Thurston Parish Council 3 Year Business Plan

May 2022 – May 2025 – reviewed 2023

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 13 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 Code of Conduct 2020 which will also apply to the Council's Committees. Working Groups upon which the Parish Council are represented are expected to work to terms of reference agreed in full Council.
- The Council will facilitate the holding of an Annual Parish Meeting between 1st March and 1st 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 1st Parish/Town Council in Suffolk to achieve Quality Status in 2016, the Parish Council is working 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.

<u>Village administration</u>: – 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.

<u>Council development</u>: – to provide the Chair, Vice-Chair, Councillors, the Parish Clerk, Deputy Clerk and Staff 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.

<u>Strategic planning/Key projects:</u> – 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 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 it 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 Ground Trust Committee: Thurston Parish Council is the sole trustee of the Thurston Recreation Ground Charity. The 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.

<u>The Policy & Resources Committee</u>: 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 committee is responsible for producing a directory to assist in the parish in case of an emergency. Summarized versions along with relevant website links will be added to the Parish website.

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.

<u>The Leisure and Environment Committee:</u> is the merging of two committees with the responsibility of managing, maintaining and improving the sports, recreational and leisure facilities on behalf of the Parish Council as well as advising on measures to protect and enhance the biodiversity and preserve the environment of the parish of Thurston. 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. This Committee will also oversee and improve those sports, recreational and leisure facilities within the parish under the remit of the Parish Council and will proactively support the development of events on open spaces and identify opportunities for improvement.

<u>The Friends of Thurston Library Committee</u>: 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.

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 nominate persons to sit on the 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

Action	Measure
Ensure continuing engagement with other	Councillors to be involved at a management level with
Thurston village groups	key village groups.
Manage/monitor Village Website	Update as required.
Ensure continuous communication and	Regular monthly surgeries and public meetings
engagement with residents	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	Establish a youth council to allow young persons
the village	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	Completion is monitored at each meeting.
meeting are completed	
Ensure meeting statutory obligations	Annual Parish Meeting held along with 4 other Council
	Meetings throughout the year.
Liaison with Suffolk County and Mid Suffolk	County and District Councillors attend monthly
District Councils	Council meetings and give reports and answer
	questions.
Liaison with Stowmarket Safer Neighbourhood	Ensure that the council has a regular activity report
Team (SNT).	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	The Parish Council Clerk must have at least the
qualifications	training listed as Quality Council requirements.
Ensure Parish Deputy Clerk has the opportunity	The Deputy Clerk must have at least the training
to obtain relevant qualifications	qualifications to obtain the Certificate in Local Council Administration.
Ensure all Councillors have received Basic	Ensure all Councillors receive an individual training
Training as standard	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	Most appropriate returns on funds invested to be
investments	reviewed at Policy & Resources Committee Meetings.

5. <u>Strategic Planning</u>

Action	Measure		
Ensure continuing engagement with SCC and	SCC and MSDC Councillor attendance and input at		
MSDC	Parish Council meetings.		
Ensure the Parish Council continues to respond	Planning Committee has full delegated powers to		
to all planning applications as a statutory	respond on all matters concerning planning for		
consultee	Thurston.		
	The NPSG will provide additional commentary to this		
	process where appropriate.		
Ensure the adopted Thurston Neighbourhood	Ensure reviewed on a regular basis and that all		
Development Plan (October 2019) remains	planning applications for Thurston demonstrate		
relevant and provides policies that are in	conformity with the vision and policies as laid out		
general conformity with local and national	within the development plan		
planning policies.			
Ensure succession planning for Chair & Vice Chair	Ensure Vice Chair is encouraged to lead meetings		
	throughout the year.		
Ensure support for Chairs of relevant	Ensure all Chairs are able to access Leadership		
Committees	Training if required.		
Update 3-year Business Plan	To be reviewed annually in June - see Strategic		
	Planning and Key Objectives above.		

Appendix 1: THURSTON PARISH COUNCIL – SUMMARY OF ACCOUNTS FOR 2022 - 2023

	Parish Council Account	Parish Council Account	Recreation Ground Account	Recreation Ground Account
	2022 Restated to I&E	2023	2022	2023
Opening balance	206,530	351,553	18,845	1,840
Plus receipts	431,703	212,340	5,977	6,924
Less payments	286,880	282,777	22,982	6,671
Closing balance	351,553	213,467	1,840	2,093

Appendix 2. THURSTON PARISH COUNCIL SUMMARY OF ANNUAL BUDGET FOR 2023 - 2024

TOTAL INCOME	145,760	352,839	167,780	212,340	205,550
NEWSLETTER	0	9,286	0	4,095	C
MISCELLANEOUS	36,000	2,409	39,300	2,013	48,300
CIL MONIES	0	307,917	0	71,828	C
GRANTS	3,896	6,277	3,000	8,924	4,330
PRECEPT	105,864	105,864	125,480	125,480	152,920
INCOME					
	147,900	200,000	107,780	330,420	205,550
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	147,960	286,680	167,780	350,426	205 550
NEWSLETTER	0	5,489	10,000	12,621	
MISCELLAENEOUS: LEGAL/COSULTANCY	0	36,628	10,000	23,585	15,000
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SUBSCRITIONS/DONATION	9,240	10,088	7,080	8,351	1,646
HEATH ROAD	4,055	722	3,055	420	3,055
ADMINISTRATION	14,530	15,253	18,300	16,801	20,980
COUNCIL SERVICES	53,940	141,795	54,300	214,919	75,135
STREET LIGHTING	5,930	11,583	6,500	6,080	4,500
STAFF COSTS	60,265	65,122	68,545	67,649	85,234
EXPENDITURE					
	2021-22	2021-22	2022-23	2022-23	2023-24
CATEGORY	BUDGET	ACTUAL	BUDGET	ACTUAL	BUDGET

Appendix 3. Areas of Active Involvement for 2023-2024.

This Business Plan is to be reviewed annually in July / August. 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 2023 – 2024 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 an annual 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 <u>https://thurstonparishcouncil.uk/parish-council/business-plan/</u> or in the Parish Council Offices.

	AREAS OF ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR2023 - 2024				
Issue Raised	Result of Consultative work carried out along with results	Budget	Review		
dedicated PCSO role for Thurston – impact in	Suffolk Constabulary for the provision of a dedicated PCSO for the village of Thurston. PCSO Swain left the force in May 2023 and PCSO Brown	£3,300 car for year 2023-2024	 2-year contract commenced 01.04.23 and expires 31.03.25. 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. 		
withdrawal of financial support	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.	2023–2024.	Formal review at Council budget setting meeting in January 2023 with continued support for a valued community asset.		
Speeding issues within the village not being dealt.	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.	£500 budget for 2023–2024	Parish Council to continue to discuss effectiveness of the machines at each location with Stowmarket SNT and Suffolk Road Safety Team. Both areas are now linked into the approved sites of enforcement		

			in Thurston, along with Ixworth Road and Station Hill.
Speeding issues within the village not being dealt.	energy) along Ixworth Road to allow for the collection of	2023–2024 – CIL	discuss effectiveness of
Concern at lack of funding available from Highways to ensure hedgerows are	Highways as to devolvement of powers to deal with matters	_	Ongoing review with Highways during grass cutting season and ongoing discussions regarding devolvement.
maintained and	Litter Picker employed by Council as well as a Village Handyman to carry out small maintenance works.		New Green Public Open Space and the servicing of the bio waste bag dispensers. Cost to
Asset maintenance	Agreement that on-going maintenance is carried out on an as and when basis.	Increased play equipment maintenance budget – Thedwastre Park - £5,000 New Green - NIL Heath Road - £1,000.	reports carried out with an Annual Inspection Report issued (February 2023). Remit of LEC Committee to review and advise Council on maintenance required.
	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 and the Clerk.		During 2024, Council will need to commence a review of the NDP given its age. Work on this will need to be cognisant of Part 2 of the Joint Local Plan. Overall NIL impact on the budget for 2023-24 as secretarial assistance will be absorbed by the Clerk and Deputy Clerk but costs for professional assistance will need to be factored into the 2024-2025 budget.

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.	2024 of £500 to provide for the	Emergency Plan Group to meet on a quarterly basis during 2023–2024 to monitor areas of issue.
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 2023-2024 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.
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 2023-2024 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 Village Website	Ongoing on the part of the Parish Council in light of the 2015 Regulations and to ensure that the Council is open and transparent in its dealings as a public authority		Review on a monthly basis to ensure information is updated and relevant.
Village Newsletter	Overall administration of the village newsletter is now under the control of the Parish Council. Editorial responsibility lies with the Editor with mediation approval given by Chair and Vicar where conflict arises.	employs an Editor who is part of the	Newsletter Editor (£3,531) is
Engagement with Public		Parish Councillors; County & District Cllrs & PCSO Swain	· · · ·
Good Governance of the Parish	Membership; Policy & Procedures	Salary. SALC & NALC Budgeted Fee: £1,350; Election budget: £3,645 held	Committee. Reviews carried out February

			carried out by Clerk to the Council post May 2023.
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 – Proper Practices (2023)	Part of Clerk's Salary & role of one appointed Parish Councillor.	Quarterly reviews on internal control systems to be carried
Contractual and employment obligations	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, Deputy Clerk and Newsletter Editor.	Clerk, Parish Council Chair	Annual review of Clerk's Performance including working environment carried out by Chair March 2023. Deputy Clerk's, Newsletter Editor's and Litter Picker's Performance Review carried out by Clerk March 2023. Reported to and considered by Council June 2023.
Appropriate management of the Recreational Ground Trust	Sole trusteeship of Thurston Recreation Ground Trust.	Own budget for the running of the land and pavilion managed by the PC as sole Trustee.	Recreation Ground Trust Committee to ensure any issues
Appropriate management of the Public Open Space area at New Green	The Parish Council, under agreement with the New Green Trust, maintains the open space area at New Green. For 2022-23 Funds (£14,500) were set aside from CIL for Maintenance Works (to include trees £8,000); Works to the Wildlife Area (£2,000) and Tree Survey (£4,500).	Budget for 2023- 2024 £6,000 for grounds maintenance work. Balance of CIL funds (£4935) will be used to offset costs that arise for significant works to trees.	Working Group with a formal proposal to be submitted to
Appropriate management of the Public Open Space at School Road	Clarification has been given, via records held at Land Registry, that the area between St Peter's Way and Cavendish Close along School Road is under the ownership and remit of the Parish Council.	No specific budget has been set for this area.	It is anticipated costs will come out of the Village Maintenance Budget of £10,000.
Detached Youth Work Project	Detached youth work project set up to Establish relationships through face-to-face work with young people, to offer support	Budget of £7,000 per annum from CIL for the project which was set to	Senior Detached Youth Worker is to be a funded post with two volunteer youth workers to be recruited locally.

behaviours and into positive activities. Initiate and deliver a programme that encourage young	Maximum CIL spend to be £14,000.	of the overall package.
people to engage in positive and constructive dialogue.		