

# **Thurston Parish Council 3 Year Business Plan**

**May 2021 – May 2024**

## **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 Chair and a Vice-Chair annually 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 Chair 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 it operates and conducts its business. Council's 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 facilitate the holding of an Annual Parish Meeting between 1<sup>st</sup> March and 1<sup>st</sup> June each year to review the activities of the previous year and give an opportunity for residents to raise issues of concern. If in attendance, the Chair of the Parish Council will preside over the meeting.
- The Parish Council aims to promote the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the Parish and to contribute to a sustainable and inclusive community.
- Having been the 1<sup>st</sup> 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 the Chair, Vice-Chair, Councillors, the Parish Clerk and Deputy 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; 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 Facebook with a further presence on local media platforms. This, along with the introduction of further noticeboards sited around the village, will provide a more professional and inclusive approach by Thurston Parish Council to the community of Thurston.
- 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.
- With the introduction of new 30mph speed limits on Ixworth Road, Norton Road and an extension to that on Church Road, the Parish Council will also monitor these roads to ensure speed limits are adhered to.
- Investigate what steps can be taken to provide further traffic calming measures in appropriate areas.
- Monitor the 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.
- Ensure 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 Council's Committees.

**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 and Deputy Clerk receive the relevant training on Desktop Publisher and social media. 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. The Committee will also oversee and improve those sports and recreational facilities within the parish under the remit of the Parish Council.

**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 Parish of Thurston 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 Committee will also oversee the work of the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group for policy compliance with the Thurston Neighbourhood Development Plan and will monitor reasons for departing from policies, the effectiveness of the Neighbourhood Development Plan as well as matters not addressed by policy.

**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 Plan Working Group (NPWG):** 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, now that the Thurston Neighbourhood Development Plan has been adopted by the Local Planning Authority, has become an advisory group to the Planning Committee with a remit to review the plan ensuring that it is compliant at all times with national and local policies.

**The Climate Awareness and Environment Committee :** was formed as a direct response to the Parish Council taking steps to address the growing climate emergency and in recognition of the need to protect the environment. The Parish Council has adopted a Climate Awareness and Environmental Policy which commits the Parish Council to embedding green awareness in its policy and organisational development. Central to this is the need to raise awareness of the climate crisis within the community and to encourage groups to come together to take action in achieving the Suffolk County Council target of being carbon neutral by 2030.

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 and trees and hedgerows.

## **Business Plan Objectives**

### **1. Parish Benefit**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Measure</b>
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 Facebook Account. 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**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Measure</b>
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**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Measure</b>
Ensure Parish Council Clerk has the relevant qualifications	The Parish Council Clerk must have at least the training listed as Quality Council requirements.
Ensure Parish Deputy Clerk has the opportunity to obtain relevant qualifications	The Deputy Clerk must have at least the training qualifications to obtain the Introduction to Local Council Administration
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 at renewal stage	Ensure compliance with the latest requirements of the Local Council Award Scheme “Quality” to enable retention of Quality Status. Once achieved, to be monitored to ensure compliance and to aim to 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 internal audit is procured by the Council	Ensure all matters arising from internal audit are actioned in a timely and appropriate manner.
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 will provide additional commentary to this process where appropriate.
Ensure the adopted Thurston Neighbourhood Development Plan (October 2019) remains relevant and provides policies that are in general conformity with local and national planning policies.	Ensure reviewed on a regular basis and that all planning applications for Thurston demonstrate conformity with the vision and policies as laid out within the development plan
Ensure succession planning for Chair & Vice Chair	Ensure Vice Chair is encouraged to lead meetings throughout the year.
Ensure support for Chairs of relevant Committees	Ensure all Chairs are able to access Leadership Training if required.
Update 3-year Business Plan	To be reviewed annually in July See Strategic Planning and Key Objectives above.

**Appendix 1: THURSTON PARISH COUNCIL – SUMMARY OF ACCOUNTS FOR 2020 - 2021**

	Parish Council Account	Parish Council Account	Recreation Ground Account	Recreation Ground Account
	2020	2021	2020	2021
<b>Opening balance</b>	35783	114560	1168	647
<b>Plus receipts</b>	188868	3147243	7064	23705
<b>Less payments</b>	110092	222445	7585	5507
<b>Closing balance</b>	114560	206358	6471	11845

**Appendix 2. THURSTON PARISH COUNCIL SUMMARY OF ANNUAL BUDGET FOR 2021 - 2022**

CATEGORY	BUDGET 2019-20	ACTUAL 2019-20	BUDGET 2020-21	ACTUAL 2020-21	BUDGET 2021-22
EXPENDITURE					
STAFF COSTS	42288	46646	48725	49907	60265
STREET LIGHTING	6000	5487	5800	0	5930
VILLAGE MAINTENANCE	43570	24596	42800	128523	53940
ADMINISTRATION	14067	14255	12465	14044	14530
HEATH ROAD	1155	2721	1655	1160	4055
SUBSCRIPTIONS/DONATION	6730	8155	6730	6245	7040
NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN	2270	1123	0	0	0
MISCELLAENEOUS: VAT		7108		22566	
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>116110</b>	<b>110092</b>	<b>118175</b>	<b>222445</b>	<b>145760</b>
INCOME					
PRECEPT	96889	96889	105162	105162	105864
GRANTS	5084	21945	2988	21077	3896
S106 /CIL MONIES		62517		167700	
INTEREST/VAT RECLAIM		6244		19304	
MISCELLANEOUS		1273		1001	
<b>MOVEMENT FOR YEAR - (TRANSFER TO RESERVES ) + (TRANSFER FROM RESERVES)</b>	<b>14137</b>				<b>36000</b>
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>116110</b>	<b>188868</b>	<b>118175</b>	<b>314243</b>	<b>145760</b>

**Appendix 3. Areas of Active Involvement for 2021 - 2022.**

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 2021 - 2022 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.

For full details of the issues raised in prior years along with consultative work carried out please refer to prior year's business plans which can be found on the website <https://thurstonparishcouncil.uk/parish-council/business-plan/> or in the Parish Council Offices.

<b>AREAS OF ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2021 - 2022</b>			
<b>Issue Raised</b>	<b>Result of Consultative work carried out along with results</b>	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Review</b>
<b>Policing - cessation of match funding dedicated PCSO role for Thurston – impact in Thurston on community safety; traffic issues and safety amongst vulnerable residents.</b>	<b>During 2020-2021, Council entered into negotiations with the Project 2025 for a new contract for the fully funded PCSO effective 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 and at the budget setting meeting for 2021-2022, agreed to enter into a new contract with Suffolk Constabulary for the provision of a dedicated PCSO for the village of Thurston</b>	<b>£38,000 + £3,300 car for year 2021-2022 With a six-monthly review. Any percentage increase to be funded as part of percentage increase in precept</b>	<b>2-year contract commenced 01.04.21  Six monthly reviews with Stowmarket SNT to discuss effectiveness of dedicated PCSO for Thurston.  Weekly reports by PCSO to Clerk which are presented on a monthly basis at Parish Council Meetings for review by PC as a whole.</b>
<b>Libraries – withdrawal of financial support for Libraries by SCC</b>	<b>Agreement by Parish Council to continue to offer financial support to the Library to allow for increased opening hours and use of Library as a meeting venue.</b>	<b>£2,700 for 2021 – 2022.</b>	<b>Formal review at Council budget setting meeting in January 2021 with approval given to continue the support.</b>
<b>Speeding issues within the village not being dealt.</b>	<b>Council has two VAS machines which are located along Barton Road and Beyton Road to allow for the collection of speeding data to allow for comprehensive evidence to be gathered.</b>	<b>£Nil budget for 2021– 2022.</b>	<b>Parish Council to continue to discuss effectiveness of the machines at each location with Stowmarket SNT and Suffolk Road Safety Team.</b>

Concern at lack of funding available from Highways to ensure Hedgerows are maintained and kept clear of pedestrian footpaths	On-going discussions with Highways as to devolvement of powers to deal with matters relating to minor village maintenance works .  Litter Picker employed by Council as well as a Village Handyman to carry out small maintenance works.	Village Maintenance Budget - £3000  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.
Asset maintenance	Agreement that on-going maintenance is carried out on an as and when basis. Budget has been increased to take account of the newly installed Gym Trail (Summer 2020) and Community Shelter (Autumn 2020). Formal review at Council budget setting meetings in December 2021 & January 2022.	Increased play equipment maintenance budget – Thedwastre Park - £5.000 Heath Road - £2000.	Monthly internal inspection reports and Annual Inspection Report due Summer 2021.
Mid Suffolk District Council formally adopted the Thurston Neighbourhood Development Plan in October 2019.	Monitoring of the plan and responses to planning applications to ensure conformity with the plan as written is within the remit of the Planning Committee, the Clerk and Chair of the NDWG.	Part of Clerk's overall salary	Nil impact on budget for the year.
Concern at the level of localised flooding and effectiveness of dealing with localised emergencies	Review of the Emergency Plan to include existing procedures and plan and cascade of information.	Budget for 2021-2022 of £1,500 to provide for the provision of further information to the public.	Emergency Plan Group to meet on a quarterly basis during 2021 – 2022 to monitor areas of issue including the COVID-19 Emergency Plan rollout and amendments in light of the Government's roadmap out of restrictions.
Concern at the impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on vulnerable members of the community.	As a direct response to the impact on the restrictions imposed by the Government in relation to the pandemic, the Parish Council introduced a village wide Covid-19 Emergency Plan	In 2020-2021, Council applied for and was granted a £2,500 grant from Mid Suffolk District Council used to offset any expenses incurred by volunteers	At budget setting for 2021-2022, Council agreed to set a budget of £1,000 for ongoing expenses
Planning Applications submitted to	Contribute to planning process for Thurston in conjunction with the Local Plan for Mid Suffolk -	Part of Clerk's salary	For 2021-22 the Council will continue to respond to all planning applications submitted

<b>Local Authority</b>	ongoing process dependent upon Local Plan and planning applications		relating to Thurston and surrounding areas. Ongoing discussions are being held with MSDC/BDC over the emerging new Local Plan.
<b>Parish Council and Village Website</b>	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 and Deputy Clerk' salaries and volunteering time from a member of the public	Review on a monthly basis to ensure information is updated and relevant.
<b>Engagement with Public</b>	Community engagement surgeries to restart in line with Government roadmap out of restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure continued engagement and communication with public	Parish Councillors; NP Steering Group Members; County & District Cllrs & PCSO Smith	Monthly surgeries to be reinstated with Parish Councillors; NP Representatives; PCSO; County and District Cllrs. in attendance.
<b>Good Governance of the Parish</b>	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: £1,3100; Election budget: £3,645 held within Reserves.	Formal annual review of all policies and procedures by Policy and Resources Committee. Reviews carried out February – May 2021. Annual review of training records for Councillors and Staff September 2021 to be carried out by Clerk to the Council.
<b>Accountability of Parish Council's finances</b>	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 – Proper Practises (2021)	Part of Clerk's Salary & 1 Parish Councillor.	Quarterly reviews on internal control systems to be carried out by non- signatory Councillors: April, July, and October 2021 and February 2022.
<b>Contractual and employment obligations</b>	Council to ensure that it complies with employment law and health and safety issues - ongoing as part of review of working environment and workload for the Clerk and Deputy Clerk	Clerk, Parish Council Chair	Annual review of Clerk's Performance including working environment carried out March 2021 and next due March 2022. Deputy Clerk's six-monthly performance Review due October 2021.
<b>Appropriate management of the Recreational Ground Trust</b>	Trusteeship of Thurston Recreation Ground Trust	Own budget for the running of the land and pavilion managed by the Trust	Quarterly meetings of Recreational Facilities Committee to ensure any issues raised are dealt with accordingly.