



Chair's Annual Report to the Annual Parish Meeting

Thurston Parish Council

Report Aim: Annual Report from the Chair of Thurston Parish Council
Presented to: Annual Parish Meeting
Date: 16th April 2026.

As written by the Chair of Thurston Parish Council for the Annual Parish Meeting which took place in the Cavendish Hall, Church Road on Thursday 16th April 2026

Good evening and welcome to the 2026 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.

I am delighted to report that we have maintained a full council of 13 Councillors this year and my thanks go to all the councillors for serving as members of the Council and its Committees.

Also, thanks to Steve, our litter picker for maintaining the public areas, Matt Brown, our Police Community Support Officer for the policing and safeguarding support for local residents, Clive, our Village Ranger, who has been working to maintain areas of the village over the last year and Laura, our Newsletter editor.

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.

Penny will be stepping down this year after many years of supporting Thurston and other local parishes.

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.

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.

But, life is never without change and Vicky has decided to step down from the role of Clerk during the coming year.

I am pleased to say that we have recently appointed a new clerk, Laura, to start with us in May.

However, we are not letting Vicky go that easily and having decided to split the roles of Clerk and the Financial Officer, Vicky will remain with the council managing the

finances, supporting Laura in her new role and will also continue to look after the Neighbourhood Plan and some of the significant planning matters impacting the village.

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 almost complete, having received initial planning approval in 2017. The Bloor Homes site on Beyton Road, the second Persimmon development, Hakewill Mews on Ixworth Road and the Barratt David Wilson development also on Ixworth Road are all underway.

A consultation process has been held recently with regard to the replacement of the current Thurston Community College building and planning permission has been applied for. The rebuild, on the current site, will offer improved infrastructure and opportunities for the students and the community and it is pleasing to see that the community library will be unaffected by the changes and will benefit from enhanced facilities.

Whilst under construction these developments do continue to 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.

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 have commenced a review of the Thurston Neighbourhood Plan and will be engaging in consultation with the community to support the review, ensuring the plan reflects the needs of the community moving forward and recognising the development which has already occurred.

Whilst the plan has not achieved everything we would have liked for the community, it has provided the opportunity for some influence over the development that has happened and there have been some significant achievements including the new Michaelmas Court supported housing project on Heath Road, which is now open.

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 Mid Suffolk Croquet Club £500; Friends of Thurston Library £500; Suffolk Accident and Rescue Service £500; Ixworth Youth Junction Youth Club £500; Lighthouse Women's Aid £500; Tiny Toes Toddler Group £288; Communities Together East Anglia £500 and the Mid Suffolk and West Suffolk Citizens Advice Bureau £500 each.

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, contracting a Village Ranger for village maintenance, new flooring here at Cavendish Hall, support for the Library Sensory Garden, provision of the allotments on Thurston Park, 2 new streetlights on Barton Road and support for the Thurston Community Players. CIL has also been used to contract some consultancy support for the review of the Thurston Neighbourhood Plan.

Full details of the use of CIL funds can be found on the parish website.

The Pavilion at the Recreation Ground has undergone a significant internal refurbishment this year and is available for hire, offering space for regular or one-off events with new and improved facilities. The venue is open to a variety of hirers; it is not necessary to be a sports club or group to use the building. Please contact the Parish Council for more information on availability and hire rates.

The car park at the Recreation Ground also offers 2 electric vehicle charging points
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 2026/27 the Parish Council has agreed a small rise in the precept of £8.66 per annum or 17 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.

Our monthly Parish Council meeting is held on the first Wednesday of every month at the Community Library on Norton Road.

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.

Christopher Dashper,
Chairman of Thurston Parish Council
March 2026.