

THURSTON PARISH COUNCIL

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Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Thursday 27th March 2025 in the Cavendish Hall, Church Road, Thurston

Prepared by the Deputy Clerk to the Parish Council.

The Chair of the Parish Council, Councillor (Cllr). Christopher Dashper, took the Chair for the Meeting.

In Attendance: Penny Otton, County Councillor Thedwastre South Division; Harry Richardson, District Councillor, Thurston Ward; Cllr. Bryan Rainbow, Chair of the Recreation Ground Trust Management Committee; Cllr. Barbara Morris, Thurston Footpath Warden; Paul Wade, Chair of the New Green Trust; Richard Fawcett, Chair of the Friends of Thurston Library; PCSO Matt Brown; Keith Towers, Chair of Thurston In Relief Charity; Vicky Pryke, Chair of Cavendish Hall Management Committee and President of WI; Melanie Johnson, Group Scout Leader, 1st Thurston Scouts and eighteen members of the public.

- Opening and Welcome by the Chairman of the Parish Council** - the meeting was declared open at 7.30pm and all were thanked for attending.
A statement was read out indicating that, in accordance with legislation, the public and councillors were permitted to film, record, photograph or use social media to report on the proceedings of the meeting.
A full transcript is available from the Clerk
- To receive apologies for absence** - Maeve Taylor, Principal, Thurston Community College Rev'd. Ben Edwards; John Bayes, Headteacher, Thurston Primary School; Sgt. Jamie White from Stowmarket Community Policing Team; Lucy Robison-Smith, Parish Tree Warden; Ellie Longman, Library Manager, Thurston Community Library; Graham Balaam, Philip Smith, Vicky Waples and Jeanette Service.
- To confirm the minutes of the APM of 18th April 2024** - having been previously uploaded onto the website, these were approved by the meeting and signed by the Chair of the meeting, Chair of the Parish Council, Cllr. C Dashper.
- To receive a report from the Stowmarket Community Policing Team** - PCSO Brown was invited to submit the report in which he drew the meetings attention to the following:
(a full copy of the report can be seen at Appendix A starting at Page 17 of these minutes)
- Crime figures have risen slightly on the similar period last year however this relates to the higher population numbers. The two Arson crime statistics relate to targeted addresses and are not linked to anyone else in the area. Across Mid Suffolk there has been a general rise in Burglary statistics, but this is not reflected in Thurston. The statistics for Sexual

Offences include a number of historical reports. Take to distribute indecent photographs is no longer recorded under Sexual Offences but as Miscellaneous Crime against Society. PCSO Matt Brown reminded the meeting that he is available at the parish council office on Wednesdays between 11.00 and 12.30 for residents to drop in and discuss any concerns or issues privately in person. PCSO Matt Brown was complimented on his visibility in the village and the good job he carries out.

5. **To receive a report from the Chairman of the Parish Council Christopher Dashper** - the Chairman of the Parish Council delivered his report which is as follows: Good evening and welcome to the 2025 Thurston Annual Parish Meeting and the Chairman's report.

The Parish Council continues to work hard to support the community of Thurston. The growth of the community as a result of recent development, coupled with the divestment of responsibility for many local services by other tiers of local government, continues to occupy a considerable amount of the available time and resources of the council. Planning matters remain one of the most significant aspects of the work of the council but also meeting the leisure and recreational needs of the community, including the provision and maintenance of public space and equipment, supporting local groups and services and liaising with other organisations such as the district and county councils regarding highways and other public services including infrastructure and transport.

Moving on into the main body of the report, this is always my opportunity for a number of important thankyou's.

A thank you first to all the members of the council who have committed their time and energy to the parish this year.

Since my last report, councillor Tracey Welham has left the council, while Peter Marsh, David Millest, Jeanette Allen and Yvonne Hamel-Cooke have joined.

My thanks to Vice Chairman Brian Rainbow and to all the councillors, including Barbara Morris, Julian West, Graham Balaam, Liz Bond, Michael Moy, Stephen Gerrish and Philip Smith for serving as members of the Council and its Committees. I am delighted to be able to report that we have a full council of 13 Councillors, for the first time in some while.

Also, thanks to Steve, our litter picker for maintaining the public areas and to Matt Brown, our Police Community Support Officer for the policing and safeguarding support for local residents.

Thanks also to our Suffolk County Councillor, Penny Otton and Mid Suffolk Councillors David Bradbury and Harry Richardson for their support on county and district issues including road infrastructure and planning.

And, as ever, thanks to our Clerk Vicky and to Paula, our Deputy Clerk for continuing to manage the ever-growing and diverse range of subjects the council is involved with. As the village expands and the council becomes responsible for more aspects of everyday life, our team continue to maintain their high standards of excellence in financial management, planning and community and stakeholder engagement. In every way, the council continues to exceed expected standards and to set the benchmark for others.

In planning and development matters, the community continues to grow as the current developments in the village build out and the houses are occupied. The Matthews Homes site on Norton Road is now underway, having received initial planning approval in 2017. Also now under construction are the Bloor site on Beyton Road and the additional Persimmon development, Hakewill Mews on Ixworth Road. Planning has also now been approved for 210 homes on the site opposite the existing College Park development, also on Ixworth Road.

Whilst under construction these developments do have a detrimental impact on existing residents, particularly through road closures, vehicle traffic, noise and mess. The Parish Council has worked hard to develop relationships with the developers to manage these

issues and to encourage a collaborative approach to the provision of play areas, landscaping and tree planting.

As set out in the Neighbourhood Plan the objective is to ensure that the village has a good range of services, complimentary and attractive and accessible to all and offering a range of opportunities for all residents.

One issue highlighted in the Neighbourhood Plan was the availability of supported housing for older residents, and in June the new Michaelmas Court development will open on Heath Road, offering independent living with on site care in 40 apartments and 14 bungalows.

We continue to be aware of concerns around the provision of essential infrastructure within the village, much of which was linked to Section 106 agreements with the original 5 large planning applications approved in 2017. Many of these improvements are scheduled to be delivered upon completion of the sites, but the council continues to press for the early completion of measures including vital safety crossings, particularly those adjacent to the Community College. We have in particular raised concerns around improvements which have been scheduled and then deferred due to other planning approvals.

We are pleased to be able to support local organisations each year with small grants so that they can provide services to support our residents. Organisations supported over the last year include Suffolk Accident and Rescue Service £500; Tiny Toes Toddler Group £280; West Suffolk Citizens Advice Bureau £500; St Edmundsbury Newstalk £500; 2nd Thurston Brownies £1,000; Mid Suffolk Citizens Advice Bureau £500; Headway Suffolk £500 and Mid Suffolk Croquet Club £500. Organisations within the village who provide services to local residents, can apply for a grant using a simple application form available from the Clerk and the request will then be considered by the Parish Council. Requests for grant support from organisations based outside the village including regional groups may be considered where there is or has been a recognisable benefit to Thurston.

We have also continued to deploy our Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding, supporting several community focussed projects in the village over the last year. These have included funding for our Police Community Support Officer, replacement entrance doors at the New Green Centre, bins, seats and street furniture throughout the village and works at the library and Cavendish Hall. For 2025/26 works including improvements to the Recreation Ground pavilion are planned. Full details of the use of CIL funds can be found on the parish website and a report was included in the April edition of the village newsletter. Thurston Parish Council has a number of responsibilities many of which have a financial implication, including maintaining the village sports, recreational and play facilities and equipment, some street lighting and general village maintenance and litter clearance. The combined cost of these services along with the core running costs of the parish council is supported by the annual precept, funded by the Council Tax paid by each household. For 2025/26 the Parish Council has agreed a small rise in the precept of £7.89 per annum or 15 pence per week for a Band D Property. This increase will support the continued investment in local services and the accompanying administration and will help to offset inflationary rises in goods and services. From April, in addition to the existing services, the village will benefit from the addition of a Village Ranger, a new post funded through the Parish Council to provide maintenance, repair and grounds keeping services, helping to keep the village safe and well cared for.

Our monthly Parish Council meeting is held on the first Wednesday of every month at the library. Anyone can attend the Parish Council meetings and raise an issue or an area of concern in public forum. The public are also invited to attend our other committee meetings, all of which are held at the library. The dates of all these meetings are advertised on the notice boards around the village and on the Thurston website. All papers including those relating to finance are uploaded to the website for perusal by Councillors and members of the public ahead of all meetings.

6. **To receive a report from County Councillor Penny Otton, Thedwastre South Division** – County Councillor Penny Otton was invited to submit her report which is repeated as follows: Suffolk’s Library Service - At Cabinet on 18th March 2025, the council administration voted to bring Suffolk’s libraries back in-house at the end of the current contract for the library on 31 May. Suffolk Libraries, who have held the contract since the service was divested in 2012, were the only bidder for the contract, but negotiations broke down. The proposal to do this was passionately opposed not just by Suffolk Libraries, but also Suffolk residents including Friends of Thurston library and myself and the many volunteers and Friends groups who work for and raise money for libraries in their communities. Richard Fawcett was amazingly helpful in highlighting many of the discrepancies between SCC and Suffolk libraries. My group have now asked for the decision to be examined at the scrutiny meeting 29th April.

Devolution and Local Government Reorganization - Since the publication of the government’s White Paper in December, Suffolk councils have been scrambling to develop their proposals for reorganizing local government. Under the new system, Norfolk and Suffolk will have a joint mayor (with elections held in May 2026) leading a mayoral authority replaced by unitary councils – single councils that undertake all local services like education, adult care, waste collection, housing and highways. Suffolk County Council’s for Suffolk, and they ratified this decision by voting for it in the council chamber on 13 March and at Cabinet on 18 March. Opposition councillors, like my group and the Labour group, are less convinced that one massive council would bring decision-making closer to the communities, which is what devolution is supposed to enable. Councils have to submit interim plans to the government by 21 March, then detailed proposals in September, with a decision from government by the end of the year on what will happen. It is likely that councillors for the new council/s would be elected by Suffolk residents in May 2027, a year after the mayoral elections.

Motions- My group passed three successful motions at council over the year:

1. In May 2024, we proposed that the council lobby the government for proper, long-term funding for local councils and support policies to address the long-term funding of adult social care. Suffolk County Council is predicting a ‘budget gap’ of £33.1m for 2026-27
2. In July 2024, my group tabled a motion that the council would do everything it could to avoid delays with local infrastructure funded by developer contributions. We were aware that a lot of local projects that are due to be paid for by developers are very overdue, in some cases for years – for example, new pedestrian crossings for roads where there is new housing. Sometimes these works are due to be undertaken by the developer and the delay is caused by them, but our motion acknowledged that the design and programming of works by Suffolk County Council was also often delayed. I named Thurston as a prime example!!
3. In December 2024, my group successfully proposed a policy for the council of ‘Roofs before Rural’ regarding solar panels. The motion noted that the new Labour government was proposing to triple the amount of solar power in the UK by 2030 and set out the council’s position that rooftop solar was preferable to ‘solar farms’ which are becoming an increasing sight across the county. The council agreed to write to the government to seek assurances Suffolk’s best quality agricultural land would be protected.

My group also proposed the following motions which were voted down by the Conservative administration at council:

In October 2024, my group tabled a motion to revise the Highways Maintenance Operating Procedure so that repairs to footways and pavements would be prioritized in areas with heavy footfall, or where a recent fall had been reported. The Conservatives rejected this motion.

State of Suffolk’s Roads - In July 2024, a report was brought to Scrutiny Committee which looked into the condition of Suffolk’s roads, the amount spent by the council to repair them and how repair works were prioritised. Works are prioritised by the council’s Highway

Maintenance Operational Plan, which sets out the parameters for repair work and the order of priority repairs. Unsurprisingly, main roads and roads which have a lot of traffic are prioritised over quieter roads which do not. The result of the damage to the roads by work on the A14 didn't help and despite promising National Highways did not recompense SCC. Thurston Rail Crossing - I cannot politely express my frustration that still we do not have a decision to go forward with this despite constantly asking what's going on.

Road works in Thurston - I cannot tell you how many times I and parish council have had to contact SCC highways, Mid Suffolk planners and developers and contractors about the numerous road works done or more importantly not done. Ixworth road for example.

Thurston Community College - I'm sure Maeve will speak at length on this but be assured I have kept in touch to make sure the DFE is still working on the plans. SCC gave the permission for the new 60 parking spaces.

Council Budget 2025-26 - In February 2025, the council voted to adopt its proposed budget for the 2025-26 financial year. This included approving a maximum rise in council tax this year of 4.99%, including the 2% social care precept for adult care. Cost pressures for the council include care purchasing for adult social care, Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and placements for children in care. 26, the debt will cause a £6.8m cost pressure for the council. The rising DSG debt is mostly for council services for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

Improving Services for Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND) - Following the poor Ofsted/CQC inspection report published in January last year, the council has been trying to improve SEND services. In May last year they produced and submitted a SEND Strategy, and in June they produced a Priority Action Plan for improvement, including extra funding of £4.4m to recruit more staff, including Educational Psychologists.

Update on Flooding - Following the Storm Babet flooding in October 2023, the council announced it was investing an extra £1m in investigating the causes of flooding and taking action to prevent further floods. As the lead local flood authority, the council undertakes investigations into flooding in the county regularly, but the level of flooding in autumn 2023 meant that far more investigations would need to be made than in other years. A year later, in November 2024, the council announced it would be allocating a further £1.5m from its reserves to deal with recommendations made in the 10 investigation reports published so far. I would like to congratulate those parishes that have done and paid for their own investigations and repair work.

My Locality Budget - I have been able to help with the cost of new chairs here at Cavendish Hall.

Warm Homes in Suffolk

- For the Suffolk Loft Insulation Offers, residents should visit <https://highloft.co.uk/pages/suffolk-council-200-loft-insulation-contribution> and fill in the form to receive a discount code
- For the interest free loan scheme, homeowners can check to see if their property has an existing Energy Certificate with an EPC band and record of their property size at gov.uk/find-energy-certificate. They can apply for the vouchers by visiting suffolkenergyassessment.co.uk. This scheme started in November and vouchers are being distributed on a first-come, first-served basis.

Cllr Penny Otton confirmed that her groups Scrutiny Call in for the Library Services scheduled for 29th April has been declined by the Monitoring Officer.

Questions raised by the meeting:

- Under possible reorganisation what will happen to parish councils? Parish and Town Councils will remain and there is a degree of consultation planned which will be communicated through SALC. There are concerns that Parish and Town Councils will be expected to pick up additional services.
- What can be done to alleviate the disruption caused by multiple road closures? Cllr Otton stated that she is totally sympathetic to the issues and will continue to work with the parish clerk to ensure that Highways and contractors are made aware of

any issues, there is a constant liaison process to feedback any issues and seek solutions. SCC Highways coordinate the road closures however unforeseen issues such as the gas leak can cause additional burden. Unfortunately there is no compensation scheme for the disruption and additional time it takes to traverse the village.

7. **To receive a report from District Councillors David Bradbury and Harry Richardson** – District Councillor Harry Richardson was invited to submit his report which is repeated as follows:

I would like to reintroduce myself as I have the distinction of being your old, new and last District Councillor.

Devolution and Local Government Reform - in February 2025, Suffolk was confirmed as one of the areas selected for the government's Devolution Priority Programme. As a result, the 2025 County Council elections have been postponed until May 2026, aligning with the election for a new 'Mayor of Norfolk and Suffolk.' According to the government's proposed timeline, the District and Borough Council elections planned for May 2027 will be replaced by elections for a 'shadow unitary authority.' The County Council and District/Borough Councils are set to be dissolved in April 2028, replaced by the new Unitary Authority. The shadow unitary councillors elected in May 2027 will then transition to full Unitary Councillors. The County Council has expressed its support for a single, Suffolk-wide authority. Meanwhile, the District and Borough Councils have suggested alternative models: one with two authorities (East and West), or one with three authorities (East, West, and 'Greater Ipswich'). Under the two-authority model, West Suffolk, Mid Suffolk, and Babergh would form 'West Suffolk,' while East Suffolk and Ipswich would form 'East Suffolk.'

In the three-authority model, 'Greater Ipswich' would encompass the areas surrounding Ipswich, including parts of Babergh (e.g., Sproughton and Pinewood), Mid Suffolk (Claydon, Barham, etc.), and East Suffolk (Rushmere, Kesgrave, and Felixstowe). The fate of the remaining areas is still under discussion, but combining West Suffolk and Babergh, as well as Mid Suffolk and East Suffolk, into the two remaining authorities is actively being considered. The initial plans were submitted on 21st March 2025, and the government will provide feedback (though the format of this feedback is unclear) before final plans are due by 26th September 2025. The government will then make its final decision. The government has indicated that new unitary authorities should have a population between 500,000 and one million. With a population of around 760,000, a single, Suffolk-wide authority would be the only option to fulfil the government's criteria, although they have said that exceptions may be made in special cases. Furthermore, the government expects the existing Districts and Boroughs to serve as the foundational units for any new authority, which could undermine the feasibility of a three-authority model that would require significant division of existing Districts.

Budget 2025/26 - on 27th February 2025, Mid Suffolk District Council approved its budget for the 2025/26 fiscal year. This budget freezes Council Tax and all current fees and charges for the year, while continuing a significant capital investment programme aimed at Stowmarket. This includes the development of a new health, education, and leisure facility, as well as a new Skills & Innovation Centre at Gateway 14. The Administration rejected an Opposition amendment to the budget that would have allocated £1.5 million to a fund for villages and rural communities. However, they did agree to repurpose an existing fund ('regeneration in towns outside of Stowmarket') into a broader 'Rural Support Fund,' which will total £2.1 million over five years (2025/26 to 2029/30)—with £300k allocated for the first two years and £500k for the remaining three.

Local Plan Update - during the Full Council meeting on 27th February 2025, it was announced that Part 2 of Mid Suffolk's Local Plan (which contained site allocations) would be scrapped and replaced with a 'Local Plan Review.' This change comes in response to the government's decision to revise the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and increase housing targets for local authorities. The new Local Plan Review will expand upon the existing Part 1 (which outlines planning policies), incorporating new site allocations based

on the updated housing targets. The plan will cover a 20-year period from 2024 to 2044, with evidence gathered for Part 2, including site submissions, being incorporated into the review. The development of the new plan will follow this timeline:

- Scoping and participation stage (minimum four months) – March 2026 to July 2026
- Plan visioning, strategy development, and first public consultation – August 2026 to March 2027
- Evidence gathering and draft plan – April 2027 to December 2027
- Second public consultation and submission – January 2028 to June 2028
- Examination and modifications – July 2028 to March 2029
- Adoption – April 2029

This process brings significant uncertainty, especially since the adoption of the plan will occur after Mid Suffolk District Council is slated for dissolution.

Changes to Refuse Collection - on 26th September 2024, Mid Suffolk District Council approved changes to waste collection, set to begin on 31st March 2026. These changes include:

- A shift to three-weekly refuse collections instead of the current fortnightly schedule.
- A weekly food waste collection.
- Separate recycling for glass, cartons, and plastic films, as mandated by the Environment Act 2021.

Though the Act was intended to prevent local authorities from reducing refuse collections to three weeks or longer, Mid Suffolk District Council has opted to implement this change. The new waste collection pattern is outlined in the graphic in the appendix.

Community Rail Partnership - Mid Suffolk District Council has supported the creation of Greater Anglia's new Community Rail Partnership for the Ipswich to Cambridge line. The partnership aims to improve and promote rail services along this vital regional corridor, aligning the development of services with local needs. The partnership will focus on communities served by the line, including Ipswich, Needham Market, Stowmarket, Elmswell, Thurston, Bury St Edmunds, Kennett, Newmarket, Dullingham, and Cambridge. Funding will come from Greater Anglia, Suffolk County Council, the Cambridge and Peterborough Combined Authority, West Suffolk Council, Cambridgeshire County Council, Ipswich Borough Council, and Cambridge City Council.

Investment in Stowmarket Town Centre - Mid Suffolk has committed £1.5 million from the Gateway 14 development to regenerate Stowmarket town centre, focusing on bringing empty units back into use. The Stowmarket Town Centre Gateway Fund is now open for applications from property agents, landlords of vacant units, and potential tenants, to identify the best uses for the funding in fostering new businesses and community ventures.

Additional proposals include:

- A £400,000 grant scheme for existing retailers to enhance their shopfronts, focusing on small and medium-sized businesses (national chains are excluded).
- A £225,000 investment in enhanced street cleansing and public realm services.
- Feasibility work to assess demand for hotel accommodation.

The shopfront improvements could include new signage, canopies, lighting, or the restoration of traditional or historic features that have been lost over time.

I hope that this report has been helpful but if you have any further queries then please do not hesitate to contact me via the details below.

Questions raised by the meeting:

- Can we have an update on the Bunbury junction? Although planning decisions are now frontloading S106 commitments older developments were required to provide infrastructure at certain occupation points which is why we are still waiting for some things. The Bunbury junction is linked to the Barrett David Wilson developers and the parish council, Cllr Otton and I are asking that this be moved on as soon as possible. I understand it to be in the form of traffic lights and I will continue to chase this.

- What will happen to the public bottle banks if MSDC are to provide bins for glass recycling at home? It is understood that public recycling for glass will be removed which will mean a loss of income for some. I have put forward a motion to pause the changes to refuse collections to enable public consultation as there has been none.
- What is the timeline for any unitary council and what will happen to planning departments? It is my understanding that elections to a shadow unitary council will take place in May 2027 and be launched May 2028, this indicates that the District Council elections scheduled for May 2027 will be delayed and councillors will be asked to stay on. There is a suggestion that councillors will in future only debate larger applications with the threshold for this rising to cover those sites with over 100 dwellings.
- Why has Ixworth Road not been completed? There are active SCC and MSDC planning enforcement cases as Persimmon Homes have not met their obligations. These are being actively pursued and will progress to court proceedings if necessary.

District Councillor David Bradbury's report - (a full copy of the report can be seen at Appendix C starting at Page 22 of these minutes)

8. To receive reports from Parish Council Representatives -

- i. **Recreational Ground Trust (304946)** - Councillor Bryan Rainbow, Chair of the Recreation Ground Trust was invited to submit his report in which he stated that the Charity is responsible for the Recreation Ground, Pavillion & Car Park. Since the last Annual Parish Meeting the pavilion has new tables, chairs, microwave oven and crockery, this was funded by our local Mid Suffolk District Councillors from their Locality Budget Grant. The two EV Charging Stations installed in the Recreation Ground Car Park are being used and show a steady increase month by month. A firm of Architects have been commissioned to prepare plans for internal building works. These plans will comply with MSDC Building Regulations. Quotes have now been obtained for internal building works which include provision of toilets in the changing rooms, additional changing facilities for parents with young children and refiguring of the existing toilets. Funding for the project will now need to be sought. The same firm of architects will be engaged to project manage the works.

Last year on Saturday 10th August the Recreation Ground was to be host to an outside production of Treasure Island but unfortunately due to lack of interest this was cancelled a day before the production was due to take place. The Football Club still uses the Pavillion & Recreation Ground. The Pavillion is actively used during term time by local groups and is for hire at competitive rates. The Trust will be advertising & actively engaged in attracting additional leisure hirers to the Pavillion when the proposed internal building works have been completed.

- ii. **Thurston Footpath Warden** - Cllr. Morris, the parish appointed footpath warden reported that Thurston is fortunate to have a wonderful network of footpaths leading to the countryside and neighbouring villages.

The current footpath leaflet is available from the Parish Council office and the library. This leaflet gives details of 5 circular walks, but these can lead into other parishes, including Pakenham, Norton, Tostock, Beyton. You can walk as far or as little as you wish. An additional footpath map leaflet, which contains information about two footpaths that link to, neighbouring villages' network of footpath walks, is now available on the Discover Suffolk web page and the printed leaflet is also available from the Parish Council Office and the Library.

At the Suffolk Wildlife Trust Black Bourn Valley Reserve, to be found on the Great Green, Tostock Road area of Thurston, more ways are being marked through the area. The whole of this Reserve is to be rewilded and to help manage the site cattle will now be found in the area throughout the year. The work to improve the very wet area further along Footpath TH 7 has still not been carried out. More extensive work is due to take

place later this year to improve this footpath. It is pleasing to see the footpaths in the village continuing to be well used. It is, however, important that users keep to the footpaths as well as keeping their dogs under control to avoid damaging farmer's crops, upsetting other walkers and causing distress to animals and ground nesting birds. Unfortunately, we need to remind users to make sure any litter is taken home including used dog waste bags so that we protect our valuable countryside. There are now a number of dog waste bins to be found in the village in addition to the normal waste bins to help with this ongoing problem. It is appreciated that a number of residents use the opportunity to pick up any litter when going for a walk. Should walkers come across a problem with footpaths please report the issue to either the Parish Clerk or direct to Suffolk County Council using their easy-to-use online facility.

Questions raised by the meeting:

- Can we initiate discussions with Rougham Estates for a new permissive path to link Fishwick Corner with the estate to avoid walking on the road? It was felt that this only involves a very short road walk and would be unlikely to be supported by Rougham Estates however following perusal of the maps a decision can be made on whether a request should be put forward.

- iii. **Thurston Tree Warden** – In the absence of the Tree Warden the Deputy Clerk reported that Lucy Robison-Smith is the parish councils newly appointed Tree Warden. We are very pleased that Lucy has agreed to take on this role within the community. Her experience as a professional Ecologist with an arboricultural background is proving to be invaluable especially with our commitment to enhance Biodiversity and her skill set is very welcome.

We look forward to working with Lucy on projects going forward, one of the first tasks is to survey and record as many of our veteran trees as she can access so if you know of any you would like to highlight please let us know.

9. To receive reports from Village Organisations

- i. **Friends of Thurston Library** – Reports were received from the Library as follows: Thurston Library has gone from strength to strength with Ellie Longman as Library Manager: the progress of recent years has continued, welcoming and providing for all age groups in Thurston and the surrounding area. It will be difficult to increase the activity in the current space which remains well below what is recognised as that needed to serve the current population, let alone the continuing increase as housing development continues apace.

The Friends of Thurston Library have sought to complement the range of activity provided by Suffolk Libraries through their many initiatives: it is a busy, attractive, and well-regarded Library which the Parish Council and Friends Group support.

This year the sensory garden has been largely completed through an appropriate mix of professional and voluntary activity, and gifts from local plant nurseries. Two years ago, a garden was just a notion: it is now a really attractive space for everyone to enjoy.

Expanding activity – for four years now we have been pleased to report a strong increase in all key areas: the number of books issued, visits made for all purposes, new users, and the number of volunteers in the Library: two years ago there were five, including Duke of Edinburgh Award students, and now there are over thirty.

The Library continues to support people through a wide range of services, from borrowing books -some through the Home Library Service - to online services and a wide range of activities and clubs for all age groups on a weekly, monthly and ad hoc basis (see appendix below); again, this winter the library was Thurston's warm space

with free tea and coffee, soup and snacks.

As the Friends Group, we have supported all the Library does, helping in the Library, running events and raising money for Thurston Library and Suffolk Libraries, working

- *with others in the community* – such as the Primary Church of England Academy (Village Quiz with the Friends of the School) for the third year and participating in St Peter’s Christmas Tree Festival.
- *as a separate group* - organising a range of activities – over the last year running
 - a very popular Christmas programme which included a well-supported and appreciated Lego competition for children, a play reading by Blackbourne U3A of *Auld Lang Syne, M’dear* (written by one of the U3A members), festive sewing craft, singing carols and Christmas songs in the garden, and a special Christmas story time
 - an ‘official’ garden-opening event
 - a music evening with *The Blaggers*
 - talks from two Bury St Edmunds guides: *Nurse – Screens please! - a window into the history of medical provision in the Bury St Edmunds and surrounding villages* and *Riot, Rebellion, and the Darker Side of Bury St Edmunds*
 - a gin evening (*All About Gin* led by the Heart of Suffolk Distillery) and a *Summer Wine Tasting* by Wynn Rees, one of Thurston Library Friends; these events have established a loyal following!
- with Suffolk Libraries on national events such as *Reading Quest*, a replacement for the Summer Reading Challenge, and the Suffolk Libraries fundraising initiatives.

Coming up. In two words – unwelcome uncertainty. Recently, Suffolk County Council decided to take the library service back in-house. The Friends Group vociferously opposed this decision. We have had arguably the best library service in the nation through Suffolk Libraries. Suffolk County Council seems to think it knows how to run an even better service. We will hold them to account.

For an example of community activity at Thurston Library please see Appendix B on page 19.

Thurston Library Manager – Apologies that I cannot be here in person, Richard is a very capable (possibly more so) replacement for me. The library has had a wonderful year. We have had Kate Sawyer, T M Logan and Nicci French author events, as well as local children’s Author, Hatty Ashton to run an event for Y3 Thuston Primary school children for World Book Day this year, as well as many other visits from the local school. We hosted a Library Badge evening for Gt Barton Scouts which went really well, not to mention the introduction of The Reading Quest, encouraging children to keep reading over the long summer holidays!

There have been a few new additions to the library program this year

- The Last Monday Book Club -an evening group for those who cannot make the daytime group. This currently has at least 15 members and is still growing...
- Thurston Creative Writing Group - open to all aspiring writers to come along and receive encouragement, feedback and support for their writing.
- One-to-One IT help - Twice a month, our volunteer Tom is available for bookable slots to help with online shopping, staying safe online, email and social media or basic support with smartphones, tablets and more.

I am now in the very fortunate position to have help from over 30 volunteers, whether it be reading stories to children, the maintenance of our lovely library garden, raising funds by sorting donated books or simply helping with everyday library tasks. I currently have 2 young volunteers as well as 2 others volunteering to achieve their bronze level Duke

of Edinburgh award, as well as a hugely supportive Friends Group which put on fantastic events for the community and in so doing, raises much needed funds for the library. I have some figures to end this report which help demonstrate how well used and supported our library is. Since April 1st 2024 to date, over 21,000 books have been taken out by over 950 users. Over 3,000 people attended one off events and regular activities held in the library. It is worth mentioning that these figures do not include the many fantastic events organised by the Friends of Thurston Library. Richard is much better placed to inform you of those.

- ii. **Thurston Community College** – a report was submitted on behalf of the Principal of the College in which it stated that in the last year life continues to be busy at the College, the summer exams of 2024 led to some excellent outcomes, especially at Sixth Form. The new cohorts in Years 7 and 12 have settled into the College community in a really positive way joining existing students in participating in clubs and educational visits that are on offer. From local theatres to the London West End, Geography field trips, Duke of Edinburgh expeditions, visits to colleges and universities in further and higher education, and History trips to the World War 1 Battlefields in France and Belgium, TCC has been all over the country and further afield, including two weeks in Panama for some of their Sixth Form students. Education is about securing strong outcomes for our young people and developing future career pathways, but it is also about developing skills and enriching their understanding of the world in which we live through these wonderful opportunities. The Principal is indebted to colleagues who organise and staff these events for their young people, it really does enhance the quality of education provided at TCC. It is known, from the increase in numbers applying to join the college later this year, that the education Thurston Community College offer to students aged 11-18 is meeting the high expectations of families locally and they will be delighted to welcome new intakes, initially in the summer for visits, and permanently from September.

The local housing developments are bringing some challenges especially with some long periods of road closures, meaning that staff and student travel between two campuses is taking longer and also that there is congestion at the start and end of the day. The college does have contact from local residents, including neighbours at the Library, as well as from parents/carers, about the increased traffic especially where there is a lack of courtesy from other road users or concerns about health and safety. The Principal would like to reassure everyone in our community that they regularly send reminders about their expectations for drop off and pick ups and about where these should happen. The Principal is exploring additional places for pedestrians to cross safely, especially in proximity to the junction of Norton Road, Ixworth Road and Station Hill; this will become more crucial as housing developments bring more traffic. Any support for this from the Parish Council and the local community would be welcome.

The Principal was delighted to welcome feeder primary schools into the College, alongside representatives of local businesses, for some of the performances of We Will Rock You in February; and hopes all those who did attend did enjoy it. Auditions are underway for the July show which will be Annie and once again, the college will be offering complimentary tickets to those locally who support the College, please do contact the college if you would like to be added to their mailing list about this. The college are very grateful to anyone who has offered a Work Experience placement to a student in Year 10; if you are able to support work experience or other careers events for students across the age range, please do make contact with them as they would be delighted to hear from you. Whilst the college hold specific open events for Year 5 families, and those currently in Year 11, to visit the College to find out more about joining them in the future, where there is an interest in visiting the College, they are always happy to try and facilitate this on either campus; so please get in touch if you would like a tour.

- iii. **Thurston CE Primary Academy** – a report was submitted on behalf of the Headteacher in which it was stated that the school is still gradually growing in pupil numbers throughout the academic year. With pupil numbers becoming more consistent between 330 and 340, the school is expecting more pupils on roll in the coming years allowing for all year groups to become two form entry. New families continue to move to the area as well as families out of catchment who want to be part of the school community. The headteacher continues to be told by prospective parents that they have heard good things about the positive Christian ethos of the school and the support and education that our pupils benefit from. The positive reputation of the school continues to grow which is supported by the most recent OFSTED inspection, October 2024. The expansion of the school is on track, and it is expected that the additional Year 5 and 6 blocks will start construction in September 2025, ready for completion in September 2026. Thurston CE Primary Academy continues to develop its links within the community. This academic year, during Harvest, pupils once again donated food to the local charity Gatehouse as well as collecting money for various larger charities such as Young Minds and Comic Relief. The Headteacher is very keen that the community uses the school so that everyone can benefit from it, not just the pupils. Thurston Pickleball Club continues to enjoy the use of Thurston CE Primary Academy’s facilities. With four courts available, the Pickleball club have once again asked to use the courts during Spring through to September. At the end of the Autumn Term in the build up to Christmas, once again pupils enjoyed walking around the village to find the missing presents, something that they enjoyed working on with the Parish Council team. This year Premier Education have secured funding for a four-day Easter Club which offers a number of free spaces for disadvantaged pupils but is open to all pupils from Year 1 to Year 6. The Headteacher hopes that parents will take up the offer of the provision in order for holiday clubs to be regularly offered throughout the academic year. Strong links are being forged between the Primary School and the College. Work experience placements continue to be offered to Year 10 and 12 students and transition for the Year 6 pupils is being developed positively. Year 5 and 6 pupils always look forward to and enjoy the various events that they attend at TCC. Staff at Thurston CE Primary Academy continue to relish the challenges that they face as a growing school and will continue to put the pupils at the heart of everything that they do.
- iv. **St Peter’s Church** – There was no report from the Reverend Benjamin Edwards. It was noted that the Annual Parochial Church Meeting report would be available in May 2025.
- v. **Cavendish Hall** – a report was given by the chair of the Cavendish Hall which is repeated as follows: Our Hall continues to be well used and much appreciated by all who use her. Our new chairs are much lighter and easily moved. The issues facing the hall in my last report, namely the flooring will hopefully be resolved at Easter. The planks will be taken out to be replaced after the wooden flooring underneath has been removed, hopefully there will be no nasty surprises underneath that, which will then have to be resolved. Our solar panel payments have also been resolved, a very long-winded frustrating process, but payments are now coming through. We have put in a key safe to enable entrance to the hall when Hayley is not available, and to save her valuable time. We are also in the process of having an emergency phone available to be shared amongst committee members. Hayley now has a dedicated email address for the hall, and answers emails two or three times a week, which is working well. Hayley does an excellent job in her role as booking secretary. We are hoping to resolve the issue of ownership of the land at the side of our hall and have submitted papers to the Parish Council regarding this. This Easter we are replacing the flooring in the toilets and entrance hall. We had two fund raising events last year, one arranged solely by Kirsteen Ellis, she shared her profits between us and a charity she supports and another with the return of Sean Hedges Quinn. Both well supported and another one planned this Friday. We cannot

expect to receive grants all the time without putting some effort in ourselves. It is important to keep on maintaining our hall to keep it a standard that we and our hirers are happy with. We are thankful to the Parish Council, Mid Suffolk and Suffolk County Council for the support they have given us. My biggest worry is the lack of trustees and committee members, we urgently require a secretary, at the very least. Hayley has been doing our minutes this last year, but there are other items that are missed because we do not have one. I wish to thank everyone on our committee for their support this past year. It is a community asset of which our village should be very proud.

- vi. **New Green Community Trust** – Charity 299140– a report was given by the chair of the New Green Community Trust as follows: I would like to start by thanking the Trustees and volunteers for their efforts over the past year, also the Parish Clerk for her excellent advice, and most importantly the hirers and the village community for their continued use of our facilities. Not knowing what other contributors to this meeting will have said or may say following me, I believe that it is appropriate to mention one particular contributor, who donated considerable time to many charities and organisations in the village, including the New Green, who will be sadly missed, I refer to Jill Rood, a huge and sad loss to the village. My biggest disappointment in the three years since speaking with the landlords in an attempt to secure the future of New Green, one of the biggest assets of the village, for future generations, this has not yet been resolved. We have lost, for various reasons, numerous hirers; two acquiring their own premises, one unable to get caterers and we are about to lose another one in early April due to the main hall being too small, so she is relocating to the New Bury Centre. During the last twelve months we have installed all new doors making us more accessible for disabled people, replaced tables in two of our rooms and created a new bar, which will allow more functions to take place. We have hosted numerous events including fund raising events in support of Bone Cancer and Save the Children, a pagan festival, snowdrop day, wedding celebrations, a living wake, and the D Day commemoration and the feeling of pride with the involvement of the ATC. The next twelve months will hopefully see the creation of a location to be available for families on Friday, Saturday and Sunday evenings, a return of the lamented “social club” and probably some Sunday picnic days. Events already scheduled include charity nights for Bone Cancer, Scotty’s Little Hero’s and the Scouts. VE Day commemoration, official opening of the new bar, a kids disco, and wedding celebrations including our first gay wedding. There is the possibility of a monthly street food vendor and hopefully some new regular hirers, together with hopefully the added security for the retention of the open spaces. A Family Fun Day is arranged for August 2nd. I express my thanks to the chairman and the parish clerk for organising this meeting.
- vii. **Thurston Relief In Need Charity** – Charity 210828 - the chair of the Charity gave a report as follows: Objects of Charity – to make payments to relieve persons resident in the Parish of Thurston who are in need, hardship or distress or to provide items, services or facilities for such. Grants Made - The charity has had no requests for assistance in our last financial year (to December 2024). No emergency payments were made in the last financial year. The charity was advertised in the Thurston Parish magazine during the year. Trustees - The nominative, co-optative and ex-officio trustees are unchanged. Use of Charity’s assets -
- The major asset of the charity is the area of land to the south of Heath Rd. A decision was taken some time ago to review the use of this land and see if it could be improved. This includes the existing recreation area which has been let to the P.C. since the 1960’s.
 - The area of agricultural land has now been taken out of that use and part of it (approx. 3.5 acres) is now leased to Housing 21 for the construction of an extra-care facility comprising flats and bungalows.

- Their appointed contractor Carters made a start in September 2023. The charity has granted them the temporary use of an additional area of land to facilitate parking and material storage to ensure that Heath Rd and environs are subject to minimal disruption.
- The development is progressing well with completion being forecast for early June. We have been advised that the first residents are due to move-in in mid July.
- It is proposed that the remainder of the land, which includes the existing recreation area, will be dedicated to some form of communal/village use. It has been expressly stated, on a number of occasions, that it will not be used for open-market housing.
- The charity is continuing to liaise with the Parish Council towards that goal.

Professional Advisors - The charity continues to use the services of Hazells (Chartered Surveyors) and Greene & Greene (Solicitors). We have also engaged with Stone King (solicitors) who are specialist advisors on charity matters to guide us through this period of transition. Future - The charity will continue in its current form for the time being. A far-reaching review of its constitution and aims has been undertaken and legal advice is being sought to ensure that we comply with the requirements of the Charities Commission when making any changes to the structure and aims of the organisation. Once these changes have been implemented the future use of the residual land will be able to be determined/planned. Queries - Please direct any queries via email to: thustoninneedcharity@btinternet.com

Questions raised by the meeting:

- Where do the funds come from? Originally from historical bequests in the form of land which generates very little money. There is a small income from Shares and Investments and some from the more recent lease from the Care Facility.

viii. **1st Thurston Scouts** – Melanie Johnson, Scout leader was invited to give her report in which she drew the meetings attention to the following;

a full copy of the report can be seen at Appendix C of these minutes starting on page 20

Reflections on the past year have celebrated not only our members growth but also welcomed new leadership to our teams. A notable transition was Harrison moving from being a Young Leader to the role of an adult leader in Cubs. We were also pleased to welcome Pete, who has recently joined the Cub team. Michelle has transferred from Cubs to Scouts, and we have unfortunately lost Giles from Cubs after fourteen years of scouting and wish him well for the future. Throughout the year we have welcomed Sam and Ash to join the Beaver team.

This year has been active and enriching for the Beavers with a variety of meetings and a range of activities such as sessions themed around nature and book reading together with a night hike and skill building challenges. Outings included a visit to Colchester Zoo, the Panto and tobogganing.

Cubs meetings included diverse activities such as chair football, festive crafts and a Sorting Sixes session which cultivated friendships and teamwork among members. Outings included the District Night Hike, the Panto and a Stopover.

The past year has been a busy and engaging one for the Scout Group with a range of meetings and events that focused on nurturing skills, teamwork and camaraderie among our members. Activities included game night, demonstrations on digital making, pumpkin carving and a visit to Rougham Tower. Scout Summer Camp is a highlight which is an eight-day adventure filled with various activities, Our Scout participated in District Dodgeball, and a District Bowling evening.

Group wide we held our Annual Review combined with a Family BBQ and took part in events like the Remembrance Parade and Service. Family Carol Service and Family Bingo evening added to the fun and community spirit.

As the year closes thanks go to the children for making our meetings and events memorable and enjoyable. Their enthusiasm and spirit are what truly define our Scout Group. A heartfelt thank you to the parents for their ongoing support and dedication as well as to volunteers who work tirelessly behind the scenes to ensure that everything runs smoothly.

As we look ahead to next year a highlight will be Woolpit Steam Rally Group Camp which serves as a major fundraiser, and we have plans for a Family Camp in August.

- ix. **Thurston W.I.** – the President of the Thurston W.I. was invited to submit her report in which she mentioned that this year Thurston WI celebrated their 106th birthday. Our WI continues to flourish and have welcomed several members from the new areas in the village. Our membership at the end of last year was 50. Last year we tried Kurling, looked and heard the fascinating stories of Faberge eggs and automatons, a forensic scientist, a UK Defence Attache about his time in Moscow and a Ukelele band to name a few. An enjoyable day visiting the Manor House at Grantchester and St Ives in June was enjoyed by members. We continue to hold our Soup & Chat lunches at Cavendish Hall from September to March. This has proved very popular, and an enjoyable time is had by all. This all came about from a Resolution from National WI regarding loneliness. We donated £110.00 to the Hospice following a bottle raffle in memory of one of our members. We continue to support our village in any community events such as the Christmas Tree Festival and the Village quiz.
- x. The Chair invited Philip Broadbent-Yale to give a report from Pickleball Thurston which is repeated as follows: This winter, PBThurston have played on the TCC badminton courts with 33 players, 5-7pm on a Thursday. We go outdoors to the Thurston Primary Academy, from 1st May, for our 3rd summer of play. A huge thanks to Helen Sturman and Sean at TCC, also John Bayes and Judy Taliku at Thurston Primary, for making their facilities available to us. Both Cllr's. David Bradbury and Harry Richardson have also helped us with Locality Award grants to acquire equipment for PBThurston, as well as for the Primary Academy. We are pleased to see PB being played by students both at the College and Primary Academy. Because the 4 courts can only take a maximum of 16 players at any time, we have had to restrict numbers joining. We have turned away 13 new players this winter. The popularity of PB continues to increase. As the Primary Academy do not have as many sports using their playground, we intend to hold two 'PB Taster Sessions', on May 13th and 20th. 5-7pm. If these prove successful, we will continue with a Tuesday evening game, as well as our regular Thursday Club evening. Anyone from 15-80yrs can be playing competitively within 20 minutes of coaching, regardless of age and gender. PB is therefore a great sport for community engagement, particularly in Thurston, with both its original and new communities. In addition, there are the health, well-being and mental benefits. As the School's facilities are only available outside the school timetable, we are keen to see a Thurston MUGA for tennis, basketball, netball and pickleball constructed, as was envisaged in the 2019 Neighbourhood Plan. We would welcome the opportunity of working with the Thurston Parish Council to help deliver this.

Thanks were offered by the Chair to those who had taken time to attend and present their reports.

10. To receive comments from members of the public present –
- A plea for new members came from Thurston Carpet Bowls Club. Their membership is made up primarily of older players and they meet Wednesdays between 7 and 9.30pm. A thank you was extended to all the speakers who have

spoken on behalf of their group and to all the groups volunteers who are committed to a parish-based community. It was stated that the village newsletter was an important resource for the continuity of community.

- Richard Miles spoke on behalf of Thurston Football Club in his new role as Chair of the club. He acknowledged that historically there had at times been a divide between the football club and the community and the new format at the club wanted to change that and improve relations. The club currently has 365 members, 200 of which are under the age of 15 and are involved in the youth football side of the club. This is felt to be a huge plus for the village however they have had to turn away upwards of a further 200 children as they do not have the facilities to accommodate them. The club has seen success in adult cup finals at Portman Road and Ram Meadow.
- Question – Why are the SENDAT school in School Lane not invited to provide a report to the Annual Parish Meeting? The chair confirmed that this will be considered next time.
- Question – Can additional public noticeboards be provided as the existing ones are too small for the number of events and services using them for advertising? The chair confirmed that any new locations put forward would be considered however it would not be practical to add extra boards to existing sites. It was noted that the parish council does not monitor these noticeboards, they are community notice boards and as such are self-managed by residents therefore any out-of-date adverts should be removed to make space for current ones. The parish council would provide additional magnets where necessary.
- Question – Is a fine system in place for cars parking in the EV charging bays? And are there any plans to increase the size of the carpark? The chair confirmed that there have been cars parked in the bays reserved for EV charging and that persistent drivers have been spoken to by our PCSO however there is no fine system in place and no plans to introduce one at this time. It was suggested by a member of the public that as the car park was too small to accommodate visitors to Cavendish Hall all spaces including the EV charging bays and disabled bays should be available to visitors. The chair confirmed that EV bays and disabled spaces should not be used, and that street parking was also available should the car park be full however the suggestion of a system of parking passes for those using the Cavendish Hall could be considered. It was confirmed that any extension to the carpark was not an option.

11. As there were no further comments from members of the public in attendance, the Chair closed the meeting at 9.35pm by thanking all for attending.
12. Date of next meeting – to be confirmed but all were made aware that it would need to be between 1st March and 1st June 2025.

Appendix A – Fully Funded PCSO for Thurston – Report

- **Community Policing Team Covering the area.**
- Inspector for Stowmarket SNT: Inspector John Murray
- Sergeant for Stowmarket SNT: A/Sgt Jamie White.
- Police officers for Stowmarket SNT:
 - PC 202 Kerrie Stephens Named Officer for Thurston and surrounding area
 - PC 1107 Chloe Levett Covering Stowmarket.
 - PC 1026 Laura Shearwood Covering Stowmarket.
 - PC 808 Adam Ferguson Covering Mid Suffolk North area
- Link PCSO's for Stowmarket SNT:
 - PCSO 3098 David Harvey
 - PCSO 3287 Abigail Durrant (Both will be assisting across all of the areas covered by Stowmarket Community Policing team).

PCSO 3362 Matthew Brown has been in post for 21 months as the fully funded PCSO (Police Community Support Officer) for Thurston.

- Providing high visibility patrols, for public reassurance, reducing fear of crime and anti-social behaviour, on either foot, bicycle, or car.
- Community engagements to understand and address local needs, such as victims of crime, new and emerging communities. Assisting with inputs and support for Thurston Primary School and Thurston Community College in the absence of School Liaison Officer/Community Engagement Officer.
- Building working relationships with Partner Agencies to help identify solutions to prevent local crime and anti-social behaviour at the earliest stage by tackling the root causes.
- Identifying and reducing community issues, tensions, and fears, including multi-agency problem solving, evidence gathering and early intervention.
- PCSO Brown also engages with several different agencies in the area as well as local businesses to try and achieve problem solving.

PCSO Matthew Brown reports to the Parish council on a weekly basis with updates on issues raised to the Police by members of the public. A Police report is submitted each month for the Thurston Newsletter, this includes useful information relating to topics or areas of concern, which have included personal/property safety and changes to the Highway Code. The Council in turn can advise of any concerns which may have come to their attention, all crimes are to be reported via 101.

PCSO will attend Parish Council meeting when able to and will look to attend the Annual General Meeting.

PCSO will also hold a weekly “drop in” on a Wednesday morning between the hours of 11:00-12:30, this will give an opportunity for the residents to discuss any concerns or issues in person with the officer in private.

Parking:

Suffolk Police focuses its resources based on an assessment of threat, harm, and risk. Dealing with parking offences is a lower priority and complaints of illegal parking will not automatically result in Police attending. They would allocate a unit in a situation where there is a clear offence that is a risk to public safety. If there is an issue with a particular location causing a community concern, the Community Policing team will deal with it appropriately.

The CPT receive many emails regarding the parking issues in the village mainly around the peak times around school pick up and drop off. There are no restrictions within the village except outside Primary School and Community College. These areas of concern will continue to be monitored to tackle any obstructions by PCSO Brown.

Police have powers to enforce:

- Dangerous or obstructive parking, including parking on the pavement and 10 metres from any junction. (Where two roads meet)
- Vehicles parked on a pedestrian crossing and zig zag line.

- Moving vehicle violations, such as speeding and going through 'no entry signs'

CRIME STATISTICS between March 1st 2024 and March 1st 2025:

- Arson / Criminal Damage x 12
- Burglary x 4
- Drugs /possession/related x 4
- Public Order x 5
- Sexual offences x 8
- Miscellaneous Crime against Society x 7 (These crimes are in relation to
- Take or to make or to distribute indecent photographs or pseudo- photographs, of children).
- Violence against a person x 80 (This is covering all assaults including Domestic related incidents).
- Theft x 30
- Possession of offensive weapon x 2
- Vehicle related crimes x 4 (This can include driving offences such as Disqualified from driving).

Please note crime statistics can be adjusted and reclassified and are only correct at the point of research, please contact crime admin team for official records. For an explanation on each crime category please visit www.police.uk

For more information on Crime statistics in your area please visit www.police.uk.

Please if there are any issues or concerns that need to be raised, please contact 999 in an Emergency or Non-Emergency call 101, or report things on-line via the Suffolk Constabulary Website.

Cptstowmarket@suffolk.police.uk is the Email address that you can make contact by; this will then go to all the team and will be passed onto individual officers that cover the area or to the appropriate resource.

Many thanks

PCSO 3362 Matthew Brown.

Appendix B - Community Activity at Thurston Library

We currently have these regular activities and meetings in the library:

Weekly

Mondays	MIni Movers – movement group for toddlers
Tuesdays	Chat ‘n’ chill afterschool club Children’s Centre
Wednesdays	Wordplay: Baby Bounce for 0-4year olds Watercolour Art Club Parish Council Meetings (3-5 per month usually)
Thursdays	Children’s Centre Twenty-minute tales
Fridays	Friday Sewcial – Sewing Group Children’s Centre
Saturdays	Knitting and Crochet Workshop
Sundays	Lego Club

Fortnightly

Saturdays	Ancestry Club
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Twice monthly 1st and 3rd Thursdays

Thursdays	Adult Lego Club
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Monthly

Mondays	Simply Sing (choir) The Last Monday Book Club
Tuesdays	The last Tuesday Baking Club
Wednesdays	Thurston Library Book Group
Thursdays	U3A Book Club

Variously

Friends of Thurston Library monthly meetings and activities

Appendix C – Report from 1st Thurston Scout Group

Reflecting on this past year within the 1st Thurston Scout Group, we have celebrated not only our members' growth but also welcomed new leadership into our teams.

A notable transition was Harrison moving from being a Young Leader to taking on the role of an adult leader in Cubs. His experience and commitment have been invaluable, and we are excited to see how he will contribute further to our programme, before he goes off to University. We were also pleased to welcome Pete, who has recently joined our Cub team. His enthusiasm and fresh ideas are already proving to be an asset to our group. Michelle has transferred from Cubs to Scouts. We also lost Giles from Cubs after 14 years of Scouting due to a change of personal circumstances and wish him well for the future.

Throughout this year, Sam and Ash joined the Beaver team, and we extend our warmest welcome to them. We are grateful for the enthusiasm and energy that they bring to our group. Their contributions have already made a noticeable impact, and we appreciate their dedication.

Beavers

This year has been quite active and enriching for the Beavers. Throughout the past months, the group successfully engaged in a variety of meetings designed to be both fun and educational. The autumn session started brightly with the first night introduction, followed by a focus on community impact, which took place at the church. A range of activities encouraged creativity, such as sessions themed around nature and book reading. The group ventured out for a night hike and took part in skill-building challenges through various games. Members participated in multiple themed meetings, including the widely appreciated Christmas party, and celebrated Chinese New Year with special investitures. A highlight was the pancake night, which added a festive touch to the winter months. Additionally, the engaging sessions including visits to the police and fire station enabled children to learn about their local services in an interactive manner.

In terms of events, the Beavers created wonderful memories at several outings. A visit to Colchester Zoo allowed the children to explore wildlife, while the Panto brought delightful entertainment. The tobogganing excursion was a thrilling experience, and the Elf training camp instilled a sense of teamwork. The recent District Beaver sleepover was a chance for fellowship and fun.

Cubs

Throughout the year, we ensured engaging experiences for our Cubs through a range of meetings and events. Our weekly meetings included diverse activities such as chair football, personal safety discussions, and festive crafts, all aimed at enhancing the Cubs' skills and fostering a strong group dynamic. The Sorting Sixes session encouraged familiarisation among members, which cultivates friendships and teamwork.

The year also included several exciting events. Highlights included the District Night Hike, which offered a chance for outdoor adventure, and the delightful Aladdin Pantomime that brought laughter and joy. The recent District Cub Hike and Stopover further provided our members with opportunities to enjoy the great outdoors and build lasting memories.

Scouts

This past year has been a busy and engaging one for our Scout Troop. We had a range of meetings and events that focused on nurturing skills, teamwork, and camaraderie among our members.

Our past meetings included a variety of activities such as games at Cavendish Hall, and several troop meetings where members participated in practical skills demonstrations like digital making, pumpkin carving, and even a visit to Rougham Tower. These meetings provided an excellent opportunity for our Scouts to get to know each other, learn new skills, and build friendships.

Among the highlights of our year was the Scout Summer Camp 2024, which was an eight-day adventure filled with various activities. Our Scouts participated enthusiastically in competitions such as the District Dodgeball Competition and even enjoyed a District Bowling Evening. It was also a pleasure to witness our group's achievements during the Family Carol Service and awards presentation where three Chief Scout Awards were presented to deserving members.

Group-wide

We held our Annual Review, combined with a Family BBQ and took part in community events like the Remembrance Parade and Service, strengthening our connection with the local community.

Our Family Carol Service and awards presentation was a heartwarming event, which brought everyone together to celebrate achievements and was enjoyed by parents and children alike during the festive season.

The February Family Bingo Evening added to the fun and community spirit.

Despite the Scouting organisation rolling out a new Adult Membership system we have been getting to grips with it and the new learning modules that were brought in.

We have also recently been able to purchase new tables and benches, a set of new radios and lots of heavy duty pegs through grant money from the District Council Locality Budgets. As this year closes, I would like to thank the children for making our meetings and events memorable and enjoyable. Their enthusiasm and spirit are what truly define our Scout group. Additionally, a heartfelt thank you to the parents for their ongoing support and dedication, as well as to the volunteers who work tirelessly behind the scenes to ensure that everything runs smoothly.

As we look ahead to the next year, there are exciting events to anticipate. One significant highlight will be the Woolpit Steam Rally Group Camp, which will also serve as a major fundraising event as we sell programmes to the general public. Additionally, we have plans for a Family Camp in August, which promises to be a delightful experience for both Scouts and their families.

I would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to all the leaders, particularly for their support during my illness last year. Their commitment ensured the running of activities and continuity for our members during that challenging time.

Moreover, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to all the leaders for their commitment and hard work throughout the year. Their dedication helps create a supportive environment for our Scouts to grow and thrive. I look forward to another year filled with fun, learning, and adventures in scouting!

Appendix D - Mid Suffolk District Councillor David Bradbury - Report

New devolution and local government reform affecting Mid Suffolk

Following on from the election of the new Labour government in July 2024, the new government has proposed widescale changes across the UK regarding devolution and council re-organisation. This includes two proposals affecting Suffolk as a whole, including Mid Suffolk District Council, which may lead to its eventual abolition.

The first proposal is a strategic authority covering both Norfolk and Suffolk, which is likely to have a directly elected Mayor for both counties, and an increase in local powers for Suffolk. The election for this Mayor is currently scheduled to take place in May 2026.

The second is the re-organisation of the current two-tier system within Suffolk into either a single or multiple Unitary Authorities, where all of the council's general services are ran by one coherent entity. Should this proposal go ahead, it will likely result in the abolition of MSDC in the late 2020s. Suffolk has applied to be on the fast-track for this scheme, which has resulted in the postponement of the Suffolk CC elections that were due to take place in May 2025. The election for any new authorities is currently unclear but is likely to be held after the Mayor election, in May 2027.

Talks for both are currently an ongoing matter, although new information will likely be updated frequently throughout the year.

Budget

For 2024/25, net expenditure on services is budgeted at £18.5 million with a 2% increase in council tax. Council home rents increased by 7% and sheltered housing service charges also increased. This has been done to ensure the Council can afford the repairs and maintenance that are needed. All these increases are due to inflation, costs of energy and other cost increases.

The Council has reserves of over £28 million as at the end of the financial year plus an expected dividend from the Gateway 14 business park. Plans for this are on a variety of work including new foot/cycle paths, land for biodiversity and green spaces, regeneration of Stowmarket town centre, improved sports provision in the district and enabling community-led housing.

Approval was also given to increasing council tax on empty homes in 2024/25 and implementing increased council tax on second homes in 2025/26.

For the 2025/26 budget, recently agreed in the February council meeting, the administration committed to a capital programme of £36m for the district, which is partially funded by the council's reserves. This includes investment in health facilities, primarily including the ongoing SHELF project, investment into new skills and innovation within the district, and an increase in funding for the communities across Mid Suffolk's smaller towns and villages. In addition to these spending plans, there was also no planned increase in council tax, which was frozen at its current rate of £175.03 for a Band D property. Finally, the council is additionally estimated to have a surplus of £2.4m at the end of the financial year.

Thriving towns and villages

As part of Mid Suffolk's Rural Transport Grant Scheme, two new community transport routes were launched, utilising the council's new Taxi Bus scheme, connecting Stowmarket with the surrounding villages and communities across Mid Suffolk. Initially, there were the two routes looping around villages of Mid Suffolk, beginning in Stowmarket, the first of these goes via Thurston, the second via Bacton, with further communities eventually being added, including Eye and Debenham. These have allowed for further connectivity between the villages across Mid Suffolk and Stowmarket in the heart of the District.

Environmental sustainability

Mid Suffolk District Council previously launched their Cosy Homes scheme for Winter 2024, which included plans to improve insulation and energy efficiency within private homes across

Mid Suffolk. This is a readily available scheme for residents and has made great progress in improving energy efficiency and sustainability across homes.

Planning and Housing

Over the last year, Part 1 of Mid Suffolk and Babergh's Joint Local Plan (JLP), which was first created back in November 2023, had its first year of full operation. The purpose of the plan was to provide essential clarity for communities about how the district was to develop until 2037 and assisted in allowing for a structured response to housing and planning targets, of which Mid Suffolk had always excelled at, and delivered Mid Suffolk's aim of 535 new houses annually. In January 2025, the plan has since come under review, as a result of new housing targets set out by national government. Whilst MSDC have previously exceeded with housebuilding targets, there is a possibility that the new national housebuilding guidelines take priority over the JLP if the council cannot prove there is a 5-year land supply for housing.

Supporting the community

We support local events and community groups where we can and particularly link local groups with external fundraising via the Mid Suffolk community team. Almost £550,000 was allocated by Mid Suffolk District Council Direct to communities across the district from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). Both ward councillors (Harry & David) had a budget of £7350 for local projects which has been awarded to groups such as a baby & toddler group, Stowlangtoft parish council (quiet lanes project) and a village hall refurbishment.

Mid Suffolk District Council information is available via www.midsuffolk.gov.uk or by phone 0300 123 4000