Three Year Business plan 2025-2026

Thurston Parish Council

FOR REVIEW

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Thurston Parish Council Three Year Business Plan 2025 – 2028

Vision

Thurston Parish Council aims to provide a positive and reliable organisation to meet the needs of the parish through its commitment, its awareness of the needs of the parish and active communications within and for the parish.

It seeks to promote, maintain and improve a good quality of life by using the keen knowledge of the needs of groups and individuals within the parish and by making efficient and positive use of its income. It will also strive to be pro-active in the introduction of measures that will enable the community as a whole to live healthily and safely together.

What is Thurston Parish Council?

Thurston Parish Council is the first tier of local government closest to the community, with an important role to play in promoting the parish by representing its interests. Within its limited remit, it provides and monitors efficient services and amenities to meet local need, influences other decision makers and strives to improve the quality of parish life. The council represents the views of its community to improve or provide cost effective services and amenities. These can range from crime prevention measures, providing litter and dog bins, maintaining bus shelters and recreational facilities, to having the right to be notified of, and comment upon, planning applications.

Residents have the opportunity to elect 13 parish councillors every four years. The Council elects a Chair and a Vice-Chair annually in May. Councillors are unpaid and receive no allowance for their duties other than travel costs for duties beyond the parish. Details of all councillors can be found at the following website page: Details for all serving councillors on Thurston Parish Council

How the Parish Council operates

- The Parish Council will carry out its statutory duties as required by:
- Meeting 12 times per annum to deal with the business of the council and running these meetings within the Standing Orders of the council. *One of these meetings will be the Annual Council Meeting of the Parish Council at which the Chair for the coming year will be elected.* All full council meetings are open to the public with a period set aside for members of the public to address the council. The meetings take place in Thurston Community Library to allow good access and adequate meeting space.
- The council has its own Standing Orders and Financial Regulations, which lay down the rules by which it operates and conducts its business. Council's Standing Orders are based on a model prepared by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC).
- All Parish Councillors are expected to adhere to the Code of Conduct 2020 which will also apply to the council's committees. Working Groups upon which the parish council are represented are expected to work to terms of reference agreed in full council.

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- The council will facilitate the holding of an Annual Parish Meeting between 1st March and 1st June each year to review the activities of the previous year and give an opportunity for residents to raise issues of concern. If in attendance, the Chair of the parish council will preside over the meeting.
- The parish council aims to promote the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the parish and to contribute to a sustainable and inclusive community.
- Having been the 1st Parish/Town Council in Suffolk to achieve Quality Status in 2016, the Parish Council is working towards further development of the Council under the concept of the Local Council Awards Scheme and to achieve appropriate awards for the benefit of the parish of Thurston.

Business Plan Objectives

Parish benefit

To represent Thurston Parish and to improve the facilities and infrastructure for the parishioners within Thurston. This will be achieved by being a professional and competent parish council, which is open and accountable and ensures sound financial management of parish council resources.

Village administration

To ensure the ongoing administration of Thurston Parish and the facilitation of the parish council's activities. Be a good and fair employer by providing fulfilling work opportunities and conditions for staff. Continue to seek and improve established channels of communication and find new ways of engaging and communicating with the residents of Thurston.

Council development

To provide the Chair, Vice-Chair, councillors, the Parish Clerk, Deputy Clerk and staff with the education and knowledge to enable them to contribute to the advancement and improvement of Thurston Parish. To ensure councillors have the opportunity to keep abreast of new opportunities and policies. To improve council services to the public by encouraging members and staff to develop their skills through appropriate training.

Financial planning and control

To ensure the ongoing financial viability of the parish council and provide high quality, efficient, cost effective and sustainable services. To ensure the financial budget is monitored on a regular basis to ensure any anomalies are highlighted to the parish council for appropriate action. A financial report will be presented to the full council each month at its meeting.

Strategic planning / key projects

- To ensure Thurston Parish Council has a long-range plan for the future the following objectives will be included in the parish council's 3-year Business Plan.
- Ensure continued communication with County and District Councils to agree areas for devolved powers to the parish council to include road verge & hedgerow maintenance; weed control on pavements; edge maintenance or skirting of carriageway; cleaning of traffic signs and bollards.

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- Work with County and District Councils to ensure the maintenance of widely used but increasingly inaccessible public footpaths.
- Improvement of communication and engagement by the parish council, by introducing social media streams such as Facebook with a further presence on local media platforms. This, along with the introduction of further noticeboards sited around the village, will provide a more professional and inclusive approach by Thurston Parish Council to the community of Thurston.
- To continue to address concerns by residents on speeding and to continue to monitor the data from the Vehicle Activated Signs (VAS) that are situated on Barton Road and Beyton Road. Having the two machines, will enable the parish council to continually monitor both sites without having to transport the machine from one location to another.
- Share the data provided by the VAS machine, with Suffolk Highways and Suffolk Constabulary.
- With the introduction of new 30mph speed limits on Ixworth Road, Norton Road and an extension to that on Church Road, the Parish Council will also monitor these roads to ensure speed limits are adhered to.
- Investigate what steps can be taken to provide further traffic calming measures in appropriate areas.
- Monitor the Parish Infrastructure Investment Plan (PIIP) to allow appropriate infrastructure to be provided within the village once the funding stream under the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) becomes available.
- Ensure that the PIIP is reviewed on a regular basis to ensure compliance with the CIL regulations and is of relevance to the parish.
- Ensure that the CIL income is spent on projects that have been identified as providing, improving, replacing, operating or maintaining infrastructure that supports the development of the parish council's area or anything else concerned with addressing the demands that development places on the area. Input to the discussions regarding infrastructure required within the village will also be received from Council's Committees.

Communication and Engagement

To provide a channel of communication for the views and expressions of the local community and to be responsive to it needs and aspirations**.** The council will ensure that the Parish Clerk and Deputy Clerk receive the relevant training on all aspects of communication. This will ensure the communication/engagement to residents is improved, whilst providing reports on the parish council in a professional manner.

Thurston Parish Council committees and groups

The Recreation Ground Management Trust Committee

Thurston Parish Council is the sole trustee of the Thurston Recreation Ground Charity. The Committee has been established to formally manage the recreation ground, car park and sports pavilion on Church Road. The Parish Council is the sole trustee of the Charity. The

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committee will keep under review the provision of the sports and recreational facilities for the residents of Thurston at the Recreation Ground on Church Road.

The Policy and Resources Committee

This has been established to propose the budget each year and to monitor the routine expenditure and investments. This committee has delegated powers for managing, maintaining and improving the performance of the statutory powers and the functions and related work of the parish council which includes, ensuring the Quality Council certification requirements is of a satisfactory standard and for ensuring the Parish Council acts in a manner appropriate to this certification.

The Emergency Plan Committee

This group is responsible for ensuring the Thurston Emergency Plan is maintained and relevant on a yearly basis. The committee is responsible for producing a directory to assist in the parish in case of an emergency. Summarized versions along with relevant website links will be added to the Parish website.

The Planning and Infrastructure Committee

The Parish Council is a statutory consultee in the Mid Suffolk Planning process. All planning applications within the Parish of Thurston are examined and commented on by this group on behalf of Thurston Parish Council. The Planning committee has been granted full-delegated powers to make Council decision regarding responses to the appropriate authorities. The Committee will also oversee the work of the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group for policy compliance with the Thurston Neighbourhood Development Plan and will monitor reasons for departing from policies, the effectiveness of the Neighbourhood Development Plan as well as matters not addressed by policy.

The Open Space and Leisure Committee

This is the committee with the responsibility for the provision, maintenance and future development of open spaces owned, leased or managed by the council. The committee is also responsible for sporting, leisure and recreational facilities provided by the council, and for making recommendations for new and improved services and provision. The Committee will also proactively support the development of events on open spaces and identify opportunities for improvement and will review and recommend byelaws for the parish council's recreational, leisure and sports facilities.

Environment and Biodiversity Committee

This has been established to ensure that the council has an active input into the preservation and enhancement of the local environment and interest of the local community. The Parish Council has adopted a Climate Awareness and Environmental Policy which commits the Parish Council to embedding green awareness in its policy and organisational development. Central to this is the need to raise awareness of the climate crisis within the community and to encourage groups to come together to take action in achieving the Suffolk County Council target of being carbon neutral by 2030.

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Individual members of the Thurston Parish Council are also represented in the management of several village and County organisations. These include the Suffolk Association of Local Councils, The Cavendish Hall Management Committee; New Green Community Trust; Friends of Thurston Library Committee and nominate persons to sit on the Thurston Relief in Need Charity. Other Council members are responsible for single issues including public footpaths and trees and hedgerows.

Business plan objectives

Parish Benefit

Action	Measure
Ensure continuing engagement with other Thurston village groups	Councillors to be involved at a management level with key village groups.
Manage/monitor Village Website	Update as required.
Ensure continuous communication and engagement with residents	Regular monthly surgeries and public meetings throughout the year. Introduction of a Facebook Account. Ensure Village Website as operated by the Parish Council is up to date at all times.
Donations to parish organisations	Donations considered on request.
Ensure engagement with all age-groups within the village	Establish a youth council to allow young persons under the age of 18 to engage with the decision-making process of local councils

Village administration

Action	Measure
Functional Council Meetings in place	Hold 12 meetings per year and an Annual Parish Meeting
Council transparency to the Parish	Public sessions are available in all meetings, meeting minutes available on the village website and from the Parish Council office.
Ensure all actions from the Parish Council meeting are completed	Completion is monitored at each meeting.
Ensure meeting statutory obligations	Annual Parish Meeting held along with 4 other Council Meetings throughout the year.
Liaison with Suffolk County and Mid Suffolk District Councils	County and District Councillors attend monthly Council meetings and give reports and answer questions.
Liaison with Stowmarket Community Policing Team (CPT).	Ensure that the council has a regular activity report from the parish funded PCSO. Act as a liaison point between the public and the CPT.

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Council development

Action	Measure
Ensure Parish Council Clerk has the relevant qualifications	The Parish Council Clerk must have at least the training listed as Quality Council requirements.
Ensure Parish Deputy Clerk has the opportunity to obtain relevant qualifications	The Deputy Clerk must have at least the training qualifications to obtain the Certificate in Local Council Administration.
Ensure all Councillors have received Basic Training as standard	Ensure all Councillors receive an individual training record. This will be provided to Councillors each year. As a minimum all new councillors should attend Councillor Training with Suffolk Association of Local Councils (SALC). All members of the Planning Committee shall attend a Training Course on Planning provided by either the local authority or (SALC).
Maintain compliance to ensure retention of Local Council Award Scheme Quality Level at renewal stage	Ensure compliance with the latest requirements of the Local Council Award Scheme "Quality" to enable retention of Quality Status. Once achieved, to be monitored to ensure compliance and to aim to work towards the Gold Award.
Maintain links with SALC to ensure the Council has the best advice	Ensure representative attends SALC Area Meetings.
Provide Councillors with the education and knowledge to enable them to contribute to the advancement and improvement of Thurston Parish Council	Provide all Councillors with information packs to ensure compliance with statutory instruments and financial regulations. Provide the opportunity for Councillors to request individual training requirements as necessary.

Financial planning and control

Action	Measure
Set and monitor annual operational budget	Budget to be set to inform precept requirement for following year. Annual precept form to be submitted to MSDC by the deadline. Actual to budget monitoring reports to be presented to full Council Meetings on a quarterly basis in accordance with Council's own Standing Orders.
Perform internal quarterly audits	The Parish Councils Internal Control Officer will provide an audit report detailing actions to be completed by next internal audit.

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Ensure internal audit is procured by the Council	Ensure all matters arising from internal audit are actioned in a timely and appropriate manner.
Ensure external audit submitted by the deadline	Ensure all external audit actions are completed.
Develop investment strategy and monitor investments	Most appropriate returns on funds invested to be reviewed at Policy & Resources Committee Meetings.

Strategic planning

Action	**Measure**
Ensure continuing engagement with SCC and MSDC	SCC and MSDC Councillor attendance and input at Parish Council meetings.
Ensure the Parish Council continues to respond to all planning applications as a statutory consultee	Planning Committee has full delegated powers to respond on all matters concerning planning for Thurston. The NPSG will provide additional commentary to this process where appropriate.
Ensure the adopted Thurston Neighbourhood Development Plan (October 2019) remains relevant and provides policies that are in general conformity with local and national planning policies.	Ensure reviewed on a regular basis and that all planning applications for Thurston demonstrate conformity with the vision and policies as laid out within the development plan
Review of the adopted Thurston Neighbourhood Development Plan (Autumn 2025)	Increased growth has highlighted a greater awareness and understanding of the infrastructure problems in the village. Plan will need to be reviewed to ensure compliant with changes in legislation.
Ensure succession planning for Chair & Vice Chair	Ensure Vice Chair is encouraged to lead meetings throughout the year.
Ensure support for Chairs of relevant Committees	Ensure all Chairs are able to access Leadership Training if required.
Update 3-year Business Plan	To be reviewed annually in November prior to budget setting - see Strategic Planning and Key Objectives above.

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Appendix 1 Thurston Parish Council – summary of accounts for 2024-2025

	Parish Council Account	**Parish Council Account**	**Recreation Ground Account**	**Recreation Ground Account**
	2024	**2025**	**2024**	**2025**

Opening balance	213,467	190,865	2,093	2,820
Plus receipts	299,608	298,473	7,286	12,992
Less payments	322,210	302,044	6,559	11,366
Closing balance	190,865	187,294	2,820	4,446

Appendix 2 Thurston Parish Council summary of annual budget for 2025 – 2026 excludes CIL projects funded outside of the budget

CATEGORY	BUDGET 2023-24	ACTUAL 2023-24	BUDGET 2024-25	ACTUAL 2024-25	BUDGET 2025-2026
EXPENDITURE					
STAFF COSTS	85,234	67,581	97,160	96,621	103,770
STREET LIGHTING	4,500	5,383	6,250	4,366	6,000
COUNCIL SERVICES	26,835	59,507	48,430	48,629	67,437
ADMINISTRATION	37,626	37,405	30,465	18,789	31,630
HEATH ROAD	3,055	1,205	3,055	2,186	3,055
CIL FUNDING AGRREMENTS	61,000	46,095	61,000	67,980	42,700
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	**218,250**	**217,176**	**246,360**	**238,571**	**254,592**
INCOME					
PRECEPT	152,920	152,920	177,360	177,360	201,497
GRANTS	4,330	34,358	5,000	8,159	4,175
CIL MONIES	61,000	0	61,000	61,000	44,920
MISCELLANEOUS	0	3,973	3,000	7,452	3,000
REFUSE / RECYCLING	0	2,753	0	3,143	1,000
TOTAL INCOME	**218,250**	**194,004**	**246,360**	**257,114**	**254,592**

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Appendix 3 Areas of active involvement for 2025-2028

This Business Plan is to be reviewed annually in November prior to budget setting for the coming year. The areas of active involvement will relate to the budget which is set in December of each year and finalised the following January. This will also include projected expenditure for the forthcoming year as well as regular items of expenditure to ensure the smooth running of the Parish Council. Some of the projects and matters coming forth have arisen from engagement during the development of the Thurston NDP; Parish Council meetings; Annual Parish Meeting and visits to the Parish Council Office.

The Parish Council will continue to monitor the areas of active involvement for 2025 through to 2028 and will add any new matters as required during the year. As some of the areas covered in the Business Plan are ongoing and will cover more than one financial year, the Parish Council will review the Business Plan on an annual basis thereby ensuring that it is updated regularly and that any further appropriate actions identified during the six-monthly period are included or, where appropriate, are signed off as having been completed actions.

For full details of the issues raised in prior years along with consultative work carried out please refer to prior year's business plans which can be found on the website or in the Parish Council Offices.

Strategic risk register 2025 – 2028

The Council's strategic priorities are delivered through two complementary frameworks: a strategic risk register and a community engagement register.

The strategic risk register identifies areas where resources are allocated to manage risk, ensure compliance, safeguard community assets and support the effective delivery of council services.

The community engagement register identifies areas where resources are allocated to support community wellbeing, improve communication and deliver local priorities identified through consultation and engagement.

Together, these registers demonstrate how the Council manages risk whilst investing in services, facilities and initiatives that benefit the community.

Both registers will be reviewed annually by the Policy and Resources Committee as part of the Council's business planning and budget-setting process and may be updated during the year where new risks, priorities or opportunities are identified.

Strategic risk register 2025-2028

The Council manages these risks through regular committee oversight, policy reviews, internal controls, staff training, contractor inspections, partnership working with Suffolk County Council, Mid Suffolk District Council, Suffolk Constabulary and other stakeholders.

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Ref	Risk Area	Risk	Risk rating	Budget allocation 26-27	Review
R1	Community safety	Reduction in visible policing and community safety provision	High	£60,000	Six monthly
R2	Road safety	Vehicle speeds causing risks to residents and road users	Very high	£500	Quarterly
R3	Flooding and emergency planning	Local flooding and emergency incidents impacting residents	High	£3,000	Quarterly
R4	Asset and playground safety	Injury or liability arising from failure of play equipment and public assets	High	£6,960	Quarterly
R5	Planning and development	Unsustainable development impacting village infrastructure, biodiversity and character	Very high	Part of staffing budget	Monthly
R6	Strategic planning documents	NDP and PIIP becoming outdated	High		Annual
R7	Governance and legal compliance	Failure to comply with statutory obligations and procedures	Medium	Part of staffing budget	Annual
R8	Financial controls	Financial error, fraud or audit failure	Medium	Part of staffing budget	Quarterly
R9	Employment and health and safety	Failure to meet employment law or health & safety obligations	High	Part of staffing budget	Annual
R10	Land and trust management	Failure to properly manage council land, trusts and open spaces	High	£15,000	Quarterly
R11	Community resilience	Failure of emergency equipment and systems	Medium	£995	Monthly
R12	Village maintenance	Deterioration of public spaces leading to safety and reputational issues	Medium	£10,000 & Cleansing Grant from Mid Suffolk	Quarterly

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Rating definitions

Rating	Definition
Very high	Significant strategic risk requiring ongoing monitoring and active mitigation
High	Significant risk requiring regular review and management
Medium	Managed through routine controls and periodic review
Low	Managed through existing procedures and standard controls

Community engagement register 2025-2028

The Parish Council actively engages with residents and stakeholders to support community wellbeing, improve communication, enhance local facilities and ensure that local priorities continue to inform decision-making. The following areas of engagement are subject to regular review as part of the Council's business plan and budget-setting process.

Ref	Engagement area	Objective	Budget allocation	Review
E1	Library support	Maintain enhanced library services and support community access to facilities	£2,700	Annual
E2	Parish council website	Ensure transparency and provide residents with access to current council information	£2,000	Monthly
E3	Village newsletter	Promote communication and awareness of village activities, services and local issues	CIL funding	Annual
E4	Community engagement surgeries	Provide opportunities for direct engagement between residents, councillors and partner organisations	Part of staffing budget	Quarterly
E5	Community policing engagement	Maintain public awareness of policing activity and local community safety issues	Part of Community Staffing budget	Monthly
E6	Neighbourhood development plan review	Undertake periodic reviews of the Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) and Parish Infrastructure Investment Plan (PIIP) to ensure they continue to reflect community priorities and infrastructure needs	CIL funding	Annual

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E7	Parish infrastructure investment plan review	Identify and prioritise infrastructure improvements arising from growth and development	Part of staffing budget	Annual
E8	Emergency preparedness communications	Provide residents with information and support during emergencies and severe weather events	Part of staffing budget	Quarterly
E9	Community health and wellbeing	Support community resilience through maintenance of publicly accessible defibrillators	£995	Annual
E10	Biodiversity and environmental enhancement	Enhance and maintain wildlife and biodiversity areas for community benefit	CIL funding	Annual
E11	Village ranger programme	Improve the appearance, maintenance and accessibility of community spaces	£10,000	Quarterly
E12	Planning consultation and representation	Ensure community views are represented in planning consultations affecting Thurston	Part of staffing budget	Monthly

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