THURSTON PARISH COUNCIL – Environment and Biodiversity Committee

Minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Biodiversity Committee held on Wednesday 17th September 2025 at 6.00pm in the Community Library, Norton Road.

In attendance: J Allen, L Bond, Y Hamel-Cooke, P Marsh, D Millest, B Morris and P Smith.
Also in attendance: Mrs. P Gladwell (Deputy Clerk) one member of the public.

1. **To elect a chair for the meeting –** It was agreed that Cllr Philip Smith take the chair for this meeting, aif.
2. **Chair's Welcome -** the Chair opened the meeting advising all that the Protocol adopted by the Parish Council for reporting at Parish Council Meetings would be enacted for this meeting. A copy of the Protocol is available from the Clerk or can be downloaded from the website: https://thurstonparishcouncil.uk/parish-council/policies-procedures-and-strategy/

3. **To receive Apologies of Absence** – Verified apologies were received from Cllr S Gerrish. The meeting was in agreement to approve the apologies received with aif.

4. **Declarations of pecuniary and local non-pecuniary interests:**
   a) To receive declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests and other registerable interests and non-registerable interests as detailed in Appendix B of the LGA Model Code of Conduct – None received.
   b) To note the determination of requests for dispensations in accordance with council's Dispensation Policy – None received.

5. **To consider and approve the minutes of the previous meetings:**
   a) Minutes of the meeting of 16th June 2025 – approval of the minutes as an accurate record of the meeting that took place was given by all present, aif. The Chair signed the minutes in accordance with legislation.

6. **To receive comments from the members of the public present:**
   a) On the agenda under discussion – None received.
   b) On any other environmental matters within the village of Thurston – None received.

7. **To receive a report from Cllrs. Allen, Hamel-Cooke and Morris from their recent Wildlife in Your Community course –** The course held in Hadleigh in July was found to be interesting and very informative. Based mainly in the classroom with limited field work the content covered the work of Suffolk Wildlife Trust to "bring nature back" together with biodiversity and environmental input into Neighbourhood Planning and Biodiversity Action Plans. It was confirmed that the Parish Council had recently subscribed to Suffolk Wildlife Trust with an annual donation.

8. **To note the closure of the consultation on Suffolk County Council's Draft Local Nature Recovery Strategy and to receive an update on the current position with adoption of any final documents -** it was noted that the consultation closed for comments on 11th June 2025 and that council's comment had been added to the mapping system to suggest that the Recreation Ground was not suitable for restoring the existing grassland due to its current use as a sport and recreation field. It was noted that the report produced following the consultaion process indicated that this had been acknowledged and that "for urban greenspaces such as allotments, sports grounds etc. inappropriate measures such as woodland/scrub creation will be excluded and appropriate

caveats added for the other measures applied" It was noted that it is unclear from the Suffolk County Council website what the timeline for approval of the Suffolk Local Nature Recovery Strategy is however it is thought that the draft document will remain very much in its current form. It was acknowledged that this will be a valuable document for reference when progressing parish council projects.

9. Biodiversity Policy & Action Plan

a) To receive an update on the progress of the inventory and assessment to log mature trees for the Veteran Tree Survey – Cllr Morris confirmed that the example sessions had taken place however no recording had commenced to date. It was agreed that volunteers would pair up and areas would be designated for survey over the next couple of months as it was becoming time crucial with Autumn approaching and bare leaf making recording more difficult. A report on progress is expected for the next meeting. It was noted that Council is in the process of advertising for a new Tree Warden.

b) To receive an update on the arrangements for the community engagement open space event for Heather Close, to confirm the date and to consider any further actions required – It was suggested that the invite was too wordy and that a brief invite at the top in bold would be preferable, the deputy clerk will amend. It was agreed that the Biodiversity Manager at Babergh Mid Suffolk District Council and the Wilder Communities Advisor at Suffolk Wildlife Trust be invited to the event to assist with the presentation of information. A date would be fixed once their availability is known. It was noted that the format of the event would be to establish if there is resident support for biodiversity enhancement of the area.

c) To consider Autumn planting of trees, hedging, wildflowers and bulbs, identify locations and arrangements for planting and make recommendation to full council for any funding required – Cllr Morris confirmed that there were at least three trees in her nursery, donated by BMSDC that must be planted this year, two Field Maple and one Wild Cherry. It was agreed that these be planted on New Green as replacement for the recently felled trees. Cllr Morris confirmed that guards were available for these. Tree planting will be arranged to coincide with a Wildlife Garden work party. Discussion around bulb planting established the preference for native bulbs. It was noted that the district council biodiversity manager did not support non native daffodil planting however there may be support from the District Council with native bulbs in a similar way to their tree, hedging and wildflower offers. It was noted that wildflower swathes had been suggested within the Biodiversity Action Plan for New Green and Heath Road, suggestions for the exact locations for these would be mapped and costs confirmed before any recommendation to full council.

d) To consider organizing a Bioblitz/Biodiversity Open Day event – consideration of an event specific to a Bioblitz was deferred.

e) To receive an update on the application to BMSDC's Pride in Your Place fund for bird, bat and swift boxes and to consider how to incorporate community involvement in the project – Initial enquiries to the grants team at BMSDC confirmed that the proposed project has the potential to be eligible for the grant however they would need to see evidence of community involvement, including volunteers for installation and school children helping with decoration together with a detailed description of the benefits the project will deliver to the community. It was noted that the 1st Thurston Scouts had expressed interest in being involved and meetings are arranged with Thurston Primary School and Priory at Thurston to facilitate their involvement. The time scale for the project is based around the Scouts request that they build their own bird boxes in May/June next year, it was agreed that an open event will then be

arranged for a Saturday in July before the schools break up. It was suggested that this event could be expanded to include a Bioblitz and further Biodiversity projects such as planting and recording. Volunteer installation events could then be scheduled for Autumn 2026.

f) To review the Biodiversity Action Plan and consider any amendments, updates or actions required – following a review of the action plan it was agreed there were no updates to make at this time. Priority Year 1 actions were confirmed as the Tree inventory, installation of bird, bat and swift boxes, using Heather Close as a flagship for biodiversity enhancement and ongoing community engagement.

10. Climate Awareness:

a) To consider the installation of further EV Charging points at community venues – it was noted that there are currently two EV points at the Recreation Ground which have generated an average of six users per month and this has only increased recently due to newsletter advertising. The college and the primary school have points and there are public points planned for both Thurston Grove and St Peter's Chase. It was suggested that public EV charging points might be installed in the future at New Green Community Centre carpark however no recommendations to full council were proposed at this time.

b) To consider ways to promote the uptake of Thermal Imaging whilst the camera is available - Suffolk Climate Action Team are again promoting their Keep the Heat project which enables the parish council to borrow thermal imaging cameras and carry out heat loss surveys for residents. The uptake in the first year was high with interest in subsequent years dropping, however as a valuable service it was agreed that it should be offered again this winter. More extensive advertising was suggested and newsletter copy will commence next month with social media and website promotion ongoing.

11. To note the survey results received and consider a request for the installation of roadside hedgehog warning signs – The results of an eighteen-month long survey by the Thurston Hedgehog Group were noted. The main casualty areas in the report are Barton Road, between Thurston Vets and the Fox and Hounds, Station Hill, near the New Green area, Norton Road between Barton Road and the Library, Thedwastre Rd/Sandpit Lane, around Ryefields and the pond area and School Lane. Designs suggested by the group include pictures and text on a warning triangle at either end of these locations or alternatively an addition to all village entry signs. Suffolk County Council have confirmed that any provision of signage will require an application to be made with supporting evidence for a street licence and then if approved further application for permission to install warning signs would need to be made to the Department of Transport. The costs for this process would be significant however external funding may be available. Support for the aims of the Thurston Hedgehog Group was confirmed, however the provision of multiple warning signs at five locations was thought to be excessive. Due to concerns that this amount of signage would lose its impact together with the cost and application process implications it was agreed that the provision of this type of hedgehog warning signage could not be supported at this time. Consideration was given to providing signage for the village entry routes, this was thought to be a better solution and was supported by members. It was noted that once current developments were built out the village entry roads, speed limits and signage would be reviewed and the introduction of additional signs to highlight Thurston as a hedgehog friendly village or wildlife friendly village would be recommended as part of that review.

12. Date of next meeting – 26th November 2025 commencing at tbc in the Thurston Community Library.

13. Close of meeting – there being no further business to transact the Chair closed the meeting at 8.50pm.

Approved and signed by ……at the meeting of 19th November 2025