THURSTON PARISH COUNCIL – Environment and Biodiversity Committee

Minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Biodiversity Committee held on Wednesday 21st January 2026 at 6.00pm in the Community Library, Norton Road.

In attendance: Cllrs. S Gerrish (Chair) L Bond, Y Hamel-Cooke, P Marsh, D Millest and B Morris.
Also in attendance: Mrs. P Gladwell (Deputy Clerk) no members of the 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. **Apologies:**
   a) To receive apologies for absence – verified apologies for absence were received from Cllr. Smith and Cllr. Allen.
   b) To consent to accept apologies received - the meeting consented to accept the apologies submitted, aif.

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 of 17th September 2025 and inquorate meeting of 19th November 2025 -** approval of the minutes as an accurate record of the meetings that took place was given by all present, aif. The Chair signed the minutes in accordance with legislation.

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. **Clerks report – to receive and consider information from the Deputy Clerk and in particular:**
   a) Update on applications received for the tree warden position – to date only one expression of interest has been received which included concerns around the physical aspects of the role. General knowledge around the subject was good with no formal qualification and a preference for a more support role requested. Councillors were urged to continue to promote the role in the community.
   b) Update of Pride in Your Place grant – this has now been confirmed as successful and will enable the bird and bee box project to go ahead. It was noted that this and the Biodiversity Open Day would be progressed by the Biodiversity Open Day Working Group.
   c) It was noted that Ladygreen Woodland consisted of two distinct types of woodland which will dictate its uses. With a view to information gathering and familiarisation with similar projects, initial investigations have been made into Level 1 training options for the forest school ethos. It was noted that Suffolk Wildlife Trust and some local trainers hold these courses and available dates are being sought. An information seeking visit has also been

arranged to the Green Light Trust woodland.

7. Biodiversity Open Day Event –

a) To note the Biodiversity Open Day Working Group meeting scheduled for 23rd January 2026. The date was noted and membership from this committee noted as Cllrs. Allen, Morris, Bond, Gerrish and Hamel-Cooke.

b) To receive a report from Cllr. Bond on her attendance at the Sustainable Communities Action Day at Kesgrave – Cllr Bond reported on the input from various groups including Suffolk Wildlife Trust, LEAF, an environmental charity, Suffolk Tree Wardens and Blackburn Vision. It was noted that all these groups could be approached to attend the Biodiversity Open Day. Good takeaways from the day included; importance of residental gardens for biodiversity and climate change, running a successful enviromental charity hub for the community and best practice for engaging with the community through hard copy newsletters and notices as well as an online presence. It was agreed that the two known Black Poplars in Thurston should be added to the county data base being set up by the Suffolk Tree Warden. Himalayan Balsam was highlighted as an invasive plant that should be removed if found, it was confirmed that none was known of in the village and as a riverside plant it was unlikely to thrive here. The biodiversity workshop during the afternnoon included information and resources available through the Suffolk Tree Warden network which includes the register for recording our veteran tree survey, Norton Park nursery and their efforts to produce resistant Elm trees and testing of biodegradable tree guards. The recommendation to look at Gallowsfield Wood at Haughley and Greenerfram will be followed up.

c) To consider the provision of an information stand promoting the Biodiversity Action Plan – It was agreed that a stand with a blown up copy of the plan and information around the projects identified should be provided at the Open Day on 18th July. This would be an ideal place to highlight the parish councils work towards enhancing biodiversity in the village. This stand can be used to engage with residents, collate feedback and take offers of support and comments. A table, gazebo and display boards will be required and attendance on the day to run the stall.

8. 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 – The Deputy Clerk has started the compilation of the data collected so far. Councillors are asked to continue to record old and significant trees throughout the spring and summer, sending their completed forms to the deputy clerk to be added to the log. It is envisaged that once a tree warden is in post this project will be facilitated by them however in the meantime all councillors are encouraged to record what they can.

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 – The new briefer format invite was agreed and a date will be set for mid to end of April once the availability of the Biodiversity Manager at Babergh Mid Suffolk District Council could be confirmed and weather forecasts checked. 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 any spring planting of trees, hedging, wildflowers and bulbs – various locations were identified for bulb and wildflower planting and the availability from MSDC of free bulbs

and seeds was noted. It was confirmed that three trees had been planted on New Green to replace some recently felled for safety reasons. It was noted that the wildflower swathes and bulb planting areas agreed would be recommended to full council once any costings and planting schedule was confirmed.

d) To consider and review the Biodiversity Action Plan and identify future projects – it was agreed that current projects should take priority and these included the bird box project, veteran tree inventory, wildflower and bulb planting and a stand at the Open Day. It was agreed there were no updates to make at this time.
It was noted that discussions around encouraging residents to get involved in enhancing biodiversity in ther gardens highlighted the fact that many rental tenants are restricted in what they can do in their gardens with the majority having to regularly cut the grass. It was suggested that a template letter could be produced explaining the parish council approach for gardens that tenants could use if they wished to approach their landlords with alternative biodiversity benefits for their home.
Updating of the Biodiversity pages on the website is a priority. Added links to outside information, advertising by QR codes and regular features should be included. Updating and promoting the footpath maps and perhaps including additional circular walks with visuals was suggested. This improvement to the website should also coincide with regular articles in the newsletter, with councillors taking on an issue each perhaps, or a series of articles showing the changes to an area, suggestions included photos of Thurston Park Open Space taken over a year or the progress of the two Elms planted there, for instance. All councillors were encouraged to take photos whilst out and about to create a photo library that can be used in all promotional material going forward.
Resident correspondance suggesting various ways to engage the public and encouage them to enjoy the benefits of the local habitat was considered. Photo competitions run through the newsletter were thought to be an excellent idea however it was noted that the time commitment for a project such as this was not possible by officers at this time and would need to be public or councillor led. This would be added to the Biodiversity Action Plan as a community engagement project for the future when resources would allow.

9. Climate Awareness:

a) To note the resident uptake for the Thermal Imaging project and the collection date for the equipment – It was noted that only three expressions of interest had been received to date. The project will be promoted again in the February newsletter. Pick up of the equipment is schedueld for 4th March from Leiston. A decision will be required by mid February as to the minimum numbers needed to make the project viable.

10. Date of next meeting – 25th March 2026 tbc in the Thurston Community Library.

11. Close of meeting – there being no further business to transact the Chair closed the meeting at 7.25pm.