Performance including working environment due August 2019.
Appropriate management of the Recreational Ground Trust	Trusteeship of Thurston Recreation Ground Trust	Ongoing	Own budget for the running of the land and pavilion belonging to the Trust £6482	Quarterly meetings of Recreational Facilities Committee to ensure any issues raised are dealt with accordingly.