

THORNAGE PARISH COUNCIL

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The minutes of the Thornage Parish Council Meeting held on Wednesday 6th December 2023 at 6.30pm at All Saint's Church, Thornage.

Present: Cllrs Dan Earp (Chairman), Dany Pearce (Vice Chair), Teresa Anderson, Kate Dickson, Peter Hammond, Paul Hendrick and Nigel Watchorn, Kerry Harris (Clerk), 0 residents.

1. To welcome those present to the meeting

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting. He noted there were several important items on the agenda.

2. To consider apologies for absence

None.

3. To receive Declarations of Interest in items on the agenda and to consider any requests for dispensations

There were none.

4. To consider excluding the public under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 due to the confidential nature of the items to be discussed (Personnel matters)

This was Approved by all on a Proposal by Cllr Dickson and Seconded by Cllr Pearce. The Clerk left the room while this item was discussed.

5. To Approve an amendment to the Clerk's contract

Cllrs considered the report on the Clerk's Appraisal and agreed to increase her salary to SCP 17 with effect from 1st April 2024. This was Approved by all on a Proposal by Cllr Dickson and Seconded by Cllr Hammond.

6. To Approve Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 18th October 2023

Minutes of the meeting held on 18th October were unanimously Approved on a Proposal by Cllr Anderson and Seconded by Cllr Hammond.

7. Matters Arising

There were none.

8. Open Forum for Public Participation

8.1 NCC Cllr Dalby

Cllr Dalby's report had been circulated to Cllrs before the meeting:

NCC Children's Services and Waterstones have teamed up to launch the 2023 Giving Tree appeal; 27 new gritter vehicles will be taking to the roads this winter; Norfolk spends an average of £3.2m each winter keeping Highways moving and the average cost of each gritting run is £49,000. The Travel Norfolk website provides local, accurate, real-time public transport information; more people are using the bus in Norfolk this year; Norfolk County Council is backing a call from the County Council's Network for additional funding for School Transport; Awards were presented recognising the outstanding contributions to Norfolk Fire & Rescue Service; winter campaign launched to support residents in Norfolk and Waveney to stay warm and well.

8.2 Reports from Other Organisations

Thornage Hall

We will be having our 100th Biodynamic Spray next year which is a big milestone for Thornage as a community. Biodynamics is important for Thornage Hall as it helps us grow fresh and delicious produce in an environmentally friendly way. Our produce is then sold to local outlets or made available to purchase via veg boxes. More information regarding our 100th year Biodynamic Spray will be released closer to the date.

FROTH

We shall be hosting a music/social evening in the church on Monday 18th December which we hope will be well attended by villagers. We have also leafletted the village to remind people about our lottery and the uses to which funds so raised have been put. We hope this will encourage people either to renew their subs or to join in for the first time and therefore to offer support to the village.

Church

A Carol Service is taking place at the Church on 21st December.

One estimate has been received for internal electrical work and an estimate will be done soon for the external work.

8.3 Opportunity for Members of the Public to raise questions or concerns.

A resident has suggested creating a Q code that can be put into the Newsletter, on the website and on the Noticeboard to increase uptake of the Village WhatsApp group. This was seen as a good idea.

The traditional telephone exchange is being decommissioned and all telephone handsets will need to operate via the internet. Liberal Democrats parliamentary candidate Steffan Aquarone has addressed several village meetings about support available. Cllrs wanted this information to be added to the Newsletter and would like information about dates for the presentation in neighbouring village halls.

9. Chair's Report

Cllr Earp had a meeting with the new CEO for Thornage Hall and discussed improving connections with the Village and the use of Gregories Barn by the Village. She has said they will consider this.

10. Clerk's report

The Clerk had nothing to add to the items in the agenda.

11. To receive an update on the Volunteers Group

A litter pick has taken place since the last meeting. The next task is to clear the leaves outside the Black Boys. The Telephone Box will now be on hold until the weather is warmer in the Spring. The pallets by the Bottle banks will be removed before they become a slip hazard.

The main challenge is the small number of volunteers, mainly connected with the Parish Council. Cllr Hendrick suggested that a QR code could be considered for volunteers. The need for volunteers will stay in the Newsletter.

Cllr Hendrick will also draw up a long term schedule for periodic tasks such as varnishing the Village Sign or Noticeboard.

12. To receive an update on Green Spaces in the Parish

The Astley Estate manager has confirmed that the suggested changes to the Common are acceptable. The next stage is to agree the options and arrange a public meeting to consult the village. Grass cutting will still be required and there should be no additional costs. A report will go in the Newsletter.

13. To consider what the Parish Council can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity in the Parish

The Clerk explained the Biodiversity duty in the 2021 Act. It was noted that the Parish didn't own any land.

Cllr Dickson reported that there is a site meeting Friday 8th between N Rivers Trust, River Glaven Conservation Group and Lord Hastings regarding the recent clearance of the meadows, woodland and alder carr along Thornage Beck up to the lane at Beck/Hunworth Ford, to create commercial cattle grazing. The beck itself has also been cleared. The EA and NNDC have been informed, as the entire site is in The Glaven Valley Conservation Area and Astley Estate is a member of the Landscape Recovery programme (DEFRA) and the NCC's 'wilder, wetter, better' initiative.

14. To receive an update on the Postbox

The Clerk is waiting to hear a new location for the replacement to the stolen postbox. Royal Mail do not think they will be able to place the postbox on the side of the road near the Noticeboard as this is private land however they are looking to see whether the opposite side of the road, also with a pavement, is public land.

15. To consider any action on Second Homes within the Parish

This item was suggested by NNDC Cllr Brown so will be deferred to the next meeting.

16. Finance and Governance Matters

16.1 To Approve the Cashbook and Payments list

The balance in the Barclays account is £4,643.29, balanced to the 31st October bank statement.

Receipts: None;

Payments: NNDC £27.00 (19th October - Uncontested Election Fee); Countrystyle Recycling £12.00 (31st October Bottlebank collection); Mrs C. Harris £664.24 (Clerk's salary, October to December and backdated pay from Local Government Pay Award April to September); HMRC £166.20 (Tax on salary); Thornage PCC £18.75 (Hire of Church – 6th December); Mr D. Earp £25.00 (Reimbursement for Hazel Mindham books)

These were approved by all on a Proposal by Cllr Dickson and Seconded by Cllr Pearce.

Payments will be paid via the bank by Cllrs Pearce and Hendrick.

16.2 To Approve the Budget and Precept for 2024 - 25.

A discussion took place about the level of reserves required by the Council to ensure it could meet its commitments and the rate of increase in the cost of living over the past year. All budget headings were considered.

It was agreed to accept the recommendation of the RFO. The PC unanimously Approved a Precept of £5,000 on a Proposal by Cllr Hammond and Seconded by Cllr Anderson.

16.3 To receive an update on banking.

The Clerk explained that issues with Barclays about the bank account have been resolved after the account had been referred to Historical Records.

16.4 To Approve the following policies: Risk Management, Lone Worker, Reserves

These were Approved on a Proposal by Cllr Watchorn and Seconded by Cllr Dickson.

16.5 To Approve the appointment of the Internal Auditor for the 2023 – 24 Financial Year

Mrs D. Dann was Approved by all as Internal Auditor on a Proposal by Cllr Pearce and Seconded by Cllr Earp

17. To receive an update on Planning Matters

17.1 PF/23/2346 Erection of electrical substation & 6 vehicle hub – Back to the Garden
The PC have no comment to make.

17.2 To Approve the PC response to Planning Applications since the close of the agenda.
There were none.

17.3 To receive updates on current planning applications
There were none.

17.4 To Approve the PC Response for the Local Plan Examination
Thornage PC had submitted comments about the Local Plan and have been invited to attend the Examination. It was agreed that Cllr Earp would attend the Examination to ask questions about the inclusion of the GVCAA in the Local Plan.

18. Highways Matters

18.1 To receive an update on the SAM2
The SAM2 is regularly moved location. Cllrs suggested that the fastest speed should be reported in the Newsletter. It was noted that the records would not differentiate an emergency vehicle.

18.2 To receive an update and Approve any Action on the Thornage/Hunworth footbridge.
The footbridge is continuing to disintegrate due to weather and tractors.
Cllr Earp has written to NNC Cllr Plant about the footbridge and the bridge on the B1110. He has received no reply. Cllr Earp will continue chasing.

18.3 To receive an update and Approve any Action in respect of the bridge on the B1110
The PC believe that the bridge is much safer now that the hedges are cut. Cllr Watchorn reminded Cllrs that farmers can only cut hedges between 1st September and 1st March unless on safety grounds.

Cllrs are concerned that signage for the bridge at night is not adequate. There are no visible reflections. Cllr Earp will report this to NCC Cllr Plant.

19. To Agree the publication of the next Newsletter

This will be published at the end of January, before the issue of Council Tax bills.

20. To note any Correspondence

21/10 October report from Rev'd Trudie Morris; 25/10 Flood alert information from Cllr Andrew Brown; NCC Online Budget Consultation; 21/11 NNDC Local Plan Examination; 24/11 Thornage Road closure; 27/11 Highways visit from 18th December; NNDC Planning Roadshow.

21. To set the rota for the Bottle and Paper Banks

January 2024 – Cllr Earp, February – Cllr Watchorn, March – Cllr Pearce, April – Cllr Heindrick

22. Any Other Business (for information only)

There was none.

18. Dates for future meetings: Wednesdays 6th March, 6.30pm; 22nd May 6.30pm, Annual Parish Meeting 7.30pm

19. To close the meeting: The meeting closed at 8.00pm.

Signed

Date: