

THURSTON PARISH COUNCIL – Open Space & Leisure Committee

Minutes of the meeting of the Open Space & Leisure Committee held on Wednesday 25th March 2026 at 7.30pm in the Community Library, Norton Road.

In attendance: Cllrs. B Rainbow (Chair), J Allen, Y Hamel-Cooke, P Marsh and B Morris.

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. **Apologies:**
 - a) To receive apologies for absence – verified apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. D Millest, M Moy 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 – no members of the public present.
 - b) On any other matters relating to recreational matters within the village of Thurston - no members of the public present
6. **To receive and consider matters relating to the Monthly Risk Assessments Reports:**
 - a) To receive updates on previous works highlighted in the Monthly Risk Assessments for action.
 - **Heath Road Play area:** General site rubbish highlighted to litter picker. Cracked swing seat, replacement to be installed. Seesaw pinch hazard, monitoring.
 - **Thedwastre Play Park Area:** Swing chain wear, replacement swings to be installed. Roundabout base lifting, Kompan to replace under warranty on 26.03.26. Gates, fencing and benches paint flaking and rust evident, repainting commenced.
 - **New Green Open Space:** Graffiti on Youth Shelter, repainting commenced.
 - **Recreation Ground Play Area:** Litter bin sharp edge on hole in the lid, monitoring. Climbing frame sharp edges on net fixings, filled with silicone, risk is now negated.
 - b) To consider matters on the Monthly Risk Assessment Reports for the following and agree

appropriate actions arising:

- **Heath Road Play Area:** General site has large holes being dug, these require filling to remove the trip hazard. Swing seat cracking, replacement swings in hand. Seesaw pinch hazard, aged equipment, no action required, monitor.
- **Thedwastre Play Area:** Roundabout base lifting, Kompan to replace under warranty on 26.03.26. Swing chains worn, replacement swings to be installed.
- **New Green Open Space:** Rotator, fixing missing from one of the suspensions on one of the arms. Annual inspector taped item off at time of inspection. This tape was removed. Officers reapplied the tape and signage, all subsequent efforts to tape this off as out of use have been removed. Spare parts and install ordered from Kompan. Efforts will be made to remove the arm completely.
- **Recreation Ground Play Area:** Grass areas wet and muddy, especially around the pavilion.

7. Clerks report –

- a) Update on bulb planting and maintenance of the wildlife garden – It was noted that the Environment & Biodiversity Committee had planted “in the green” daffodil, snowdrop and aconite bulbs received from Mid Suffolk District Council at The Recreation Ground and New Green. Areas at Heath Road and New Green have been identified for no mow and wildflower seed enhancement and these will be marked off now that one cut has been carried out by the landscape contractor.
- b) Update on the design competition for the renewal of dog control signage at public open spaces and playgrounds – Thurston Primary School children have submitted 27 entries. Following much discussion and a difficult decision a winner has been chosen. The design will be used on new signs for the play areas around the village. It was suggested that the designer of the winning entry should receive a printed copy of their winning design together with a letter of thanks and a certificate and have their design on the front page of the next newsletter.
- c) 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.

d) To note the playground inspector training booked – Cllrs Hamel-Cooke and Millest are booked onto the next available Playground Risk Inspection course and thanks were extended to them for giving a day to this training. It is hoped their feedback will benefit all.

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

8. **To receive an update from councillors on any visits undertaken to other local play facilities –** None to report. Cllrs were asked to continue to investigate other playgrounds and report back on any exceptional or unique designs seen. It was noted that the Deputy Clerk had visited Botesdale Play Park and her report and pictures were considered. It was acknowledged that this award winning play park had many attributes that would make a wish list for new equipment provision in Thurston.
9. **To receive an update on the installation of picnic benches at New Green and to review the placement of one bench –** It was noted that both benches had now been installed and feedback received that both were being used. Concerns expressed regarding excessive summer use of the benches and noise and disruption this may create close to residential properties were considered. It was confirmed that careful consideration around the placement of the new benches had been taken and they had been sited to maximise good sight lines to the playground, create a grouping for multi-use and provide some seating in the shade. It was agreed that whilst duly noting the concerns raised the bench under consideration would be monitored going forward for any signs of its position causing disruptive behavior issues.
10. **To consider and review 0-3 year goals for open space and leisure –** It was noted that updates and completion dates had been added to some items including the consultation survey. It was confirmed that a transfer offer on woodland was expected this year and woodland management plans would need to be reviewed to ensure an understanding of the expectations for this area. Discussion around community events confirmed the Biodiversity Open Day arrangements were progressing. Low interest in the previous Outdoor Theatre and High Street Safari was noted and these events would not be repeated. Suggestions for further events included a fun run and a possible outdoor amateur theatre production. It was noted that the provision of inclusive play equipment at The Recreation Ground was lacking and consideration would be given to the space available for providing this. Consideration was given to the additional recreation facilities highlighted in the PIIP and the Neighbourhood Development Plan with acknowledgement that the NDP was under review and the outcome of consultations as part of this review would establish current aspirations for leisure.
11. **Date of next meeting –** 29th April 2026 7.30pm in the Thurston Community Library.
12. **Close of meeting –** there being no further business to transact the Chair closed the meeting at 8.25pm.