

2019 Thurston Parish Council Annual Report

- **Good evening - this is the Chairman's report for the past year for Thurston Parish Council.**
- **Firstly, this is my opportunity for a number of important thank you's.**
- **A thank you first to all of the members of the council who have committed their time and energy to the parish this year. We currently have 9 dedicated councillors working to try and achieve the best for the village. During the year, councillors David Moss and Jonathan Masters have left the council and John Thurlbourn and Derrick Haley have joined. My thanks once more to Vice Chairman, Brian Rainbow, for supporting myself and Vicky, Clerk to the Council and to all the councillors, including Richard Fawcett, Peter Robinson, Anne O'Connell, Ian Hasler and Barbara Morris serving as part of our committees and carrying out weekly tasks including inspecting play areas and charging and downloading data from our two Vehicle Activated Signs, a second sign having been added this year. Councillors have maintained their commitment to the village over the course of the year and we continue to strive to ensure that Thurston should provide the best environment possible for those who live, work and attend school here. My thanks also to Janette Service, a former chair of the parish council who stood down from her role as footpaths warden this year.**
- **Sadly, we also learnt this year that one of our former councillors, Robert Alston, passed away before Christmas and our thoughts remain with his family at this difficult time.**
- **To Steve and Trevor for their efforts to keep the village litter free, and the public areas and facilities maintained.**
- **And of course, once more to our Clerk. Vicky has continued to work to support the Parish Council in all respects over the last year, particularly with regard to the planning issues facing the village and ongoing support for the delivery of the Neighbourhood Plan. Vicky is a vital part of the Council and there is no doubt that we would not achieve the quality standards and the levels of efficiency that we operate at without her efforts.**
- **Our Suffolk County Councillor Penny Otton and Mid Suffolk District Councillor Derrick Haley have worked with us again this year and we are grateful for their ongoing support.**
- **This time last year I reported on the decision by Mid Suffolk District Council at their November 2017 meeting to approve 818 new homes in Thurston. Whilst none of those homes have yet been built, the Parish Council has continued to work with a number of the developers and continues to do so to ensure that wherever possible we can influence the design and quality of developments and manage the impact on the village of the amount of growth we are anticipating. In particular we are trying to minimise how the developments affect existing residents, whilst integrating the future new residents into the community wherever**

possible. We are actively pursuing the inclusion of facilities such as suitable play equipment and appropriate landscaping on all of the new development sites. The Parish Council continues to receive planning applications for the village, but we are now much closer to our Neighbourhood Plan becoming officially recognised, which will help us to manage development in the future and ensure future growth is what the village wants and needs.

- 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, Mid and West Suffolk Citizen's Advice Bureau 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 outlining 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 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 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 2019/20 the Parish Council has determined to keep any rise in the precept to a minimum and it will therefore increase by 1.9% - £1.46 per annum or 3pence per week for a Band D Property. 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 Wednesday between 10am and 4.30pm and Friday between 10am and 3:00pm 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.
 - Going forward, another busy year awaits us. Firstly, following elections on 2 May, a new council will be in place. We hope to have a full complement of 11 councillors to help to deliver the work of the council. Key tasks for the Parish Council include:

- **Continuing to work to secure the best solution possible to the new developments in Thurston and exploring options for community spaces and facilities throughout the village for existing residents and as a result of forthcoming development**
- **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.**
- **Working with the local Safer Neighbourhood Team to help to address the issues of anti-social behaviour in the village.**

**Christopher Dashper
Chairman of Thurston Parish Council
March 2019**