THURSTON PARISH COUNCIL – Environment and Biodiversity Committee

Minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Biodiversity Committee held on Wednesday 25th March 2026 at 6.00pm in the Community Library, Norton Road.

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

To elect a chair for the meeting – It was agreed that Cllr Peter Marsh take the chair for this meeting, aif.

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 Cllrs. S Gerrish, D Millest and P Smith.
   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 meeting of 21st January 2026 -** 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 – two expressions of interest had been received resulting in one invitation to discuss the role further.
   b) An update on the Biodiversity Open Day arrangements – It was noted that the arrangements were well under way with several activities planned to include the bird box project, a nature photography competition, a bioblitz treasure hunt and some local environmental groups expressing interest in joining the event. It was confirmed that the Biodiversity Action Plan information stand would be led by this committee and further consideration around how this could be used to engage with residents and collate feedback together with the format, layout and printing of information is required with a lead person to be identified.
   c) Update on the Thermal Imaging project - Thanks were extended to Cllrs West, Bond and Marsh for their efforts over three evenings to image thirteen properties. Feedback from

DRAFT

those residents who took up the offer of thermal imaging was very positive. It was suggested that more extensive advertising, with larger copy in the newsletter, should the project be repeated next year, could encourage more residents to take advantage of this free service.

d) Report from the visit to Lawshall Woodland – The information seeking visit to Lawshall's 20 acre community woodland revealed that the woodland management team is spearheaded by one or two people who give a large amount of time and expertise and organise monthly management groups which are very well attended, between 20 – 30 on a regular basis. The group have a close relationship with the primary school and their forest school programme. The pond area is fenced with vegetation encouraged, extensive bramble, palisade and wire fencing and signage encourages no access to this area. A willow maze is very popular and the rides are open with internal areas left dense to encourage visitors to use the paths. Information boards and signage are prevalent. They experience some issues with dogs off lead and difficulties in enforcement of this. Permission for memorial benches has now ceased, there are half a dozen or so in place and the group will resist any more. The group store their tools in a building at the Green Light Trust. They have erected a log store in the wood for drying coppiced timber they ready for sale.

   At a visit to Lukeswood, in Elmswell, approx. six acres, the volunteer group who manage the wood informed us that they were set up as a charity who purchased the land with a People's Millions grant and planted the woodland around 16 years ago. A second tranche of land was purchased later and houses an ancient species orchard. The volunteer group is made up of at least ten regular members with others joining on a more ad hoc basis. The core group meet weekly for management in the woodland and monthly to run the charity and plan. There is a large grassed area that encourages visitors to picnic and includes an open sided timber shelter, benches around a fire pit and picnic benches. They have a small grassed car park but encourage cycling and walking to visit the wood. The entrance gate for vehicles is locked whilst there is no work party. The group have a shipping container to store their tools. Only one historical memorial bench and no others allowed. Some information signage and a natural pond that is fenced and has little maintenance. The group are now starting to coppice.

e) It was noted that the Deputy Clerk and Cllr. Hamel-Cooke would undertake the Forest School taster day in September.

7. Biodiversity Policy and Action Plan –

a) To consider any Spring planting of trees, hedging, wildflowers and bulbs – It was noted that the "in the green" daffodil, snowdrop and aconite bulbs received from Mid Suffolk District Council had been planted at The Recreation Ground and New Green in the areas agreed. The wildflower seed was still awaited. It was agreed that the areas at Heath Road and New Green identified for no mow and wildflower seed enhancement should be marked off now that one cut had taken place. This will be communicated to the landscape contractor and done as soon as possible. It was noted that the planting schedule had begun with the bulbs due to the short window for survival of the plants once received from Mid Suffolk DC and the areas for no mow needed to be marked to prevent further cutting.

   Consideration of bulb planting at the village entrances was discussed with members keen to progress this aongside any village entrance gates project. It was noted that planting would

need to be during the Autumn for best results however it was acknowledged that further development along entrance roads would possibly take place and agreeing the siting of welcome gates may be difficult but the preference of members was not to delay this

b) To consider any updates to the biodiversity web pages including additional circular walks, a series of articles, regular newsletter reports and a photograph library – consideration and review of the existing website pages for biodiversity and climate awareness acknowledged that some of the photographs accompanying articles could benefit from an update however there were numerous informative and relevant pages with links to other sources and there are several walks mapped and written on the footpath pages. The agreement of members to take an issue of the newsletter each and submit a relevant biodiversity or climate article was further encouraged, these could then be rolled out on the website pages too. Cllr Hamel-Cooke will do the May one and Cllr Allen will take on the June issue. Further work will be done to create a Biodiversity Action Plan page which will feature the current projects and reflect progress and can then be duplicated for the stall at the Biodiversity Open Event.

8. Climate Awareness:

a) To consider any actions to raise awareness and actively engage the community to reduce carbon emissions – Discussion around planting for dry weather conditions and RHS recommendations for drought resistant trees took place. Further investigation into this subject would provide an article for the newsletter. Additional articles were discussed including the promotion of public transport and recycling and minimising waste. It was noted that all projects identified by the Biodiversity Action Plan should be aligned with the objectives and activities of the parish council's Climate Awareness and Environmental Policy and that a review of compliance with the policy should be undertaken.

9. Date of next meeting – 29th April 2026 6pm in the Thurston Community Library.

10. Close of meeting – there being no further business to transact the Chair closed the meeting at 7.24pm.