

2018 Thurston Parish Council Annual Report

- Good evening- this is the Chairman's report on the past year for Thurston Parish Council.
- My first task tonight is a number of important thank you's.
- Firstly to my predecessor Peter Robinson, the previous Chairman of the Parish Council. After a number of years on the council and as Chairman, Peter decided to step down from the role and the Parish Council last summer and he has been a tough act to follow, but I am delighted to say that Peter has recently returned to the council and we welcome him back with his wealth of experience and knowledge of the village.
- Secondly to all of Thurston's councillors, past and present (in Peter's case both). After a difficult year for the village and the parish, we have 9 dedicated councillors working to try and achieve the best for the village. During the year, councillors Robert Alston, Mike Thomas, David Ames and Jeanette Service have left the council and Ian Hasler and Barbara Morris have joined, along with Peter Robinson returning. My thanks go to the Vice Chairman, Brian Rainbow, for supporting myself and Vicky, Clerk to the Council and to all the councillors, including Richard Fawcett, Anne O'Connell, David Moss and Jonathan Masters serving as part of our committees and carrying out weekly tasks such as turning or moving our Vehicle Activated Sign between its two sites in the village. Throughout the year councillors have maintained their commitment to the village and their determination that Thurston should provide the best environment possible for those who live, work and attend school here.
- To Steve and Trevor for their efforts to keep the village litter free, functional and presentable.
- Last, but certainly by no means least, my particular thanks to Vicky, our Clerk. Vicky has worked tirelessly to support the Parish Council over the last year, the range of tasks I am sure going above and beyond that of most Clerk's in other Councils, even down to editing the Parish Magazine! Vicky has continued to work on the Neighbourhood Plan alongside regular duties and is a vital part of the Council and without doubt the efficiency and success of the Council is down to her efforts. My particular thanks to Vicky for her support to my transition to Chairman during the year.
- Our Suffolk County Councillor Penny Otton and our Mid Suffolk District Councillors Derrick Haley and Esther Jewson support us and have been particularly active in relation to the planning issues facing the village over the last year.
- As you will all be aware, this has been a tumultuous year for Thurston in terms of future development. At the Mid Suffolk Referrals Committee meeting in November 2017, the district council determined to approve 818 new houses for the village. Added to the homes already under construction and those with planning permission but not yet built, this means over 1,000 new homes could be built in the village over the next 10 years. Now that planning permission has been determined, the role of the Parish Council is to influence the development that is coming, to ensure that new homes fit with the character of the village and that facilities such as exemplary new play areas are of the highest standard and that sites have facilities such as suitable cycle paths and appropriate landscaping. The Parish Council is already working closely with some of the developers and stands ready to talk to others as their plans mature. We are also working with Mid Suffolk District Council to address issues with the

railway station crossing identified as part of the planning process. A key aspect to help support and manage future development is the Neighbourhood Plan and as the plan enters the final stages of development, we look forward to its adoption to help to ensure that development in the years to come reflects the needs of the village as closely as possible. More on the Neighbourhood Plan later. The Parish Council remains a statutory consultee for all planning applications in the village and as I am sure you would expect the level of approved development is being considered when we review new applications, both in terms of the need of the village and the cumulative impact on infrastructure, such as the roads and junctions.

- Outside of planning and development, we are pleased to be able to support local organisations each year with small donations so that they are able to provide services to support our residents. Organisations supported this year include New Green Community Centre, The Cavendish Hall, St Peters Church with maintenance of the Church Yard, the Village Newsletter, Thurston Library, Royal British Legion, Ixworth Patients Association, MidSuffolk Croquet Club; Mid Suffolk Citizen's Advice Bureau, Suffolk Rescue Accident Service and Tiny Toes Toddler Group. Organisations within the village who provide services to local residents, can apply in writing to the Clerk for a grant and outline the service they provide within the village and what the grant is required for, the request will then be considered by the Parish Council. Requests from organisations based outside the village, regional groups such as the Air Ambulance, may be considered where there is, or has been a 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 now 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 2018/19 the Parish Council share of this will increase by 3.91% or £2.39 per annum. In terms of the parish finances, expenditure for the year is on target. Accounts will be published on the village website once they are completed for the year.
- The Parish Council office is open every Tuesday and Friday between 9:30 and 3:30 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 at the Library. Anyone can attend the Parish Council meetings and raise an issue or an area of concern in public forum. We also have Council Surgeries once a month where residents can attend and discuss local issues they may have. The public are also invited to attend our planning meetings, usually held twice a month, also at the Library. The dates of all of these meetings are advertised on the notice boards around the village, in the Library and on our website www.thurston.suffolk.cloud and in the Village Newsletter.
 - Another busy year awaits us from April. Key tasks for the Parish Council include
 - Continuing to work to secure the best solution possible to the new developments in Thurston
 - Supporting the work to complete the Neighbourhood Plan

- Working with Suffolk County Council to devolve responsibility for some minor highways works down to the Parish Council.
- Addressing the issue of speeding through the village by fitting a second Vehicle Activated Sign.
- Collaborating with key stakeholders in the village, such as Thurston Community College, who we worked with closely over the proposals by Suffolk County Council to change the school transport policy in the village
- Working with the Skate Park steering group to assist them in their efforts to develop a Skate Park in the village in memory of Ben Wragge.

Christopher Dashper
Chairman of Thurston Parish Council
March 2018