THURSTON PARISH COUNCIL – Environment and Biodiversity Committee

Minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Biodiversity Committee held on Wednesday 18th June 2025 at 6.00pm in the Community Library, Norton Road.

In attendance: Cllrs. S Gerrish (Chair), J Allen, L Bond, Y Hamel-Cooke, P Marsh, D Millest, B Morris and P Smith.
Also in attendance: Mrs. P Gladwell (Deputy Clerk) no members of public.

1. **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/

2. **To receive Apologies of Absence** – There were no applicable apologies as all were present.

3. **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.

4. **To consider and approve the minutes of the previous meetings:**
   a) There were none available as this is the first meeting of a new committee.

5. **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.

6. **To note the Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils Adoption Statement and Biodiversity and Trees Supplementary Planning Document.** Supplementary Planning Documents, Guidance & Briefs - Mid Suffolk District Council - babergh.gov.uk / midsuffolk.gov.uk - it was noted that the district council formally adopted this supplementary planning document back in March 2025 following modifications which were made from representations submitted during the consultation process. The document provides guidance and detail for the provision of biodiversity and trees within development proposals and sets out the requirements of developers and the expectations of the District Council when it comes to planning applications. The meeting noted the useful information contained within it and that the section that details good practice in the design and implementation of biodiversity measures is especially informative for this committee and its aims.

7. **Suffolk County Council, Local Nature Recovery Strategy :**
   a) To note the draft document and the consultation process. Local Nature Recovery Strategy Draft Documents - Suffolk County Council - it was noted that the draft document and accompanying maps are available as part of the consultation process that had a closing date of 11th June for comments. It was noted that the deputy clerk had included a note on the mapping system to confirm that the Recreation Ground was not suitable for restoring the

existing grassland as indicated as a potential measure due to its existing use as a sport and recreation field.

b) To consider the areas of particular importance for biodiversity (APIB) and the areas that could become of particular importance (ACB) on the Local Habitat Map for Thurston and its surrounding area – it was noted that of the many areas identified in Thurston as having a potential measure against it very few were owned or managed by the parish council. Others identified are either under private ownership or church land. Whilst noting that this is a draft document and subject to amendment following the consulation process all areas were considered for their value in including them in our Biodiversity Action Plan or Neighhood Plan once the Local Neighbourhood Recovery Strategy is formally adopted.

c) To identify potential nature recovery measures that could be taken in these areas and to incorporate these into the Biodiversity Action Plan – Each area identified was considered for its compatibility with our BAP or its potential to be added to it. It was acknowledged that areas identified on the map that were owned or managed by the parish council, or had the potential to be, were already included in our Biodiversity Action Plan and that the potential measures suggested for these areas would be added to the plan. It was agreed that areas identified along the railway line and tree belt adjacent to School Road would be added to the plan to be assessed for any action. It was agreed that new developers or their subsequent management companies would be informed of the LNRS once approved to highlight the potential measures suggested for their land. It was agreed that any private landowner areas with potential measures suggested, such as improved field boundries, should be included in our action plan if they facilitate essential corridor links between habitats to enhance ecological connectivity.

8. Biodiversity Policy & Action Plan -

a) To review the Biodiversity Action Plan and consider any actions/strategies needed to ensure compliance with the council's duty to maintain, improve and enhance biodiversity including:

i. To consider the implementation of a Veteren Tree Survey – it was acknowledged that the Woodland Trust's aim to secure ancient and veteran trees to celebrate their value and ensure the connectivity and continuity of their habitats is a valuable project that aligns with the parish council's commitment to maintain, improve and enhance biodiversity. Veteran trees contain unique microhabitats for and are host to hundreds of species at any one time and are vital attributes of woodland sites, open wooded habitats and hedgerows. It was agreed that an inventory and assessment be commenced to log mature trees throughout the parish. A toolkit will be created to help councillors identify and record mature trees for assessment by our Tree Warden.

ii. To consider community engagement events for open space areas – it was noted that the recent Biodiversity Audit highlighted various measures to improve the Local Green Spaces designated in the Thurston Neighbourhood Plan. As part of any enhancement of these areas it is intended that local resident engagement will be sought. It was agreed that an open meeting on site to discuss biodiversity enhancement of each open space should take place. The first event will be arranged for Heather Close as this area was highlighted in the audit as a flagship area successfully rewilding the green space. The success of the event will be measured before similar events are arranged for other green open spaces.

iii. To consider organising a Bioblitz/Biodiversity Open Day event – discussion took place around the recommendation from the recent meeting with the West Suffolk Wilder Communities

Advisor for Suffolk Wildlife Trust regarding community engagement and the suggestion of a Biodiversity Open Day or Bioblitz event. The meeting agreed that holding such an event would be a positive way to engage with residents that would give an enjoyable interactive experience whilst securing feedback on what biodiversity projects resident would like to see. Further discussion and consideration around the organising of an event will be included on the next agenda.

iv. To consider an application to BMSDC's Pride in Your Place fund for bird, bat and swift boxes – it was confirmed that many areas of the recent Biodiversity Audit recommended the provision of bat, bird, swift and bee boxes. Various quotes and sources for nest boxes were considered and it was agreed that purchasing from the RSPB would show support for this charity. Average costs per item are £24 for bird, bee and bat boxes and £50 for swift boxes. It was resolved **to create a list of items to cover the recommendations from the audit together with additional boxes to be made available to residents through the existing successful bird box scheme and to make application to the Babergh and Mid Suffolk Pride in Your Place grant up to the value of £5000, with aif.**

It was noted that none of the recent developments appeared to have included bee bricks in their builds. It was suggested that developers be asked at future liaison meetings to consider these.

9. Climate Awareness:

a) To review the measures in place to support the parish councils position on climate crisis – It was noted that the parish council adopted their Climate Awareness and Environment Policy in September 2022. This policy confirms the councils commitment to tackling the Climate Crisis and to the preservation of the environment. The approaches and responsibilities outlined were reviewed and agreed as continuing to be relevant. Projects undertaken to date were noted and future projects considered. It was suggested that additional EV charging points be considered at community venues and that the sucessful Thermal Imaging project be repeated.

b) To note Suffolk County Councils commitment to net zero status by 2030 and to consider actions to support this – it was noted that the county council has declared a climate emergency and recognises the urgency for action and the scale of the challenge to becoming carbon neutral and they actively encourage others to change their behaviour in order to protect and enhance Suffolk's environment and biodiversity. It was agreed that the parish council continue to support a reduction in our own carbon footprint and to actively promote the many initiatives available to our residents to encourage them to reduce their carbon footprint, improve their homes and mitigate the damage to the environment.

10. To consider organizing a litter picking event – discussion took place around the request from a resident to hold a group litter picking event. It was noted that the central areas of the village are covered by the parish council litter picker and that the outer areas around the public footpaths were thought to be reasonably clear with some residents actively picking up litter on an informal basis. It was noted that a formal litter pick would involve choosing routes, pre walking them and carrying out risk assessments. It was agreed organization of a formal litter pick was not thought necessary at this time.

11. To assess the need for an amendment to the speed limit where people and motor vehicles

regularly converge – It was noted that the increase in properties and the higher volume of both pedestrians and vehicles, especially around the schools and pick up and drop off times heightens the concerns of many that vehicles are speeding. Resident feedback has highlighted the desire for 20mph limits within the village. Suffolk County Council will only consider an alteration to a speed limit if a road meets two of their three criteria. Current mean speeds of 24mph or below, a depth of residential development and evidence of pedestrian and cyclist movements and a record of injury accidents. It was acknowledged that residential development is not questioned and evidence of pedestrian and cyclist activity could be easily surveyed however, pinch point areas adjacent to the schools might record less than 24mph at busy times of day however it is unlikely that a mean speed of this would result from a commissioned traffic survey and there is minimal accident data from central village locations. Roads approaching the school already have speed reduction measures in place and further crossing points are planned for Barton Road, Station Hill and Norton Road crossroads. It was agreed that pursuing an amendment to the current 30mph limit in these areas would be unlikely to receive support from Suffolk County Council at this time.

12. Date of next meeting – 24th September 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.