

THORNAGE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Wednesday 22nd May 2024 at 6.30pm at All Saints Church

Present: Cllr Dan Earp (Chair of the Parish Council), Parish Clerk – Kerry Harris; 12 Residents

Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed all to the Annual Parish Meeting. No apologies had been received.

Minutes of the Meeting held on March 22nd 2023

The minutes were available on the website and had been on the Noticeboard. They had been emailed out to residents and Parish Councillors who were on Parish Lists and were reviewed at the Parish Council meeting following from the 22nd March 2023 Annual Parish Meeting.

Parish Council Chair Report

Welcome to the annual parish meeting for Thornage. We hope that the offer of a glass of wine may tempt a few more people to attend, understand what the Parish Council can and cannot do and be tempted to join in village activities. This meeting is the opportunity for everyone in the parish to express any views and questions about past, present and future activities including, but not exclusively, those of your Parish Council.

Your Parish Council exists to serve the community in the village, support local organisations and to maintain local facilities. All residents and members of the public are welcome at all meetings of the Council. We hold 5 meetings during the year and dates, times and locations are advertised on the website and noticeboard in the village.

I'll now give a brief resume of some of the things have happened this year. Regular tasks at our Parish Council meetings include reviewing and commenting on local planning applications in the best interests of the village; informing NCC Highways of areas needing their attention – the B1110 road bridge, the footbridge at Beck's Farm, and potholes.

Publication of the Newsletter to keep the village updated on Parish council business, as well as local organisations, such as the Church, Thornage Hall and Friends of Thornage It is printed by Thornage Hall and distributed by Councillors. Thank you. As part of that communication there is now a QR code to join the WhatsApp Group, and the Parish Council website which is also beginning to be populated with village, not just council, information

Right at the beginning of this year we had the Coronation celebration, and now is the time to thank Dany and the members of the team who worked hard to put on another splendid village event.

Thank you also to the Common Working party, led by Nigel, who have been looking at what could be done to enhance biodiversity, now a requirement, on the space we know as the common. More from Nigel later about this.

Speeding has always been an issue in the Parish. This year has seen a request from our part of little Thornage to have access to the sign, and as highways agreed to a site, it was

trials there. We are very grateful to Nigel for the regular moving of the sign and keeping the battery charged, and to Jerry for the analysis of the software. The data collection identifies when and how often speeding occurs, and if appropriate, inform the police. It transpires that most speeding occurs during the school run! It has to be moved regularly so Nigel chooses the placement according to the amount and scale of speeding recorded to ensure maximum benefit to us all.

I must also thank all our Councillors for their dedication and time on Parish Council matters. Paul Hendrick resigned recently, and I thank him for his time as a councillor running the Volunteer's Group, who have done litter picking, (supported by Andrew Brown) strimming around signs and leaf clearance from a dangerous section of the footpath. Thank you

Plans for the near future include maintenance work on the sign and notice board, and repainting the telephone box, which houses the defibrillator. Again, thanks to Dany for monitoring this for us. There is a WhatsApp group and if you would like to help with any of the tasks, please let me or Kerry know and we will keep you informed.

Councillors, as a team, share out the Bottle & paper bank monitoring, please do use them, as it generates a small but important contribution to Parish finances so thank you all Councillors for their various contributions, Thornage is very lucky to have their contributions and commitment. Finally, and most importantly, the Parish Council only works the way it should do, because of the support of the parish clerk, and we are so very lucky to have Kerry. Thank you Kerry for all you do.

Report from other organisations represented

The Church

11 April saw the annual election for the Thornage PCC and it was excellent to see such a strong and diverse turnout at the meeting. The new church wardens are Debbie Major and Jerry Pearce. They are joined by 2 PCC members, John Smart and Joe Ashley, 2 Synod representatives for the Benefice, Janet Hammond and Beau Hopkins as well as 2 further co-opted PCC members Angela and Nigel Watchorn.

Thanks go to the previous church warden, John and to Janet, who continues in her Synod role, for all that they have done over the past year and it is great that they both remain involved in the church. It is also important to give huge thanks to Phil Anderson who is stepping down as the treasurer of the PCC after many years of service.

The church is first and foremost a place of worship offering regular services although with the reality of a falling number of worshippers, it is important that the church is also seen as a wider community asset hosting other village events and of benefit both to parishioners directly and also to bring in donations to maintain and improve church facilities: In short, we use it or we may ultimately lose it.

The Church is currently running at a deficit of approximately £5,000 a year. This will not be solved overnight and a 2 – 3 year plan will be needed to bring in donations and make cost-saving measures. It is therefore a positive development that the Friends of Thornage group has an in-principal agreement that 50% of the funds raised by them, will go towards maintenance and improving the fabric of the Church.

Thornage Hall

Thornage Hall is celebrating 100 years of biodynamics, which the Hall has been practicing for the past 40 years. Cllr Earp will put a sign on the Noticeboard advertising the event on 5th June at the Alpaco field which all villagers are invited to. Thornage Hall are looking for opportunities for tenants so may be able to help with tasks around the village such as grass mowing and Open Space maintenance.

Friends of Thornage

Friends of Thornage have recently reformed with new members. Regular coffee mornings and other events are being held to use and/or support the Church and other amenities in the Village. The Friends will support specific projects. The next major event is on 9th June and is a Garden Party and Plant Sale with a live band playing.

Projects that Friends of Thornage have supported in the past include the restoration of the Village Sign, the SAM2 Flashing Speed Sign and ongoing supplies to the Defibrillator.

They will be producing a survey to ask what the Village would like the Friends to do and which activities to run.

The Lottery currently has 62 tickets sold, but every extra ticket sold provides extra funds for the village.

Biodiversity and the Common – an Update

The Common is owned by the Astley Estate and has been managed by Thornage Parish Council for many years for the enjoyment of the village. Recent management has involved regular mowing of the Common by a local contractor to keep it neat and tidy. There have been discussions over the years about an alternative use but no conclusions were agreed.

Recently the Biodiversity duty of the Parish Council, initially designated in the 2006 Natural Environment and Communities Act was strengthened by the 2021 Environment Act which is now coming into force. It is evident that this is a major issue to address regarding the Common. Chris Major and others invited Aaron Brown from the Norfolk Wildlife Trust to the Common a couple of years ago to assess what fauna is currently there and how to enhance this.

The conclusion is to leave large parts unmown until the end of July or August. The grass then cut needs to be removed to stop adding to the nutrients in the soil as it is this which prevents the wild flowers. This will require the support and enthusiasm from the village and active involvement from volunteers.

Thornage Hall have offered to collect the mown grass as feed for their cows.

The change will take place over time. There are already a few fruit trees – perhaps an orchard with traditional varieties of tree could be considered; the Boundary edges are out of control and need to be managed; there has been talk of extending the footpath from Thornage Hall all to be considered. The extent of the Agreement with the Astley Estate will need to be investigated so responsibilities are clear.

But the first task is to consult with the village. A survey was considered and putting information in the next Newsletter. There are also now 40 members on the WhatsApp Group. This could take place over the summer so that decisions can begin to be made at the next Parish Council meeting.

NWT Officer Aaron Brown initially came in January; he will come by again in the summer to top up the known information. Jerry Cox also offered his team for a day to help with initial work.

Members of the Common Working Party were heartened by the positivity of the meeting.

Resident's Forum

Dany Pearce – the Digital Land Line Switchover

She wanted to know if residents had yet heard from their providers with any information.

The analogue landline system was being phased out as it was beginning to fail and all providers were moving all clients onto the digital system. The deadline had been January 2025, but this week had been extended to January 2027; however she suggested that people were proactive in contacting their landline provider to find out what was needed and to make sure the provider was aware if their status was vulnerable.

Jerry Pearce – B1110 Road bridge

Jerry wanted to record that visibility and safety had improved massively once the hedge had been cut and he was now concerned that it was growing too high again. He wanted to know what plans were in place to retain visibility and safety. A letter will need to be sent to the Estate Manager to ensure it is cut regularly.

The Chair drew the meeting to a close. The meeting ended at 8.25pm