

**Minutes of the Thompson Annual Parish Meeting (Annual Assembly)  
held in Thompson Community Hall  
at 7.00pm on Tuesday 19 May 2026**

Present:	Rober Garcia	Chair
	Ron Powrie	Vice Chair
	Duncan Gregory	
	Jo Shelton	
	Tony Snelling	
	Kim Austin	Clerk

Also present: There were 3 members of the public present

The meeting opened at 7:00pm

**1 To accept apologies for absence**

Apologies were accepted from Cllr. Jean Wagner who was unwell.

**2 To agree Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting (Annual Assembly) held on Tues 20 May 2025.**

The minutes had been circulated prior to the meeting. Cllr. Gregory proposed and Cllr. Powrie seconded the proposal and the minutes were signed as correct by Cllr. Robert Garcia, 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 (RG)**

Many thanks for the service of two councillors who resigned during the year, Jean Kaye and Karen Keen. Thank you to Cllr. Gregory for his service as Vice-Chair and thank you to Cllr. Powrie for taking over the role. A big welcome to two new councillors, Jo Shelton and Tony Snelling who came on board this year, as did I. Cllr. Shelton is serving as link between the Parish Council and the Millennium Green Committee. Cllr. Snelling has thrown himself into the flooding and drainage issues in the Parish ! My special role is liaison with the Woodland Trust who own the Thompson Wood site in the village. Since Cllr Kaye's resignation we have been without a permanent Chair and the role has been filled pro tem, by rotation of the councillors which has worked reasonably well but is not ideal. It is hoped that one of the councillors will be moved to take on the role soon.

**Pockthorpe to Sparrow Hill Footpath** The path is now clear and being used by parishioners and walkers. Thank you to Karen Keen who continues to monitor its progress and has led several walks on it with the Walk Watton Group. Norfolk County Council (NCC) have agreed to put up signage and this is expected to happen soon, now that we are in a new financial year. We are currently considering options for the long-term maintenance of the footpath.

**Drains** The Council is very concerned by the flooding problems in the village. NCC Highways Dept. have now cleaned and inspected the pipes and chambers between School Lane and Tottington Road. The ditch on the Millennium Green adjacent to Tottington Road however has to be deep repaired to allow water to drain away from Bus Stop Corner. This is major work and quotes are being sought. Many thanks to Cllr. Snelling for pursuing these matters.

**Reclaim the Rain** A series of pits were dug on the Green to look at the soil composition and to find out how water moves through the ground. An attenuation and associated water capture measures have been installed at the School. Some works have been carried out on the Wissey to slow down

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the water flow at times of heavy rain and thereby reduce the risk and severity of flooding in that area of Thompson.

**Thompson Wood** The site has now been completely laid out and is taking shape. There is a number of permissive paths for walkers and these will increase. Another large area will be planted with trees in the autumn. The car park is expected to be built this year. It is a great sadness to the Council that there has been vandalism and thefts of materials and installations (embedded posts). We ask all parishioners to be vigilant.

**Litter Picks** There were two litter picks in the year. Many thanks to the volunteers who took part. Many thanks indeed to Kate and Geoff Winslow who have organised and led the events for many years and have finally stood down. Cllr. Gregory has kindly agreed to lead the litter picks going forward.

**Defibrillator** We have a new defibrillator that Cllr. Wagner managed to secure on application to the British Heart Foundation - fully funded. Well done and thank you to Jean! This is to be installed on the outside wall at the Chequers Inn, Griston Road. A Listed Building Planning Application was submitted to Breckland with much help from Cllr Wagner and we hope to hear that it has been approved very soon.

**Website** Thank you to Geoff Winslow for keeping the Thompson Parish Website up to date, with agendas and minutes etc. We have commissioned a new website, the test website is available and there will soon be a handover, ideally to the Clerk plus two councillors. We will be able to keep our own website up to date and Geoff will be able to relinquish this onerous task. Once the new website is fully up and running and acceptable the old website will be switched off. The website complies with legislation as a gov.uk domain and all councillors will have gov.uk email addresses.

**Parish Clerk** The PC is grateful to Parish Clerk, Kim Austin whose service has been invaluable, especially providing continuity during the period without a permanent Chair. Thank you Kim!

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

**Fabian Eagle** Due to recent County Council elections, Fabian informed us that he was no longer our County Councillor. He had sent an email which had been circulated to all councillors prior to this meeting. We wish Fabian the best of luck in his future endeavours.

In case you did not already know, I am no longer your county councillor. My NCC email address will not be in use and all future County Council queries will need to be directed to your new County Councillor - Scott Hussey.

I have enjoyed my 9 years representing you at the county Council working with people I already knew and people I have come to think of as friends. Due to my work, I will still be in your villages and look forward to bumping into you in the future. I have enjoyed bringing a new way of working to county hall and what I have achieved for our villages with your help. The extra cut of our dangerous junctions which worked so well was expanded last year across all of Norfolk. The flashing Deer signs to reduce speed on our roads. The mobile slow down signs. Adding new gritting routes. The flooding equipment and other schemes many of them, which I was happy to help fund from my Highways fund. I have also this year finally managed to get the Brecks division extra funding for Highway Maintenance as I always felt we should receive more with such a large geographical area and so many rural roads. This funding will be spent on extra surface dressing and improving parts of the roads where there has been persistent damage. This has already started and I hope it will continue. On a Norfolk perspective in the last 3 years, I delivered. Norfolk's agreement with the Liviv region in Ukraine using my contacts, we were the first council in the UK to have such an economic agreement with a Ukrainian region and one of the first outside of countries bordering Ukraine. Our agreement encouraged other parts of countries across the world to establish contacts with Liviv including California. We have been able to establish contacts with these regions for economic purposes through Liviv and us being the first. This has helped us establish formal agreements with Norfolk Virginia and Ontario.

As well the extra junction cut, I was able to persuade the council to introduce an extra Hazardous waste amnesty in the Spring at the recycling centres.

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The High Streets Matters programme which I am particularly proud of and designed by me to support our Market Town and the independent retailers, last year supported over 100 business and is on target to exceed that this year, has achieved national recognition and is forming the basis of lots of councils support for High Streets across the country . Suffolk County Council is paying Norfolk to run the programme for them this year. High Streets Matters is also forming part of the Governments strategy for High Streets and civil servants queried the £250,000 invested into this programme as they could not believe such a programme could be delivered for that sum and it was a typo and should be £2.5 million. Love your Market Town grants formed part of this programme.

Support programmes, I created for this year are Norfolk Pubs Matters to help our pubs and hospitality sector. Start up support for Young People and Veterans so they can become Self Employed or start up their own business. Support for social enterprises and community start-ups.

In my 3 years as cabinet member for Economic Growth, I have managed to secure £1.5 million in support and grants to our small business, despite challenging budgets for the county council. There is also the Rural Business Awards to celebrate our rural economy now in its 3<sup>rd</sup> year entirely funded by sponsors so no cost to the Norfolk Taxpayers and pleased business from our villages have won or been runner ups in the categories.

The Extraordinary business event launched this year to raise awareness of business that people would not think operate in Norfolk. Most of Norfolk's MPs attended, as well officers from the Department of Trade. This event means these businesses and Norfolk should receive more government investment and acknowledgement.

If there is something I can help with you can contact me on my mobile number.

It's been a pleasure. Fabian

**Breckland District Council (Phil Cowen)** No report received.

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

**6.1 Thompson Millennium Green Charitable Trust (Jo Shelton, Management Committee Member)**

**Committee Members:** Jo Shelton, Andrew Cook, Teresa Blake, Jean Kaye

**Management:**

Angus resigned from the committee in October 2025. The Chair remains vacant. There is a real need for new members with Angus' resignation and Jean moving away from Thompson soon, the committee will be down to 3 members. It was agreed that this is not a sustainable situation. It is hoped that more help and support will be forthcoming from the PC.

**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.

**Thompson Primary School:**

We continue to support 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.

**Community Engagement:**

Thompson Run Fair October 2025 was a great success and is a vital fund raiser for the Millennium Green. The next run has been set for 4 October 2026.

Andrew has completed the website with just a few photos to add.

We would like to thank all of the volunteers who have supported efforts on the Green over the last 12 months, whether being part of the committee or helping create and run fundraising events or being a part of the working parties for our Clean the Green days. We are grateful for the additional work undertaken by committee members in managing the Green, running the Lottery, renewing the website and generally giving their time and experience.

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**Finances:**

As of April 2026, the Bank Balances are as follows: Current Account - £968.04 Savings Account £20,149.42. As in previous years the Millennium Green lottery generated around £1,500. Jo and Andrew have signed bank signatory documentation from Barclays. The internal audit has been completed by Arden Kendal.

**Safeguarding Policy:**

Andrew has put together a safeguarding policy for the Trustees to approve. There needs to be a first point of contact for the website and a chain of contacts agreed in case the first point of contact cannot be reached.

**Maintenance: Boundaries and Green**

The orchard was pruned in February. Some coppicing has been done. The brambles need to be tackled again. There is a soft patch on the plinth of the bench overlooking the pond. Tom Cottage to be asked if he minds taking a look. Moles seem to be under control.

The Committee accepted a quote for removing bullrushes and unwanted vegetation from the pond following advice from the Norfolk Wildlife Trust and the work has been carried out with all the bullrushes removed and pond dredged. Hedges were flailed in January. TSR have added a surcharge for grass cutting to cover the extra cost of fuel. This has been queried but TTSR are adamant that the surcharge will be added. There seems to be very little that can be done about it and it was agreed to stay with TTSR for the grass cutting.

**Children's play area:**

July 2025 Inspection - all was in good order. Next inspection July 2026.

**Reclaim the Rain:**

This has been ongoing with inspection pits dug. The technical reports from these have been forwarded. Generally felt that Reclaim the Rain project has, thus far, been a disappointment.

**6.2 Thompson Community Hall (Bronwen Tyler) Bronwen delivered the report.**

We have had a successful year with a variety of events and hirings in the hall. Our themed meals, or indeed anything involving food, are always successful and we pride ourselves in keeping our standards high. Our cheese scones and home-made cakes are always popular at book sales and coffee mornings.

We are always mindful that the hall is Thompson's resource. We try to come up with new ideas for events to add variety, the most recent being House of Games Meets the Generation Game, which was great fun. Classic Cars and Coffee, an idea launched by Roy and Dee Brooklyn, proved popular each month, even when the forecast is a bit threatening to the precious vehicles. Ice Cream Thursdays were a little later than usual starting this year due to the wet weather and the children were begging us to begin again, and they have been very well attended each week.

The Book Sales have taken a slightly new direction upon the retirement of Caroline and Keith, who had announced over a year ago that they were finding it too much, though to the public they continue to look much as always. The remainder of the group, which is made up of the three charities who benefit from the sales, agreed to continue the popular events. As a result, we invested in a storage shed and equipment for the books at the rear of the hall and have steadily been taking in donations so that we now have a good stock and regular weekly donations. A valued team of sorters goes through the books whenever they have time and sorts them into various categories - fiction, non-fiction, and children's. Non-fiction is further sorted into subjects. All books are checked for quality and those in very poor condition are set aside to be sold for pulping. We keep a careful eye out for old or unusual books which might have a higher value, research them and, if worth more to collectors than the small sums we charge, we set them aside to be taken to auction, which will raise more funds for the charities. We do need to make it clear that all of the proceeds raised goes to the three charities of Thompson and Griston churches and the Community Hall, with transparent expenses only being taken if necessary. We always welcome people to the team to help sort books, set up or clear up on the day, or join the organising group. This year's summer sale on 18 July is combined with the Millennium Green's event to celebrate National Year of Reading so should be a really fun day as well as a great village event.

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In addition to our own fundraising, we have regular hires for birthday parties, corporate away days, meetings, keep fit, dog training, swing groups, weddings and more.

I am sure you all heard of the unexpected flood we experienced in late April. A pipe fitting came apart resulting in about an inch of water across the entire building. We do not know the cause, but it may have been a fluctuation in water pressure. Luckily it was discovered fairly quickly due to it being coffee morning, otherwise the damage would have been more serious. The most damage was to the heating system electricals and although much repair has been done there is still work to be completed. In addition, redecoration work is needed. We were lucky not to lose much stock. We had to cancel a couple of events that week but we able to go ahead with most, including a 90th Birthday party on the following Saturday.

We continue to hold a managed investment fund under the terms of the initial bequest, which was that the money was left for the build and/or development of a community hall. We are mindful that our current account is mainly for the general running costs from funds which we raise via our activities, but that, in the not-so-distant future we may need to draw on the bequest fund to keep the hall up to scratch or even extend it. For this reason, we do not draw on it unnecessarily.

The most surprising news is that we are losing two founder members of the hall committee in the next few weeks, Jean and Martin Kaye. They both perform key roles - treasurer and project manager. The treasurer's role is perhaps understood but Jean is also a very active member of the team at all events. Martin, as project manager, performs a lot of the routine background tasks involved in running the building from weedkilling the pétanque terrain to organising rotas and checks on the systems. A list is available for anyone showing an interest. While we are agreed we can divide the project manager tasks between us, if necessary, it is an increase in our overall workload. We do need a treasurer and ideally, we need new members on the team to join us in running the hall for the benefit of Thompson. We are a group who work well together and have fun putting on events. Although we do need trustees, we recognise that a period of time as a committee member first before committing will suit most people.

If you have an interest in joining us or know someone who does, please talk to us. Meanwhile, we would like to see more members of the Thompson community join in the events we hold or suggest and help us put on new ones that would attract more people.

### **6.3 Thompson Parish Church - St Martin's (Katharine Wolstenholme Church Warden)**

Annual report was delivered by Katharine.

Firstly, on behalf of the Parochial Church Council, I would like to thank to the Parish Council for their generous donation of £500 towards churchyard expenses. These include strimming the churchyard, mowing, and hedge cutting. This is donation is invaluable and we couldn't manage without it. Our annual budget, the amount we need to keep the church open, is around £11,500. This is before any capital investment in the fabric of the building. Our largest expense is our Parish Share of £5,300, roughly 50% of our budget, which is the contribution we have to make to the Diocese of Norwich for our share of clergy and other diocesan costs. The Church of England may appear to be wealthy, but at Parish level we receive no subsidy or contribution - we must raise all costs ourselves. This is why the Parish Council contribution is so very important. Our second biggest expense is insurance, followed by churchyard maintenance. Apart from a rent we receive from a field in Caston, an ownership dating back hundreds of years, the remaining amount comes entirely from fund raising. In 2025 we raised funds from Lavender's Lunch, held annually in September, a 'fireside chat' in December, 2 pop-up suppers, ad hoc donations and the Second-Hand Book Sales, which are a great example of collaboration between the Church and the Community Hall. The PCC are fully supportive of the Community Hall's initiative to manage the sales, following the retirement of Keith and Caroline. In 2025 we also benefited from the Church Mouse Festival, organised across the six Benefice churches. The proceeds from these activities meant that we were just able to cover our costs.

The church is the oldest building in the village, built immediately after the Black Death nearly 700 years ago. It has witnessed great events; the Reformation, Civil War, Enclosure, 2 World Wars: and it is a wonderful example of medieval architecture. Whether or not you are a church goer, we believe

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that as a 'living museum' we need to preserve the fabric and fittings for future generations of villagers and visitors. With this in mind this year we are launching a fund-raising campaign to complete the works we started 10 years ago, with the priority being replacement rainwater drainage and new chancel roof coverings. These will cost in excess of £250,000, and we will have to rely on obtaining grants from the Heritage Lottery Fund and other funding bodies.

During 2025 the Bishops of Norwich, Lynn and Thetford all took services at St Martin's including a service of Confirmation with the Bishop of Norwich in October, as well as baptisms, weddings, funerals, and the Mouse Festival, village carols around the Christmas Tree, and the PCC were delighted that the school held their Christingle service in December, with well over 100 pupils, parents and teachers attending. Services are held every 6 weeks in rotation with the other 5 churches in the Benefice. The Church belongs to everyone and is open 24 hours a day for Worship, visitors or quiet contemplation.

Finally we would like to thank the Thompson community for supporting the various fund raising initiatives by attending Lavender's Lunch, pop up suppers and the Book Sales, and all those volunteers who make the events possible, including Annabel and Sandie who arrange the flowers for our services; and the dedicated team of clock winders led by John Taylor. We would also like to welcome back the Rector, Vanessa Layfield after a prolonged period of illness.

**6.4 Parish Land - Thompson Town Land Charity (Bronwen Tyler)** Bronwen delivered the report.

The Trust continues to have two trustees -Bronwen Tyler and Kate Winslow - with Geoff Winslow managing the finances. Trustees are appointed by the Parish Council but are responsible to the Charity Commission, to whom we report each year. This is an ancient charity with much of the detail confused over the centuries but initially begun to aid the poor of the village in 1599. The rules have changed slightly over time but remain focussed on aiding those in need in Thompson. However, it is increasingly difficult to identify Thompson residents in need under the present welfare state, partly due to the need to avoid contravening benefit rules, partly due to Thompson being a much more affluent village than in the past, and partly due to a reluctance by residents to apply for temporary assistance. Even those who might be considered to have a good regular income can experience difficult periods when we may be able to help. Examples are long term hospital stays, or frequent appointments when the cost of hospital parking and travel becomes too much. We treat each application in total confidence. Last Christmas, for the first time, we were unable to identify parishioners who would benefit from the annual Christmas bonus.

We have been conscious for a while that the Town Land should be properly surveyed and registered and we have now built-up sufficient funds to enable this. The process is in motion at the moment, with PDC Engineering conducting the initial survey.

If there are any queries, we are happy to help.

**6.5 Stitchers Group (Bronwen Tyler)** Bronwen delivered the report.

We continue to be a successful group attracting new members. Our focus is on the social side, support and friendship and less on stitching! The crafts everyone pursues are very varied and we often teach each other new skills. Some people only come for the chat and a coffee, which was the original intent of the group back in 1994. Although currently all women, we have never been exclusively a female group and would welcome menfolk who might be keen to learn a craft or feel the need for some company. We continue to meet each Wednesday morning 10-12 at the Community Hall. There are no joining fees as we are a Community Hall supported group. We contribute a small sum each week towards the cost of using the hall.

**6.6 Wayland Partnership Development Trust (Bronwen Tyler - Chair of trustees)**

Bronwen delivered the report. We have continued to run the charity and Wayland House for the benefit of the Wayland Community. Our offices continue to be tenanted, or hired for meetings and events, with a few changes over the year. Our main reception has a big range of visitors with a wide variety of enquiries. Citizens Advice is a particularly popular service. In the Dragonfly Gallery we continue to display locally made art and crafts as well as our recycling initiative of crafting

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materials. Not only does this facility make crafting more accessible by providing materials at low cost, but it also avoids the items going into waste and landfill. We run a variety of craft workshops, keeping the costs as low as possible.

Meanwhile we have been working towards the Digital and Creative Media Centre. We held a very successful launch in Norwich to businesses and representatives of local authorities and interested organisations. We have had a huge number of hits of support on our website following that event and the publicity it attracted, and they continue to come in on a regular basis. Currently we are working on the planning application. We have had a number of necessary surveys done and are pulling together all the paperwork. We have been very well supported by Breckland to manage this process, which we very much appreciate, as it is not easy to navigate.

We have set up a JustGiving site which we hope will attract donations to help us continue our work and especially the process towards the DCMC. It can be found via a link on our website or we can supply a direct link. Even £5 makes a difference. In addition, we have Easy Fundraising which is where you can nominate a charity via participating companies who donate when shopping with them online. A huge number of reputable companies take part as part of the charity remit. It requires no additional effort on the shopper's part but does mean we benefit locally.

Part of our own in-house fundraising have been the talks on local history. The first was by Any Reid, based on his recent book on the history of Watton, and the second was by Julian Horn on the amazing escapades of a wartime airman from RAF Watton. Both were very well received. They have suited those who have always lived here and love to hear more about their hometown, as well as those new to the area keen to understand the area. It has been inspiring to learn from those who have a deep knowledge of their subject. We have more in the pipeline so look out for the adverts. We have been working with Reclaim the Rain for the placement of water collection tanks under part of the car park and await further information, surveys and developments.

Meanwhile, we welcome new volunteers to help in the Gallery, or reception, or to do some occasional jobs like keeping the small areas of grass in the car park tidy. Additional trustees are also welcome. We have a small grant from Breckland towards a simple intergenerational growing together project and volunteers would be most welcome to help with that. We are always willing to give presentations on what we do and especially on the plans for the DCMC.

We have had a few setbacks. A leak in our heating system which proved very difficult to trace but was a pipe under the office floor, was the most difficult. The assessors and the insurance company do not entirely agree on a solution. The insurance company won't pay for all of the work and we are still not clear on how much we might need to find to complete the repairs so we are at a slight impasse. Added to this is the potential to be redeveloping the site so do we wish to spend large sums on this? This all meant keeping the gallery closed longer than we would have liked and working in a rather cold building in the early months of the year, because the alternative heating the insurers paid for was not as adequate as proper central heating. A problem still in progress.

The building is of an age when it needs constant attention so we have had to spend money on various minor repairs or improvements to keep it fit for purpose which we would prefer not to have had to spend. Fortunately, much of it was achieved via grants from National Lottery and Watton Town Council but we would have preferred to have focussed our energies on community projects.

We are extremely grateful for the continued support of Thompson Parish Council and other Wayland parish councils, which all makes a difference to what we can achieve at a time when grants and funding are increasingly hard to come by.

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

There were no comments from the public. Cllr. Powrie asked about the fete-type equipment that FE was hoping to hold and share between local parishes. The PC had not heard anything and doubted it was available.

It was evident that all organisations need more volunteers. The Clerk commented it was disappointing the parishioners did not attend to hear about all the good things that were happening in their parish.

The meeting closed at 7.50pm

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