

**Minutes of the Thompson Annual Parish Meeting (Annual Assembly)  
held in Thompson Community Hall  
at 7.00pm on Tuesday 16 May 2023**

Present:	Jean Kaye	Chair
	Duncan Gregory	Vice Chair
	Barry Mallindine	
	Ron Powrie	
	Jean Wagner	
	Kim Austin	Clerk

Also present: There were 6 members of the public present.

The meeting opened at 7:03pm

**1 To accept apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from Cllr. Cowen who was unwell and Cllr. Barry Mallindine who was away on exercise.

**2 To agree Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting (Annual Assembly) held on Tues 17 May 2022.**

The minutes had been circulated prior to the meeting. Cllr. Wagner proposed and Cllr. Gregory seconded approval of the minutes of 17 May 2022 meeting and they were signed as correct by Cllr. Jean Kaye, Chair of the meeting.

**3 To discuss any matters arising from the minutes**

There were no matters arising.

**4 To receive Chairman's annual report:**

**Reclaim the Rain** Work continues to improve the village's flood resilience. An application was made in March 2022 for Thompson to be chosen as one of the 6 villages in the joint Norfolk and Suffolk Reclaim the Rain pilot project. The objective of the project is to find innovative ways to improve flood resilience while capturing the excess water for future use. Thompson was chosen as one of the villages.

Work has begun on looking at problem areas and canvassing ideas for water capture while at the same time starting to gather information about the physical characteristics of the village. We hope that it will not be long now before we can begin looking at solutions which will work for the village, taking into account ease of maintenance and the need to be cost effective. Some of the solutions will be self-help in nature.

**Celebrations** There have been 2 village celebration events in the past year. The first was to join the rest of the country in celebrating the amazing 70-year reign of Queen Elizabeth II. Thompson joined with Merton in the organising of the event, which was held on Thompson's Millennium Green and Thompson Community Hall. Sadly, the Queen died 3 months later. The second event was earlier this month to celebrate the coronation of King Charles III. Merton chose not to join us on this occasion. I would like to thank all of those who organised the two events and also the many people in Thompson and Merton who helped to set up the Hall and the Green, who provided the great variety of entertainments for the children in the afternoons of the events, who prepared and served the food and those who came in on the following mornings to help to clear up and restore normality.

**Public Inquiry** The Public Inquiry relating to the footpath between the end of Pockthorpe Lane and Sparrow Hill finally took place in mid-November 2022, lasting 3 days. The Inspector found that while there was evidence of the common use of the footpath over many decades there was no

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evidence of its general use by vehicles. The Inspector's determination was that she would not find it to be a byway open to all traffic but rather that it would be recognised as a footpath which would be recorded in the definitive statement and on the definitive map. As this differed from NCC's Modification Order this has now been referred to the Secretary of State for confirmation. Objections will be considered as part of this process.

**Planning Applications** The Parish Council has considered a number of applications over the past year.

**Litter Picks** Litter Picks were held in the autumn of 2022 and in late February this year. The vegetation was still short for the litter pick and we were able to clear a considerable amount of rubbish from the verges. While we are getting good attendance it would be nice to see some new faces. The whole village benefits from cleaner verges.

**5 To receive annual reports from Norfolk County Council (Fabian Eagle) and Breckland District Council (Phil Cowen)**

**Norfolk County Council (Fabian Eagle)**

No report received.

**Breckland District Council (Phil Cowen)**

**Breckland District Councillor's Annual Report 2023 - Cllr. Sarah Suggitt/Cllr. Phil Cowen**

The District Councillors' report for All Saints and Wayland Ward, Breckland Council, May 2023 had been circulated before the meeting. It was not read in its entirety at the meeting but it was confirmed the whole report would be available in the minutes.

Sarah Suggitt and Phil Cowen are privileged and honoured to have been re-elected to represent the interests of the electorate in the All Saints and Wayland Ward for Breckland Council. They are proud to have played a part in helping to deliver Breckland Council's many achievements of the past four years, details of which will be in the minutes. They look forward to continuing to work with residents, communities and business within the ward to continue the work that Breckland undertook over the past four years.

1. Working to support our local environment through the Breckland 2035 initiative delivering for example,
  - a. A reduction in Breckland Council's CO2 emissions by 437 tonnes.
  - b. £850,000 investment in LED streetlights.
  - c. Saved energy at our leisure centres through LED lighting and highly efficient pool covers.
  - d. Successfully prosecuted 100 illegal fly tippers.
  - e. Reduced landfill by collecting small electrical items and batteries alongside our weekly refuse and recycling service.
  - f. Awarded a contract for EV charging points in Swaffham and Watton.
  - g. Planted 700 trees in Attleborough and Watton.
2. Helping our district to thrive by,
  - a. Invested £750,000 to support our High Streets.
  - b. Funded a new electricity substation in Snetterton to enable economic growth in the heart of Breckland.
  - c. Helped business to bounce back from the pandemic by allocating £4.2 million of funding.
  - d. Supported over 45 new enterprises and created more than 65 jobs within our successful start-up programme.
  - e. Secured £1.6 million for local projects to boost skills and training.
3. Inspired local communities through,
  - a. Investing £4.6 million in emergency housing provision.
  - b. Helped domestic abuse survivors with £100,000 support for the Daisy programme.
  - c. Introduced a low-cost local food store and community food bus.
  - d. Trained over 100 residents to become mental health champions.
  - e. Provided a new handyman scheme to allow vulnerable residents to stay in their own homes.

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- f. Awarded over £120,000 to local community projects.
  - g. Continuing to build new energy efficient homes for life across the district through our joint venture company, Breckland Bridge.
  - h. Supported local youth by launching a £10,000 educational bursary scheme.
4. We have changed the way the Council works through our working smarter programme including,
- a. Made our website more user friendly.
  - b. Introduced a 24/7 chatbot to make the service more accessible to all.
  - c. Made £344,000 of true efficiencies in the way the Council operates.
  - d. Maintained and increased our commercial property portfolio income to help to fund our services to residents.
  - e. Processed over £5 million in Council Tax rebates.
  - f. Developed Leadership Development Programmes to increase skill levels of residents.

The Council, in looking to the next four years, intends to build upon all of the above by:

1. Keeping the district charge in the overall council tax bill low through
  - a. Strong financial management
  - b. Providing well run and efficient local services
2. Supporting our communities and our elderly and vulnerable residents by
  - a. Providing a 24/7 service that's available to residents when they may need it.
  - b. Working with partners to deliver dedicated mental health support.
  - c. Providing dedicated officers to support victims of domestic abuse.
3. Protecting our green spaces and environment through
  - a. A positive drive to net zero by 2035.
  - b. Increasing EV charging points across the district.
  - c. Continuing to prosecute fly tippers through the courts.
4. Reducing crime and protecting residents from anti-social behaviour by
  - a. Continuing to help fund county lines enforcement.
  - b. Investing in CCTV.
  - c. Working closely with the police to support rural residents.
5. Supporting our local economy including
  - a. Providing start up grants for qualifying businesses.
  - b. Helping to create skilled and high-quality jobs.
  - c. Delivering opportunities for employment across the district.
6. Providing good quality local services through
  - a. Increased waste collection services at a lower unit cost.
  - b. Investing in emergency housing.
  - c. Reviewing contracts to ensure best value for money is achieved.

Finally, we would like to add our congratulations to the many parish councillors who have been returned to represent their local communities within Breckland. As your Ward representatives we are here to be the bridge between you and Breckland Council and our contact details can be found on the Council website.

## **6 To receive annual reports from local organisations**

### **6.1 Thompson Millennium Green Charitable Trust (Tina Sales, Chair, Management Committee)**

#### **Overview**

The Committee continues to manage the Green for the benefit of the community now and in the future. Post covid the management committee has changed with the inclusion of two new members and a new chair. Our thanks go to Martin Hayman, our previous chair for his leadership through the pandemic.

#### **Stakeholders**

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**Parish Council.**

We are, of course, accountable to the Parish Council as our Trustee, and are grateful to the two Parish Councillors who serve on our committee and contribute to the effective management of the green.

**Local community.**

The overarching mandate is to maintain and manage the current and longer-term health of the Green for the community. Part of the responsibility of the management committee is to take into consideration any community members feedback, both positive and negative, and to act and communicate where appropriate for the benefit of the Green and the community. We have been successful this year, now that the Green is fully open to the community, not to have received any negative feedback to date.

**Thompson Primary School.**

None of our committee members are now governors at the school but we continue to build relationships in an effort to increase support of the Green by the younger members of the community and their parents. An example of this was the promotion of our Easter Egg Hunt on Good Friday aimed at our younger friends and this was promoted via the school's class Dojo to parents. Another example is through supporting the Forest Green initiative at the school enabling children to use the Green for outdoor learning through play on the Green to learn about and to respect nature.

**Thompson Community Hall.**

We continue to work well with the Hall and helped them to stage a very successful Jubilee event last year and this year's Coronation event. We continue to work together to put on community events that look to raise funds for both parties. Development of the 10k run to this year's Run Fair is one example of increasing community involvement to the mutual benefit for both parties.

**6.2 Thompson Community Hall (Bronwen Tyler)**

We are steadily getting back to increased business but confidence since the pandemic and the current financial situation means we are not yet where we would like or need to be. We are roughly breaking even, and it is fortunate we had the foresight to ensure we had good reserves.

Some of our previous regular bookings have not restarted but we do have new ones. Most popular is Hid and Go Sniff dog training classes so we expect to see some very well- behaved dogs around Thompson in the future! Stitchers did not restart on Wednesday evenings but a core group began to meet on a Wednesday morning during Warm Spaces and have continued. We hope numbers will increase as word gets out. Wayland Quilters returned to their twice monthly booking and their numbers are increasing. WI continue to meet monthly. We have a private booking for weekly table tennis and there is discussion on starting a group if there is sufficient interest. Attendance at coffee mornings is on the rise and we attract a good number each week, many from outside the village.

We have a calendar of events planned by the committee which are advertised in the Waylander and elsewhere. We put out flyers for specific events such as film nights and have begun creating a regular what's on flyer which people can keep as a reminder.

Warm Spaces was not a particular success in terms of people using it for the specific purpose, but we did get a steady trickle of local people so we as a community possibly got to know each other better. We had a superb response to be on the rota to man the sessions and are very grateful to them all. We have been allowed to retain the underspend on the grant to support activity such as Stitchers which helps with isolation and the need for friendships.

We were a part of the group set up to organize the Coronation event which used Hall, Millennium Green, school, and church facilities. It was a huge success and a good example of community working. There are so many people who helped it is impossible to name everyone but it was wonderful to see new and longstanding members of the community pitching in. Thompson has such a good reputation for having fun together that we were fielding enquiries from outside the village to be allowed to join us. A bit of a logistical nightmare where food was concerned but we got there.

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Private bookings are less frequent than previously, especially birthday parties, which we suspect is due to money concerns. We did have one private party which got a bit out of hand and was rather loud and for that we apologise. The bass in the music was rather intrusive. However, they did turn it off at 11.30pm when asked. The police did attend but were not concerned and left us to oversee clean up and lock up. Unfortunately, the vibration showed up some problems in the build and loosened the fixings on some of the lights and acoustic panels. We have had issues with the panels before. The companies concerned responded quickly, put them back with different types of fixings within a few days and all is now good to go. One light control unit has a problem at present which will be fixed when a new component arrives. The contractor disabled it as he felt the pulsing might affect anyone with epilepsy or migraine. Many thanks for the loan of the church and book sale marquees housed at College Farm, which were erected in case the workmen didn't finish so that a child's birthday party could go ahead.

We have had a notice from the police that people are looking venues for unlicensed music events so I sent them the details of the party and of another enquiry. The holders of the party do not seem to concern them but the second enquiry turns out to be known to them so if anyone is involved in other venues do not take a booking from Ronnie Nudds. The enquiries tend to be to hold family events so it is very hard to distinguish between genuine and not.

We have invested in an online booking system. It has a few teething troubles and we are still learning how best to use it to suit the needs of the hall and users. It seems to have a mind of its own sometimes. The public seem ok with it on the whole and we can edit out any errors or alter the booking details if the customer needs to change anything. It makes hall availability more visible and more immediate on the website calendar.

If anyone has any ideas for events and activities, they would like to see in the hall then please get in touch. If you would like to join the team, please let us know. We welcome those who would like to volunteer just occasionally, those who might want to be on the management committee through to those who are willing to be full trustees. You don't have to be a trustee to join the committee. We look forward to a future of increased community use of the hall as a central part of village life.

### **6.3 Thompson Parish Church (Katharine Wolstenholme Church Warden)**

#### **St Martin's Church.**

The Clerk read out Katharine's report. We have had a quiet couple of years, recovering from covid and lockdown when we had to close the church and curtail our fundraising events. Now people are happy to mingle again in close proximity we are hosting various fundraising events again. Our next ones are:

Sunday 18th June, Kings Birthday Tea Party at College Farm. Tickets £15/head.

Saturday 8th July, Second Hand Book Sale at Thompson community Hall.

Sunday 3rd September, Lavender's Lunch at College Farm, Tickets £15/head.

Friday 3rd November, Sausage & Cider Pop Up Supper at College Farm, Tickets £15/head.

Saturday 25th November, Second Hand Book Sale at Thompson Community Hall.

We are in negotiations with TTSR Ltd. to maintain the churchyard - grass cutting etc - and are grateful to the Parish Council that we are able to reclaim up to £500 towards these costs.

### **6.4 Parish Land (Bronwen Tyler)**

Thompson Town Land Charity - The charity continues to be managed by the two appointed trustees, Bronwen Tyler and Kate Winslow, with the assistance of Geoff Winslow who oversees the accounts. For some months now we, in common with many other charities, trusts and businesses, have had issues with Barclays Bank. They send constant demands for information and we have sent them all we possess regarding the charity. They have disputed our signatures, needing fresh mandates, claiming at the same time that Mrs. Winslow is not a trustee, and many other conflicting communications. We have taken every piece of paperwork, proof of identity, verified signatures etc into the bank in Watton (before it closed and removes that service) but all have been rejected as insufficient. They continue not to explain what it is they do want, constantly quoting money laundering measures and other reasons for their behaviour towards us. Currently, we are under

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threat of having the account closed. We visited a solicitor, since one suggestion was the trust deed was inadequate but were assured it was, and that it was a common format for a charity of such antiquity. We continue to battle.

Meanwhile the land continues to be let on a five-year lease to Mr. Syer who manages the land well, using it for hay crops and the needs of his horses.

We have sufficient funds to now be able to afford the costs of Land Registry. As with many pieces of land under old and long-term ownership, this has not previously been done. It is a slow process and where no land sale makes for urgency in such matters, is often put at the bottom of the pile by Land Registry.

We continue to administer sums for the benefit of the poor of Thompson. We are finding that the recipient numbers have decreased recently. There are many reasons for this: the residents of Thompson appear to be better off than in previous years; people do not readily admit to short-term need; restrictions by the Charity Commission on use of the funds; lack of understanding by residents of what they could apply for. We need to find a way forward or we may find that charities like this are 'looked at' by the authorities as being no longer necessary or better administered by a wider authority for national needs, and we will lose the benefit for Thompson. The activities of Barclays add to this suspicion and concern.

### **6.5 Thompson WI (Annabel Welch, President)**

In November Thompson W.I will be celebrating its 70th Anniversary.

It is regularly called upon to help out at various village events with many of our members being involved across community projects e.g. Book Sales, Thompson Run and of course, the Celebration events.

During the last year we have enjoyed various talks and demonstrations. These have ranged from gardening, Bollywood dancing, the history of the village, pewter embossing and a very amusing talk by a Turkish Shirley Valentine. We look forward to our Fundraiser in July, open to the village and at which the Norfolk Blood Bikes will be attending.

We have also been involved in and/or hosted events for the Norfolk W.I. Federation. The Autumn Federation Meeting was held here again in Thompson for the second time and we catered, for the third time, the Federation Trustees Lunch.

Each W.I. is part of a group. Our group "Woodland" which included Yaxham, Hardingham, Hingham and Caston unfortunately was suspended earlier this year. However, it was decided that we would still invite each other to our annual quizzes and other special talks/demonstrations by invitation.

The resolution this year is Clean Rivers for People and Wildlife. This will be put forward at the Norfolk Federation Meeting and our delegate will then take our vote to the National Annual Meeting. We are hoping to become involved through the Rivers Trust and Citizen Science.

Our membership remains at 18, which we are hoping to bolster over the next year.

After many years as Secretary Carol Bayley has handed over to Jayne Eastwood. We thank Carol for all her hard work over the years and are delighted that she will be remaining on the committee.

### **6.6 Stitchers Group (Bronwen Tyler)**

After a long gap since covid began, Stitchers is beginning to meet once more. Initially, original members began using Warm Spaces in the Community Hall as a way to get together again. Some discussion and trawling of former members showed that the preference at the moment is for a daytime group. Therefore, Stitchers is meeting each Wednesday morning at the Hall from 10am-12noon. We are very grateful that the Community Hall Trustees are supporting this via a Warm Space underspend and, together with a sum of money still left in the pot from our previous meetings we are able to meet the rent until numbers increased once more.

There is definitely a need for social gatherings like this, whether to share crafting skills or simply to find companionship, so we look forward to returning to our previously very successful numbers of those attending. Perhaps I should add that we are not and never have been exclusively female and had have had male crafters join us in the past.

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## 6.7 Wayland Partnership (Bronwen Tyler)

Wayland Partnership Development Trust Report - It has been a very mixed year. Our main difficulties have been with Barclays Bank, which began last October. They closed our account based on not having sufficient or the right information from us despite being sent all we were asked for. They seemed very reluctant to tell us what they did want. Finally, a direct contact to one of their business directors was the only way we got any sense out of it all, and action taken by Barclays. Meanwhile, we had a period where we couldn't pay wages or bills or receive money. Thankfully they have now re-opened the accounts and removed all restrictions so we are left wondering what it was really all about. We have, in the process, become very aware that across the country an awful lot of trusts, charities and small businesses are being treated in the same way, many completely unable to make any sense of what to do. Several trusts within the Partnership area are having difficulties with Barclays with non-specific requests for information and threats of account closure. Our case for complaint is now with the Financial Ombudsman but we know it will take time to process. We are also in the process of opening an account with another bank as a backup.

The Levelling Up bid for the DCMC was unsuccessful but we are working closely with Norfolk County Council and Breckland officers to continue to push the project forward with some speed. The grant received from Watton TC is being of great use in this process. NCC and others are very keen to see the project take shape within the next year in order to progress to the next stages and achieve a successful outcome. There are a number of funding stream options being explored and staff sought to assist with the process.

We have a new gallery manager, Jayne Collett. Unfortunately, our previous manager had to take early retirement due to family commitments and we wish her well. We will retain contact as she is keen to tutor some art courses for us in the autumn and winter. Jayne is proving very keen and energetic, as well as popular with customers and staff. She was already working for us on as a tutor and clearly knows the wider Partnership and its aims well, so it made sense to promote her to a more permanent role. She has already recruited additional volunteers and has been making sure Dragonfly is open on a Saturday morning whenever possible.

We have a full programme of exhibitions planned until Christmas. Jayne is responding to demand for specific types of arts and crafts workshops and we will publish more details soon. We would like to remind people that we have a lovely and ever-changing range of locally made art and crafts, all of which can be purchased at very reasonable prices. So, when thinking of gifts do consider supporting local talent and at the same time help the Partnership continue to provide this valuable resource and outlet for our community. Our greetings cards are all made by our artists and crafters, are not mass produced, and are inexpensive!

We are installing a new trustee but had to put the process on hold due to the confusion with Barclays. They would not have dealt with yet another change in our details while the mix up was being resolved.

We currently have some office or room space available for hire as we experience the usual turnover of businesses moving on, the most recent being to larger premises.

2022 into 2023 has been a period of getting back on track after the difficulties of covid closures - rebuilding footfall and looking towards being able to plan longer term projects. Our footfall into Dragonfly is increasing, with swap shop increasingly popular. Maybe this is a sign of the times and the greater need for thrift and recycling.

We held a weekly Warm Space or hot spot from January to the end of March. Although it did not appear to attract those in fuel poverty, we could not know this unless told and many people probably would be too proud to admit to that. We felt that the national promotion targeted in this way was possibly a deterrent to some. It might have been better aimed at wider energy saving, which would then have had an overall effect on usage and therefore availability which could have reduced prices. However, we did attract people looking for friendship, for groups to join, and activities; often new to the area or suffering from isolation and loneliness. A Saturday 'bring what you do' has been started by Jane to enable people to sit and chat while making something - or simply chat if they wish. Interest is also growing in our mindfulness workshops with maximum take up at these. Swap shop attracts people who often just want to stay and chat. We offer a coffee or tea and somewhere

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to just sit whenever the gallery is open. With all this in mind we have been allowed to keep the underspend on the Hot Spots grant in order to continue helping with isolation and other such issues. The Representatives meetings are back on track and proving increasingly purposeful. We have lost one or two reps from some of the parishes since covid began and are working on recruiting new ones. Many of our partners, including Thompson, continue to make the annual grants, or donations, that they signed up to as part of the creation of the Partnership in 1999 and we are very grateful for this regular support.

The Sensory Garden continues to be maintained by volunteers and we are looking into ensuring there are funds for some larger essential maintenance which will need doing shortly. The garden is available to all during Dragonfly opening hours and appreciated by many as a place of relaxation and peace but doesn't in itself earn an income.

Financially we would like to be better, as would many charities at present, so that we could offer more activity and community support. The essential expenses of two new boilers, and some unexpected additional expenses, have been a bit of a drain despite some grant input for them, such as Norfolk Community Foundation and National Lottery Awards for All. Grants are not easy to obtain and very time-consuming to write. However, we recognize that we are not alone in what is a difficult time for many charities and businesses. We appreciate the support we have already been given and look forward to being able to provide a boost for our own and the town economy via the DCMC.

We believe there is an exciting future ahead and look forward to making it happen for the benefit of all of Wayland. We continue to believe strongly that our model of partnership working with town, village parishes and our other partners is in the best interests of Wayland as a whole.

**7 To receive comments from the public**

A big thank you to everybody involved in the Coronation celebration events which were considered to be the best the village had ever held.

The meeting closed at 7:56pm

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