



Thurston Community Awards Proposal

Thurston Parish Council

Paper: Agenda item 11a

Reason: To receive and consider proposed Thurston Community Awards and determine approval of the scheme, budget, governance arrangements and associated working group

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Thurston Community Awards

Proposal

That Thurston Parish Council establishes an annual Thurston Community Awards programme to recognise individuals, volunteers, young people and community organisations that make an exceptional contribution to life in Thurston.

It is proposed that the inaugural awards take place in March 2027, with nominations invited from residents during January and February 2027.

The Council would establish a small Community Awards Working Group to develop and administer the scheme, oversee nominations and judging, and organise the inaugural awards ceremony.

Background and Rationale

Thurston benefits enormously from residents, volunteers, community groups and organisations who give their time to support others, improve the village and strengthen our community. Much of this contribution takes place quietly and without formal recognition.

Community award programmes are successfully operated by councils and community organisations elsewhere, including the Suffolk Community Awards. A Thurston-specific scheme would provide an opportunity to recognise people whose contribution may be significant within the village but might not otherwise receive wider recognition.

The awards would have a broader purpose than simply recognising individual achievement. Celebrating positive contributions can help encourage volunteering, strengthen community pride and highlight examples of residents supporting one another.

The awards would therefore aim to:

- celebrate people who make a positive difference to Thurston;
- recognise volunteers whose contribution can otherwise go unnoticed;
- encourage greater volunteering and community participation;
- provide positive role models, particularly for younger residents;
- increase awareness of local groups, organisations and activities;
- strengthen relationships between the Parish Council and the wider community; and

- promote community pride and a greater sense of belonging.

Proposed Award Categories

For the inaugural year, it is proposed that the awards consist of seven categories.

Community Hero Award

For an individual who has made an outstanding contribution to the village or to the lives of people in Thurston.

Young Community Hero Award

For a young person aged under 18 who has demonstrated exceptional kindness, initiative, volunteering or community spirit.

Volunteer of the Year

For someone who has made a significant contribution through volunteering with a local organisation, club, charity or community initiative.

Good Neighbour Award

For an individual who goes above and beyond to help neighbours or other residents.

Community Group of the Year

For a voluntary organisation, club, charity or informal group that has made a particularly positive contribution to Thurston.

Community Pride & Environment Award

For an individual or group helping to improve, protect or enhance Thurston's environment, public spaces or appearance.

Lifetime Contribution Award

For an individual who has made an exceptional contribution to Thurston over a significant period.

The *Community Awards Working Group* would be able to make minor amendments to the categories and eligibility criteria before nominations open.

Nominations

Nominations would be open to the whole community and free to submit.

Residents would be able to nominate through:

- an online nomination form;
- a paper nomination form available at suitable community locations; and
- assistance from the Parish Council where a resident is unable to complete either form independently.

The nomination form would ask residents to explain what the nominee has done, the impact of their contribution and why they believe the nominee deserves recognition.

Nominations would normally relate to activity undertaken during the previous 12 months, with the exception of the Lifetime Contribution Award.

Self-nominations would not normally be permitted for individual awards, although community organisations could nominate themselves for relevant organisational categories.

The Council should actively promote nominations across the village to ensure that the awards reach residents beyond those already engaged with the Parish Council.

Promotion could include:

- delivery or distribution of printed flyers;
- posters on community noticeboards and at local venues;
- the Parish Council website and social media;
- local community groups and organisations;
- schools and youth organisations;
- local businesses;
- community newsletters and publications; and
- appropriate paid or boosted social media advertising if considered beneficial.

Judging

A small Community Awards Working Group should be established to oversee the scheme.

It is suggested that this consists of approximately three Parish Councillors and, where appropriate, up to two independent community representatives.

The judging panel would assess nominations against criteria including:

- benefit to the Thurston community;

- commitment and contribution;
- positive impact on others;
- community spirit;
- evidence of going above and beyond what would ordinarily be expected; and
- where relevant, the sustainability or lasting impact of the nominee's contribution.

Judging should be based principally on the quality and impact of the nomination rather than the number of nominations received for an individual or organisation.

Any panel member with a personal, professional or organisational conflict of interest relating to a nominee would withdraw from consideration of that nomination.

The judging process and final decisions should be appropriately recorded to ensure transparency and fairness.

The Working Group could shortlist a small number of finalists in each category before selecting the eventual winner.

Awards Ceremony

It is proposed that shortlisted nominees, their guests and representatives of the local community be invited to an evening awards ceremony in Thurston.

The New Green Centre would be an appropriate venue to consider, subject to availability and confirmation of costs.

An event of approximately 60–90 minutes could include:

- a welcome from the Chair of Thurston Parish Council;
- an introduction explaining the purpose of the Community Awards;
- presentation of each award;
- a short citation explaining why each winner has been selected;
- photographs of winners and finalists;
- refreshments and a light buffet; and
- an opportunity for residents, community organisations and councillors to meet.

All shortlisted nominees should receive a certificate of recognition.

Category winners would receive an engraved trophy or award and, where appropriate, a modest prize or gift.

The venue could also be decorated with appropriate banners, table decorations, signage and other presentation materials to create an attractive and celebratory setting.

Consideration could be given to inviting a local community figure to present one or more awards, although the awards would remain a Thurston Parish Council initiative.

Indicative Budget

A maximum first-year budget of £2,500 is proposed.

This would allow the Council not only to hold the ceremony but also to promote the awards properly throughout Thurston and ensure that the inaugural event is presented to an appropriate standard.

These figures are indicative and would be subject to quotations and the Council's normal financial procedures.

Item	Indicative Cost
Venue Hire	£250
Light Buffet and Refreshments	£750
Seven Engraved Awards/Trophies	£350
Winner Prizes or Gifts	£250
Certificates and Presentation Folders	£75
Advertising, Printing and Promotional Materials	£300
Venue Decorations, Signage and Other Materials	£200
Photography/Miscellaneous Event Costs	£125
Contingency	£200
Maximum Indicative Budget	£2,500

The £2,500 allocation should be regarded as a maximum spending limit rather than a target, and the Working Group would be expected to achieve value for money wherever possible.

The advertising and promotional budget would allow the Council to reach residents across Thurston rather than relying solely on existing Parish Council communication channels.

The allocation for prizes would enable winners to receive a small additional gift alongside their trophy, subject to the Working Group agreeing suitable and proportionate arrangements.

The decoration and presentation budget would allow the venue to be appropriately dressed for the event, including banners, signage, table decorations and other materials.

Local businesses and organisations could also be invited to support the awards through sponsorship, donated prizes, refreshments or other contributions.

Any external support secured would reduce the net cost to the Parish Council, but the event would not be dependent upon sponsorship.

Care should be taken to ensure that any sponsorship arrangements remain appropriate for a Parish Council event and do not influence the judging process.

Financial and Governance Considerations

The proposed expenditure represents a relatively modest investment in community engagement and recognition, particularly where sufficient funds are available within the Council's budget or reserves.

Before expenditure is committed, the Clerk/RFO should confirm the appropriate statutory power under which the expenditure would be incurred.

All expenditure would remain subject to the Council's Financial Regulations and normal procurement and approval procedures.

The Working Group should operate within the budget approved by Council and provide updates where appropriate.

Any significant change to the nature of the scheme or any proposal to exceed the agreed budget would require further approval from Council.

Proposed Timetable

October 2026

Council considers the proposal and agrees whether to establish the awards.

October 2026

Community Awards Working Group established.

October–November 2026

Working Group confirms award categories, eligibility criteria, judging arrangements and event format.

November–December 2026

Venue provisionally booked, trophies and event requirements researched, and promotional material prepared.

January 2027

Nominations formally open and promotional campaign begins.

February 2027

Continued promotion of the awards across Thurston.

Mid-February 2027

Nominations close.

Late February 2027

Judging panel considers nominations and agrees finalists and winners.

Late February / early March 2027

Finalists contacted and invited to the ceremony. Event arrangements finalised.

March 2027

Inaugural Thurston Community Awards ceremony.

April 2027

Working Group reviews the inaugural scheme, including nominations received, attendance, expenditure and feedback, and reports back to Council with recommendations for the following year.

Measures of Success

Following the inaugural awards, the Council should consider:

- the number of nominations received;
- the range of people and organisations nominated;
- whether nominations came from across different parts of the community;
- attendance at the awards ceremony;
- feedback from nominees and residents;

- publicity and community engagement generated by the scheme;
- the final cost against the approved budget; and
- whether any changes should be made for future years.

This would allow the Council to determine whether the awards should continue annually and how the scheme could be improved.

Recommendation

Council is asked to:

1. Approve the establishment of the Thurston Community Awards as an annual Parish Council initiative;
2. Approve a maximum budget of £2,500 for the inaugural awards in 2026/27;
3. Establish a Community Awards Working Group to finalise the award categories, eligibility criteria, nomination process, judging arrangements and ceremony;
4. Delegate authority to the Working Group, in consultation with the Clerk/RFO, to make operational arrangements and incur expenditure within the agreed budget and in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations;
5. Authorise the Working Group to seek appropriate sponsorship, donated prizes and other external support where this can reduce the cost to the Council without compromising the independence of the awards;
6. Agree in principle that the inaugural Thurston Community Awards ceremony should take place in March 2027; and
7. Request that a review of the inaugural awards be brought back to Council following the event before arrangements are made for 2028.

Example leaflet/advert for local residents, note the QR code is live and links to a functioning nomination page, this can also be accessed here:

<https://forms.cloud.microsoft/r/VdQjDAvBCk>

— Presented by Thurston Parish Council —

Thurston Community Awards

*Celebrating the people who
make our village special*

★ AWARD CATEGORIES ★

-  Community Hero Award
-  Young Community Hero Award
-  Volunteer of the Year
-  Good Neighbour Award
-  Community Group of the Year
-  Community Pride & Environment Award
-  Lifetime Contribution Award



Nominate a local hero

Do you know someone who goes
above and beyond for Thurston?

We want to recognise the
volunteers, neighbours, young
people and community groups
who make a positive difference
in our village.

★ KEY DATES ★



Nominations open:
January 2027



Nominations close:
February 2027



Awards evening:
March 2027

Scan to nominate



Scan the QR
code to access
the nomination
form online.

forms.cloud.microsoft/r/VdQjDAvBCK

