

2022 Thurston Parish Council Annual Report

As presented by the Chair of the Parish Council, Councillor Christopher Dashper at the Annual Parish Meeting on 16th March 2023

Good evening and welcome to the 2023 Thurston Annual Parish Meeting and the Chairman's report.

The Parish Council continues to work hard to support the community of Thurston. As ever, planning matters in particular continue to occupy a considerable amount of the available time and resource of the council, but also increasingly meeting the needs of a growing community through the provision and maintenance of leisure and recreational space and equipment, supporting local organisations and liaising with other organisations such as the district and county councils regarding highways and other public services.

Moving on into the main body of the report, this is always 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.

Since my last report, Councillors Jonathan Grant and John Priscott have left the council, while Michael Moy has very recently joined the council.

Derrick Haley who served both the parish council and Mid Suffolk District Council for many years also left the council this year. We will miss Derrick's experience and knowledge and I offer my thanks for his support both for me and to the council.

In May 2023 at the local elections the council will increase from its current 11 members to 13 and there are likely to be some vacancies on the council for new members.

My thanks to Vice Chairman Brian Rainbow, for supporting myself and Vicky, Clerk to the Council and to all the councillors, including Barbara Morris, Julian West, Sarah Cornell, Graham Balaam, Liz Bond and James Hay for serving as part of our committees including Planning, Leisure and Environment and the Emergency Planning committee.

To Steve, our litter picker for maintaining the public areas and to Beverly Swain, our PCSO for the policing and safeguarding support for local residents.

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

And thanks, as always, to Vicky and to Antonia for continuing to manage the ever-growing range of subjects the council is involved. As the village expands and the council becomes responsible for more aspects of everyday life, our team continue to maintain the high standards of excellence, particularly in financial management, community and stakeholder engagement and planning. In every way, the council continues to exceed expected standards and to set the benchmark for others.

In planning and development matters, the community continues to grow as the current developments in the village build out and the house are occupied. Where possible we continue to work with the developers of these areas for a collaborative approach to the provision of play areas, landscaping and tree planting and other aspects of the original planning applications. We want to ensure that the village has a good range of services, complimentary and attractive and accessible to all and offering a range of opportunities for all residents.

Last year, I reported that the High Court had initially ruled in favour of Thurston in the case against Mid Suffolk District Council's consent of planning for the construction of 210 homes by Bloor Homes on land south of Beyton Road. Following a further appeal, the decision has finally gone against Thurston, with a decision to rule in favour of the development. Reserve matters planning has also now been awarded to the development- as a council we are now concentrating on ensuring that the development is delivered to a high standard with minimal impact on residents. We have also stressed that the road improvements delivered as a condition of the application are re-assessed prior to commencement to ensure that they still fit for purpose before any houses are occupied.

The planning application for a further 210 houses on the land to the east of Ixworth Road, linked to the Bloor development due to a shared requirement for road improvements was originally noted as minded to approve by Mid Suffolk but has now been recommended for refusal due to the Mid Suffolk having more than a ten year land supply and because of concern over the traffic position at the Bunbury Arms crossing. The developer has indicated their intention to appeal and we await further information on this.

We are pleased to be able to support local organisations each year with small grants so that they can provide services to support our residents. Organisations supported over the last year include: Suffolk Accident and Rescue Service, £300; West Suffolk Citizens Advice Bureau, £500; Thurston Childcare Ltd £2,000; Thurston Cavendish Hall £150; Thurston Table Tennis Club £500; Mid Suffolk Citizens Advice Bureau £200; Headway Suffolk £200; Tiny Toes £184. 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.

We have also continued to deploy our Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding, supporting a number of community focussed projects in the village over the last year.

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, Beverly Swain. 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 2023/24 the Parish Council has agreed a small rise in the precept of £2.04 per annum or just

under 4 pence per week for a Band D Property. This increase will support the continued investment in local services and the accompanying administration and will help to offset inflationary rises in goods and services.

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 including Planning and the Leisure and Environment Committee, all of which are held at the library. The dates of all these meetings are advertised on the notice boards around the village and on the Thurston website. 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.

Christopher Dashper Chairman of Thurston Parish Council March 2023.