

THORVERTON PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Meeting of Thorverton Parish Council held at the Memorial Hall, Silver St, Thorverton on Tuesday 13th February 2024 at 7pm.

PRESENT

Cllr Andrew Foster (Chairman)
Cllr Andy Price (Vice-Chairman)
Cllr John Hodge
Cllr Stuart Crang
Cllr Claire Heaven-Roberts
Cllr Colin Marshall
Cllr Graham Sims
Cllr Bryanna Uglow
Cllr Shirley Nightingale

ABSENT

IN ATTENDANCE: 6 members of the public, District Cllr Rhys Roberts
Jim Roberts (Clerk & RFO)

1. Public Open Session

A member of the public's representative made a statement on behalf of a parishioner. This was a repeat of much of what was said in January's public open session and the parishioner will be replied to in writing.

A second speaker had criticisms of the Parish Council and was happy to put them in writing at the Chairman's request. He will receive a response in due course.

The Chairman closed the public session at 19:30.

2. Declarations of Interest

None.

3. Apologies

None, all Councillors present.

4 Confirmation of Minutes

Council **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of Tuesday 9th January 2024 as a true record and the Chairman duly signed them.

5 External Reports

5.1 Devon County Council

County Cllr Squires not present. D/Cllr Roberts reported that C/Cllr Squires had to attend a Council event in North Devon so could not attend. He passed on the news that DCC has more money for roads and encouraged the Parish Council to vigorously pursue any Highways matters via C/Cllr Squires.

5.2 Mid Devon District Council

D/Cllr Roberts reported:

- MDDC is holding a joint event on 20th March to offer more support and develop relationships with Town and Parish Councils. See item 10.3.
- The Planning Dept has been a real issue for MDDC. The last Enforcement Officer left abruptly, but 2 have been recruited and

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will be joining soon.

- MDDC Cabinet has approved the 2024-25 budget which is balanced. This required £1m savings by end of this financial year when first considered, now down to £86,000. The Council Tax rise will be 2.99% for 2024-25.
- A further draw down of reserves will be needed to cover the problems with the 3Rivers Development Company collapse. Assets are being sold gradually and write-offs will hopefully be completed in the middle of the next financial year.
- MDDC owns over 3000 Social Housing properties. MDDC plans to improve standards over the next three years including asbestos mitigation. A review of policy on domestic animals in MDDC properties will shortly take place. Safety will be a priority.

[Two members of the public left at 7:43pm]

D/Cllr Roberts advised that MDDC had a public question session where questions were asked in advanced in writing. Members of the public who don't offer questions in advance are promised a reply within ten days. All questions are minuted, as are the responses thus safeguarding transparency. The 'courtroom' process is not allowed. Chairman suspended standing orders to allow the second speaker to say that he was not associated with the 'courtroom' process earlier and he didn't wish to be associated with that behaviour.

5.3 Saturday Market

Cllr Hodge had attended January's meeting and reported that allotment bills and garage rent demands hadn't been received. Berrysbridge weight limit may help to restrict vehicles that are too large and too heavy getting stuck on the bend.

The Chairman had attended February's event and reported the sign marking at the Quarry Car Park had still not been done. This is waiting for a period of dry weather.

6 Projects

6.1 Affordable Housing

The Chairman reported that there have been several developments since the last meeting.

The original TAHG group has been expanded and a larger Steering Group (SG) of approximately 12 members has met. The SG was made up of volunteers from the soon to be officially registered Community Land Trust (CLT). An advisor has been recruited and will help the SG through the initial stages. The SG will split into four sub-groups, Communications, Governance, Technical and Finance.

These sub-groups are currently meeting and will present their initial recommendations to the SG and the advisor on 29th Feb and expect to then hold an Open Meeting for the whole Parish during w/c 11 March. We have held a third meeting with the Church Commissioners and their agents, Savills. This was extremely positive and a Memorandum of Understanding has been exchanged.

[Three members of the public & D/Cllr Roberts left at 8:07pm]

6.2 Thorverton Library

The DCC Mobile Library Service will end this month. Cllr Nightingale will identify any items needed and funding will be sought from DCC who are offering grants up to £300.

7 Recreation Ground

7.1 Financial Report

January repairs to the Play Tunnel but the finance will be incurred next month.

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It is now about seven years since the dead wood beneath the trees were cleared away and it needs doing again. This requires either removing for disposal or chipping on site. Council hopes to include this work in the Village Tidy-Up Day. Cllr Sims is gradually building up the hedge mindful of neighbouring residents' concerns.

7.2 Play Equipment

The Working Group has identified 9 funding possibilities but only 2 are available to the Parish Council, and they are limited to less than the amount needed (eg max £10,000). Quotes are being revised to be ready for funding submission by the Working Group.

8 Grounds Maintenance

8.1 Handyman work for the month will be grass cutting, if weather permits. Weed spraying will start in March. The section of School Lane between the 2 gates at the school needs cleaning as well.

8.2 Village Tidy-Up Day

Council decided this will be held on 23rd March 2024, Cllr Marshall will organise.

8.3 Tree Survey

Cllrs Sims & Marshall will identify all the trees for which the Parish Council is responsible. The clerk will supply the relevant maps.

9 Planning & Consultations

9.1 24/00150/FULL Land at Lynch Farm Roof to cover yard.

Council **RESOLVED** to make no comment on this application.

9.2 24/00151/HOUSE 1 Stonebridge Cottages Replacement Porch

Council **RESOLVED** to make no comment on this application.

9.3 Crediton Town Centre Masterplan Consultation

Council **RESOLVED** to make no comment on this plan.

9.4 Survey of rural services in Mid-Devon

Council asked Cllr Crang to respond emphasising Thorverton as a hub village for smaller surrounding settlements.

9.5 Town & Parish Charter Review

The Chairman will review the charter and draft a response.

10 Correspondence

10.1 (Part B) January's Public Session

Council **RESOLVED** to advise the speaker that is entirely within the Parish Council's remit to discuss all aspects of planning matters and is fully entitled to enquire or challenge any planning matter. Cllrs Sims & Foster abstained from the vote.

Council **RESOLVED** to advise the speaker that the MDDC Monitoring Officer found no misconduct at all by either Cllr Foster nor Cllr Lane (now ex-Cllr Lane) and has done no more than offer advice to the Parish Council as a whole. Cllrs Nightingale, Foster and Sims abstained from the vote.

Council **RESOLVED** that the clerk will answer all factual questions and must refute any untruths and incorrect assumptions or inaccuracies from the speaker. Cllrs Sims & Foster abstained from this vote.

Council **RESOLVED** to advise the speaker that his dispute with the Chairman regarding conversations held outside Parish Council meetings is no business of the Council and must be dealt with as a personal dispute. Cllrs Sims & Foster abstained from this vote.

Council **RESOLVED** to advise the speaker that they were entirely happy to work with Cllr Foster as Chairman who has always been honest, timely, consultative and helpful in all dealings with the other Cllrs and Parishioners. Cllrs Sims & Foster abstained from the vote.

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10.2 Footpaths to Permissive Bridleways

Council looks forward to hearing about which paths the equestrians would like to be converted to bridleways and any discussions they have had with landowners concerning new bridleways.

10.3 MDDC State of the District Debate

The Chairman and clerk will attend. Cllrs will suggest any items they wish to be included in the debate but were generally content with the agenda items planned.

11 Clerk Employment

11.1 Annual Review

11.2 Pension Arrangements

Postponed to the next meeting due to the time the meeting had taken so far.

12 Finance

12.1 Bank balance

Not available as statements are not being received. The clerk will pursue the bank with vigour as the statements are needed for budgeting and audit.

12.2 Payments

Council **RESOLVED** to make the following payments:

12.2.1 Mid Devon Mobility Donation		£ 200.00
12.2.2 Exeter Inn Winter Warmth Food & Beverages		£ 75.00
12.2.3 J P Roberts Clerk pay for January	£ 425.69	
Reimbursement for Wildflower seeds	£ 89.50	£ 515.19

12.24 A cheque was rewritten to our Payroll Contractor as the previous cheque was made out to the incorrect payee.

13 Business at the Chairman's Discretion

Council only discussed further details of items that are already covered above.

14 Next Meeting

Tuesday 12th March 2024

The Chairman closed the meeting at 10.04pm .

Signed Date
Cllr Andrew Foster, Chairman