

**Minutes of the Thompson Annual Parish Meeting  
held in Thompson Community Hall  
at 7.00pm on Tuesday 18 May 2021**

Present:	Jean Kaye	Chair
	Duncan Gregory	Vice Chair
	John Newnham	
	Ian Robertson	
	Angus Welch	
	Kate Winslow	
	Kim Austin	Clerk
	Phil Cowen	District Councillor

Also present: There was 1 member of the public present.

**1 To accept apologies for absence**

RESOLVED to accept apologies from Bronwen Tyler due to a long-standing prior engagement.  
RESOLVED to accept apologies from Fabian Eagle who was chairing another meeting.  
RESOLVED to accept apologies from Jeannie Wagner who had an unavoidable commitment.

**2 To agree Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting (Annual Assembly) held on Tues 7 May 2019.  
(Note: No Annual Assembly in 2020 due to the Pandemic)**

The minutes had been circulated prior to the meeting. Kate Winslow proposed and Duncan Gregory seconded approval of the minutes of 7 May 2019 meeting and they were signed as correct by 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:**

Cllr. Kaye reported that the Parish Council had continued to meet remotely throughout the year due to the pandemic. Thompson had a few new planning applications to discuss and one went before the Breckland Planning Committee. This was 3PL/2020/1215/PIP, Blue Oak Developments Ltd. Applying for outline permission to erect up to 4 dwellings on land to the east of Marlpit Road and South of Mill Road Thompson. In opposing the application, Thompson was represented by Cllr. Welch and John Stanley (a member of the public) at this meeting and the Parish Council welcomed Cllr. Cowen's support. The application was REFUSED.

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

**Norfolk County Council (Fabian Eagle)**

Cllr. Eagle had sent his apologies and emailed Norfolk County Council highlights for 2020/2021 which can be referenced at:

[www.hugofox.com/shared/attachments.asp?f=5c9d4751%2De53b%2D4dd7%2D8cad%2D16f4520a90ab%2Epdf&o=County%2DCouncillor%2DAnnual%2DReport%2D2020%2D21%2Epdf](http://www.hugofox.com/shared/attachments.asp?f=5c9d4751%2De53b%2D4dd7%2D8cad%2D16f4520a90ab%2Epdf&o=County%2DCouncillor%2DAnnual%2DReport%2D2020%2D21%2Epdf)

**Breckland District Council (Phil Cowen)**

Cllr. Cowen delivered his report: This has been a very challenging year for all of us, residents, businesses, and council officers and many of us have lost loved ones as a consequence of the pandemic. However, here in Breckland we have risen to the challenges set and as a result we have achieved much whilst continuing to provide an unbroken service to all. Home working has become the norm. Realised some infrastructure was lacking. Technology updated whilst buildings were empty. Despite a successful 10-year relationship with South Holland DC, utilising savings from shared

services, there has been a big change and a restructure has led to a Breckland only organisation. The Chief Exec had resigned leaving an opportunity to focus on two separate teams.

Some highlights for the past year include:

**Breckland Economy** We have now provided around £50m of direct financial support to Breckland businesses since the start of the pandemic and continue to process tens of thousands of pounds of payments every week, to help Breckland's businesses continue through the difficult trading conditions. The message remains that any business in Breckland, in need of financial support, should be eligible for a grant under our schemes. Any business can apply via a single form: <https://www.breckland.gov.uk/article/16267/Covid-19-Business-Grant>

**Spring Back Campaign** Breckland businesses are now able to access a further £2m of support which includes:

- Shop Front Improvement Scheme - investing in the biggest ever "Spring Clean" across the District. Any businesses based in Breckland's primary shopping areas, or any customer facing business, will be able to get financial support for improvements and enhancements to their shop frontage - from a lick of paint through to a replacement frontage.
- Covid Safe and Adaptions Grants - helping businesses shoulder the burden of trading in a Covid-safe way and meet the challenges of serving under restrictions. Grants of up to £5k will be available to invest in safety; or change business practices. From extra PPE and screens, through to a new marquee or outdoor seating.
- Covid Safe Scheme - helping customers easily see the efforts businesses are making to ensure Covid safety, with a simple accreditation scheme delivered by Breckland Public Protection
- Continued Investment in Shopper Safety - with new and replacement hand sanitiser stations in all busy shopping areas, and friendly Covid Support Officers helping assure safety 6 days a week
  - Expanded Enjoy Discover Explore Campaign - promoting and highlighting the local shopping and leisure offer across Breckland, with branding now bespoke to each Market Town
  - Digital Breckland - building on the highly successful scheme - Breckland Digital High Streets - enabling any Breckland-based business to get support for their digital offer, with grants towards making key digital changes from a new payment system, through to search engine optimisation.
  - Expanded enterprise and start-up scheme - having already created 10 new businesses since Christmas, we are looking to grow the pipeline of new innovative businesses further. With finance and advice for new entrepreneurs looking to start-up locally.
  - Support grants for businesses outside of national schemes -As part of commitment that no business in need goes unsupported, Breckland's discretionary scheme extends grants to any Breckland-based-business ineligible under national schemes - including self-employed, market traders and mobile traders.
  - We have already supported around 200 businesses through these programmes since the national roadmap was announced, with several hundred further in the pipeline for support. Info and applications can be found at <https://www.breckland.gov.uk/businesssupport>

In addition, we have continued to undertake the 'day job' and further increased the range of services that we provide such as:

- New Waste/Trade Waste service where we have joined forces with North Norfolk and Kings Lynn to provide a more efficient, more economical, and broader service than hitherto, as share a common boundary. Brand new fleet of vehicles, with electric tail lifts, more economical and more efficient. Significant savings for all councils. Starting to introduce a 'trade-waste' service which is proving very popular.
- Increased our staff resources focussed on dealing with
  - Fly tipping
  - Business support
  - Covid compliance and support
  - Animal welfare
- We have honoured our commitments to our climate change programme
- We have broadened and enhanced the vulnerability programmes

In March 2020, the Council donated £10,000 to Thetford foodbank, which serves Thetford, Attleborough and Watton, and the Mid-Norfolk foodbank, which serves Swaffham and Dereham, to help them buy essential food items and supplies for local residents.

In January 2021, a further decision was taken to award Mid-Norfolk Foodbank an additional £2,500 towards the costs of moving to a new home after its current warehouse reached capacity.

At the beginning of April, Thetford Foodbank, which has supported thousands of vulnerable people over lockdown, was awarded £12,500 by Breckland Council to help the group purchase a new and permanent home.

As you can see it has not been a normal year yet despite this all the services and facilities noted above have been delivered with staff working in an unprecedented environment. Further I am delighted to report that not only is the district council tax level amongst, if not the lowest in the country, Breckland Council has delivered a balanced budget and provides a stable platform on which we can continue to deliver our services in the year ahead.

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

### **6.1 Thompson Millennium Green Charitable Trust (Martin Hayman, Chair, Management Committee)**

In the absence of an annual report from the Trust Cllr. Welch delivered his report for TMGCT instead.

#### **Finances**

- A tough financial year due to no Thompson Run
- No 'Covid' grant money received.
- Breckland contributing 50% towards fencing car park
- Lottery income collection ongoing, a couple of numbers available
- Intend to hold the Thompson Run on 26 Sept. (volunteers required, speak with Martin Kaye)

#### **Boundaries and Green**

- Field Gate on Hallfield Road and posts around old village hall car park completed
- The management group has been seeking ways whereby the TMG might be enhanced and this has included a site visit with the Norfolk Wildlife Trust

#### **Play Equipment and Adult Exercise Area**

- Has been closed throughout the pandemic. After guidance from Breckland, the equipment and exercise area will open shortly with appropriate signage and sanitising stations
- Some equipment will not be available to ensure distancing requirements, one swing/no basket

#### **Recent heavy rainfall and flooding**

- The committee, enhanced by other volunteers, including a ground hydrologist, continue to assess what more might be done to assist in enhancing existing flood prevention measures on the Green
- Involvement has included representatives from NCC and Highways

#### **Community Involvement**

- The management group is looking at ways for further community involvement in the TMG with perhaps a survey sent to every household in due course
- TMG involved in planning for the Community Celebration 11 September 2021

Next Working Party will take place soon and a plan of action has been formulated

Next Meeting Monday 5 July 2021

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

Cllr. Kaye said: Since the last meeting, May 2019, bookings were good until March 2020 when the pandemic struck and bookings had to be cancelled. Cancelled some running costs but not all e.g. rates. Building has been maintained and some work done. Metal strips on plaster boarding in the hall in April 2021. Prepared to re-open in December, but then not allowed. Put us in good stead, as a practice for a future time. The local elections in May 2021 were the first event in the hall since March 2020 and this Parish Council meeting is the second.

A report was also received from Bronwen Tyler after the meeting: Since we locked down in March 2020, we have been unable to hold any events or meetings. We have spent the time ensuring we have covid-safe measures in place and Breckland Council seem happy with the hall's preparations.

We had the cracks in the foyer and hall walls repaired after some considerable correspondence between architect and builders. We had to meet part of the costs but luckily not all. Martin has been especially good at doing the checks each week which limits the number of people entering the hall. We had a request by the school to assist with their covid measures by allowing staff parking, to which we agreed. However, the staff were not keen to use it in winter months with dark nights so it did not happen. In April we had a clean-up session of hall and exterior in readiness for lifting restrictions but also to clean up the mess left by the wall repairs. We remain with a safe amount of reserves but do need to get back to hiring when sensible and safe. We have been receiving enquiries for bookings, not all being followed up but one or two firm. Classes are proving reluctant to get going again though, as are some groups like Stitchers and Wayland Quilters. These two partly due to close proximity working and the vulnerability of some members. We are looking forward to the first major event, which will be the village celebration with the Millennium Green and other village organisations. We have been allowed by Breckland to retain the WW2 grant which of course was unused in 2020 and put it towards a WW2 element of the event. Hopefully, we will gradually be able to safely host a range of activity in the coming months.

### **6.3 Thompson Parish Church (KWo)**

No report for Thompson Parish Church.

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

The Clerk delivered this report. We continue to rent out the land to Mr. Syer. At Christmas we gave the usual bonus to those in the village who were seen to be in need. We also advertised that the fund was available for anyone living in the village with particular difficulties due to Covid but had no applications. As long as we do not contravene benefit rights we can respond to one off difficulties for anyone resident in Thompson.

### **6.5 Thompson WI (Kate Winslow, President)**

Due to unprecedented times no annual parish meeting was held last year. This report covers the period June 2019 - May 2021. Towards the end of 2019 there were rumblings about a "virus" that caused concern around the world. Thompson WI continued to have a varied range of speakers, "a woman in a man's world - scuba diving", a film night and birthday meal out. We hosted our County Federation autumn meeting in the hall, with over 100 WI ladies coming to the event. This was as a feather in our cap and following on from this we were asked to cater for a "thank you" meal for federation members, this went very well, and we provided lunch for nearly 60 but come March 2020 the country went into lockdown - no more face-to-face meetings and we all had to get used to a new normal. We tried to keep in contact with members and then along came "zoom". Our secretary set up meetings and we have continued to meet via zoom since then. We have been able to invite ex members who have moved away to join us for meetings. It has enabled us to have speakers from all over the country, a lovely talk from Guide Dogs for the Blind with the very amusing Chris and his guide dog sitting in his front room in Yorkshire. And a talk on her work behind the scenes of various tv cookery shows to authors. We have had quizzes, bingo, Christmas makes, decorating Easter bonnets. The rules were relaxed during the summer months of 2020 and we were able to meet up on the Green for a picnic, albeit socially distanced. 2019 saw 1 member turn 70, one 80 and another of our members turned 90 and so becomes our 2<sup>nd</sup> honorary member. At the time of her birthday rules allowed us to visit indoors and so a gift and flowers were presented to her. Another member got married. Our annual meeting was also via zoom. Two committee members resigned but we welcomed a new member onto the committee but otherwise all stayed the same. 2021 still saw us in lockdown again, with zoom meetings but as of May 17<sup>th</sup> the rules were relaxed, and we hope to meet up socially again on the Green - weather permitting and restart meetings in the Hall from July. Our membership has suffered a little during this time as some members do not enjoy meetings via computers, and now the subs are due we have lost several members, who will be very welcome to re-join anytime. Once we are back to normal, we hope that we can attract new members.

## 6.6 Stitchers Group (Bronwen Tyler)

The Clerk delivered this report. Thompson Stitchers have not met since we entered lockdown in March 2020. We have discussed the future but at the moment the members are reluctant to meet in close confines. We will need a majority to feel able to meet in order to be able to afford the hall rental. Therefore, we will not be starting regular meetings for a while yet. One idea under consideration is to begin with one off workshops or perhaps a daytime meeting but no decisions have been finalised.

## 6.7 Wayland Partnership (Bronwen Tyler)

The Clerk delivered this report. It has been an incredibly difficult and stressful year for the Partnership. As a charity we are dependent on funding bids and donations to remain solvent. We also depend on the rentals from our serviced offices and public space, income from the Dragonfly Gallery and from the other services offered from Wayland House. Lockdown in March 2020 meant that virtually all income dried up.

We closed the Gallery ahead of lockdown because our volunteers, who are crucial to our being able to man it, became increasingly reluctant to be at risk of infection from Covid. Most are in the vulnerable categories of age or health. With less people to oversee the room we opened part time and then took the decision to close altogether. This immediately meant no income for us and our exhibitors of art and crafts, and no access to the Tourist Information Centre. Once lockdown was announced we closed the remainder of the building, although we had to allow essential access in some circumstances for our tenants and we had to maintain the building. Some of our office tenants were either, able to work from home but, in some instances, some were unable to continue their businesses for the foreseeable future. Podiatry, physio and beauticians were the most affected because they deal directly with people. We had to make the decision to accept half rents. Initially hoping that this would not be for too long! Little did we know.

Having had an incredibly difficult time in 2019 after the death of Jan Godfrey, when we had to do a lot of re-organisation, we had been planning funding bids for community projects but these had to be put on hold due to the ban on mixing and meeting with others. We did apply to Lottery for a digitisation project with plans to manage it at a distance but the criteria were a little vague and it turned out that a much more national project was needed than we could cope with, so of course we were not considered. We were directed to smaller lottery funds for a more local version and are working on a new bid.

All these difficulties and the consequent lack of incomes had us very worried. Contrary to popular opinion we do not have lumps of cash waiting for people to suggest a project on which to spend it. Our income from tenants largely goes on keeping the building going to enable all the charity work to happen. Low rents were going to have an impact. We tightened our belts as much as we could, ceasing bin collections, cutting the heating to tick over in winter and lots more small savings. We could not furlough our staff. We needed Amanda to work from home and occasionally visit the office, otherwise post (ours and tenants') would build up, and bills would not be paid. Furloughed staff are not allowed to perform any work or service for the organisation which employs them. So, it was immediately obvious that we could not survive without Amanda, compounded by the main trustees being in the vulnerable category. She has been an absolute star. Our tenants, both actual and virtual, have continued to have a service and our bills have been paid on time. She has been able to alert the trustees of any issues with the building before they became a problem. She was protected by having the office to herself behind the glass screen and we immediately put a lot of covid measures in place, banned entry to the office by any tenants and others who might be in the building etc. We also bought and put in place an external secure post box for one virtual tenant who received regular packages so that she did not need to access the building.

We also did not furlough Ruth, our Gallery co-ordinator. Initially this was partly because we naively thought lockdown would not be for long, but also because we wanted to keep the profile of the Gallery in the public eye. Ruth has considerable ideas and expertise for online exhibitions and we could still sell through this media use so we asked her to remain working. She has done a wonderful job and, despite no opportunity for people to see their work in real life, she has attracted an ever-increasing band of exhibitors. While stuck at home she has also successfully completed a teaching course to add to her qualifications.

We are so aware that we have two very valuable staff members in these two young women. We bid into the Covid grant scheme but were rejected as not fitting a category in the first round. We suffer from being unique! I complained loudly and bitterly, pointing out that closing us, should finances run out, meant closing six other businesses and making life very difficult for virtual tenants who would all need a new business address, not to mention the loss of our charitable activities which will be needed post-covid. We were already in danger of eating into our reserves. They listened and we fitted the criteria for the next round, gaining a substantial grant. This meant that we also became eligible for automatic top up grants. A huge relief after many sleepless nights.

While all this was going one of our two boilers was failing. We needed to ensure we had sufficient funds for replacement and were getting quotes for a new one. We dare not risk our reserves if we could help it. We applied to the Norfolk Community Foundation fund and received £5000 towards the costs. We also had some donations from parishes and the public towards the fund for which we are very grateful. It still left a shortfall but a recent lottery bid has made up the difference.

Another irritation and expense that we could have done without was the demolition of part of our car park wall by a driver who did not stop to leave his insurance details. We have had to fund the excess.

We began to consider how we would manage in the future once restrictions were lifted, trying to anticipate a very different world. We have decided to refurbish the Gallery to make the space airy and open and make more use of the garden. We are installing a small kitchen servery in order make a more sociable environment but also to avoid the need for volunteers to access the upstairs kitchen. We will remove the bays but still have wall space for displays. We will flex the space to allow for twilight and evening talks and training when the gallery is not open and for this, we are buying a projector and screen and some new laptops. All of this is funded via Awards For All and includes the top up sum for the boiler. We should be starting work shortly.

Breckland's regeneration fund has paid for a marquee for the Sensory Garden which will extend our use of the outdoors, and a desk screen for the Gallery.

Meanwhile plans for the Digital and Creative Media Centre are progressing with several meetings held with Breckland officers and others. They are extremely positive and supportive and we are optimistic that, though this may take a year or two. It will happen.

Our tenants are now back to working from the building and we have enquiries for rental of vacant office space. We are feeling able to plan for new projects and be confident we will be able to deliver them within the community. There is a long way to go but hopefully the worst is behind us.

## **7 To receive comments from the public**

There were no comments from the public

The meeting closed at 7:48pm