



THURSFORD ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Monday 13th May 2024 at 6:00pm in St Andrews Church, Thursford

Present: Cllr S. Eckworth (Chair of the Parish Council), Parish Clerk – K. Harris,
13 Residents

Welcome and apologies

Cllr Eckworth welcomed all to the meeting and thanked them for coming. She thanked the Churchwardens and the St Andrew's Venue Team for allowing use of the Church for this meeting and for providing the refreshments.

She said the meeting was for the village to express their views. Apologies had been received from 2 residents.

Approve minutes of the meeting held on 6th March 2023

There were no questions at the meeting and these were approved as a true record of the 2023 Annual Parish Meeting and signed by the Chair.

Receive the Annual Report from the Chair of the Parish Council

Cllr Sherri Eckworth gave the Annual Report.

I am giving this report in my role as Chair to Thursford Parish Council.

The Parish Council exists to serve the community in the village, to support local organisations and to maintain local facilities. All residents and members of the public are welcome at all meetings of the Council. We hold 5 meetings during the year and dates, times and locations are advertised on the website and noticeboards around the village.

Regular tasks at our Parish Council meetings include reviewing and commenting on local planning applications taking into account the best interests of the village; informing NCC Highways of areas needing their attention and the regular publication of the Tablet keeping the community informed of activities and events in the village.

This last year

The PC has purchased a replacement Grit Bin for Station Road after resident's requests and have purchased a dog bin for the Village Green which will be emptied fortnightly. It is hoped that this will reduce dog fouling within the village.

A working party has cleared undergrowth in the cemetery expanding the space available and the PC would like to express their thanks to all the volunteers and to Gary Pointer in particular. Also thanks go to Roy Wilkes and his wife Barbara for his work on the phone box which is now shiny and looks as good as new.

The website is in the process of finishing its revamp and the PC would like to express their thanks to Chris Rheinberg who has worked so hard on this.

A new duty for the PC to consider from this year has been the Environment Act 2021 and the PC responsibilities towards biodiversity. The PC take this responsibility seriously and, although it does not have direct responsibility for any land, would like to encourage all residents to look at the Action Plan on the website and Noticeboards and to consider what they can do within their own gardens.

I would like to thank all residents who have volunteered their time for the village over the past year – for specific activities mentioned above, but also for more regular activities, such as raising the flag, the Village Green pot display, the annual litter pick and for delivering the printed copies of the Tablet.

I would also like to express thanks to all Councillors and our Clerk for their efforts over the previous year.

Receive Reports from other organisations represented

Fuel Allotment Charity – Report given by Chris

This dates from the Enclosure of Thursford Common on 7th June 1833 as compensation to those villagers who would suffer hardship by losing their access to the Common.

The current situation is that rent comes to the Charity from renting out the Common and the Charity provides small grants to help cover winter fuel costs and in an emergency for people in the village to relieve hardship. Last year the charity provided £370 in bags of coal and £1,665 in winter fuel subsidy.

However, the Trustees believe it is time to make a change: once a year a meeting is held to decide who should receive support – with the allocation in the past being decided by criteria such as a resident's age and age of car they possess.

The two potential changes being considered:

1. Anyone in the village can complete an application form for consideration by the Trustees on behalf of themselves or a neighbour – this was done 2 years ago when additional funding was received from the Community Foundation.
2. Any money saved or acquired from other sources would go into a more general hardship fund which would be available throughout the year to pay for urgent necessities when cash was a problem.

The current Articles and Aims of the charity were updated a few years to allow such a change.

Thursford Assist – Report given by Chris

Thursford Assist was started about 5 years ago to provide short term, emergency help within the community. This includes tasks such as hedge cutting, arranging a rota of visitors and arranging lifts.

It has been noticed that recently the Group has been needed less and it is positive that the Community is providing this help within itself.

Parochial Church Council (PCC) – Report given by Lance

The Church is the oldest building in the village and it is important to keep it functioning. It now serves two separate purposes: religious services, which now take place about once a month and the community, managed by SAV (the Saint Andrews Venue Team)

The quinquennial report on the church has taken place and the report from the Quantity Surveyor is awaited. There are known to be issues with the Tower and the Tombs. In addition to

this it is hoped that a small local team will be able to help out with minor repairs. The Church is the focal point in the village and it would be great to have more village involvement: a “Call to Arms” is to go into the Tablet.

Joint PCC meetings now take place with the other 5 churches in the Benefice to combine ideas – and this has led to an idea to improve the heating in the Church.

SAV – Report given by Jeremy

In other villages SAV (St Andrew’s Venue team) would be called the Village Hall Committee. The Team meet 6 times per year in each other’s homes to discuss types of entertainment and ways to raise money – All welcome.

The past year has been particularly busy with the Open Gardens held at the beginning of June. This was fantastically successful. Thanks to Charlie for opening the Thursford Collection, to those who opened their gardens, drove people around the village and all the volunteers. A total of £5,200 was raised - however this can only be held about every 3 years.

A dinner is held every February with a national theme (this year it was Greek; next year has yet to be decided). A coffee morning is held on the first Saturday of every month and a talk on Little Snoring Airfield was held recently – and rather than the 30 people expected attracted an audience of 85.

Plans in preparation are a “60s & 70s Night” with a Band; a Murder Mystery; a Sausage Sizzle in August; a talk by John Cushing on the History of the Thursford Show, plus a “Soup & Ploughmans” takes place 2 or 3 times a year. The Group is always amenable to hear other suggestions.

Allotments – Report given by Di and Chris

The Allotments which were first set up 12 years ago with a lot of hard work may be coming to an end in March 2025. The landowner is considering the possibility that those between the road and the chicken hut may remain while the rest is returned to watermeadow.

Thursford Collection – Report given by Charlie

At a Trustees meeting last Friday a new project was Approved to design a sustainable and educational outdoor play attraction aimed towards children, based on vintage steam engines and aligned with the values of the Collection. This will be located where the December Funfair has taken place. A company called Capcoa has been engaged to develop the project. In addition a train experience will be built on the neighbouring field, recently purchased from a local landowner.

It is hoped that these attractions will be ready for summer 2025 and will enable the Collection to operate all year. This will enable the number of full-time staff to be increased but it is not anticipated that there would be a significant impact on the number of traffic movements in the village.

The Collection will hold a display for the village so that they can view the plans.

Thursford Methodist Church – Report by (Rev) Elizabeth Bellamy

As you are probably aware, last September Thursford Methodist Church closed as a place of worship. This was at the request of the small congregation.

The Church was built in 1934 to serve this community. The present Managing Trustees, since the Church closed for worship - the Central Norfolk Methodist Circuit, are keen to find a new way for the building to continue to serve this community in a new way so they appointed a small committee to explore the options. I am part of that committee.

The last thing any of us want is to sell the building to become yet another second home or holiday let. I was deputed by the committee to explore other options by talking to people in the community, the Parish Council and the Thursford Collection.

It quickly became apparent that St Andrew’s Parish Church already fulfills the role of community centre. There is no room in a community for a second one and not enough financial support anyway. The Thursford Collection were willing to host the Polling Station and the Parish Council Meetings.

Our committee, therefore, recommended to the Managing Trustees that we retain ownership of Thursford Methodist Church and convert it into a home with off road parking to be let as affordable housing to local people.

Our recommendation has been accepted and permission given by Managing Trustees at their March meeting for us to apply to Methodist HQ for a feasibility study grant to include local planning approval, an initial architect’s drawings and costings. We have provisionally identified a Methodist source of funding for the building alterations and are actively working on the feasibility study.

Rev’d Bellamy was thanked for all the consultation.

Barney, Fulmodeston and Thursford Food Production Club – Report by Di

The Club was formed during the Second World War as part of the Dig for Victory campaign and has continued ever since. It holds a Seed Swap and Social in January for members and interested parties, a Plant Sale in late April selling plants donated by members and friends to raise funds and an Annual Horticultural and Craft Show in July. In addition, Talks and other activities are arranged ad hoc throughout the year and are generally free to members.

Cost of Membership is currently £10 per calendar year, although you can join at any time. Contact me, as Treasurer, or Kerry, who is Chair of the Club and our Parish Clerk for further information or to join.

Open Forum: Public Opportunity for Questions to Councillors, comments from Electors/Members of the Public

The Chair thanked everyone for their reports. She asked if there were any questions for Councillors, or any comments from the Floor.

Di thanked both Charlie Cushing and Gary Pointer for their work on the village green. It looked extremely well kept and was appreciated by all. (Charlie was quick to point out it was all Gary's hard work!)

Close Meeting

There being no further business the meeting closed at 7.05pm

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