

Minutes of the Thompson Annual Parish Meeting held in Thompson Village Hall at 7.00pm on Thursday 19 May 2015

Present: Kate Winslow (Chair Thompson Parish Council) 24 members of the Thompson electorate, Ian Monson (Norfolk County councillor)

1. To sign as correct the minutes of the last meeting held on 15 May 2014: The minutes of the meeting held on 15 May 2014 were read and signed as correct by Kate Winslow (Chair of meeting).

2. Report from the Chairman of Thompson Parish Council: Kate Winslow reported on behalf of Thompson Parish Council During this year we have had one resignation from the Council – Anthony Murphy. The Council wishes to thank him for his valued contribution to the Council, both as a Councillor and as RFO over the years he was a member. We co-opted a new member who decided to not to re-stand for election this May. There not being enough nominations, there was no election this year and we still have one vacancy on the Council. This vacancy will now be advertised in the usual manner, or for further information/details contact the Parish Clerk .

There were several planning applications requiring decisions throughout the year. This year saw the demolition of the two empty Airey houses, and being replaced by a terrace of three. The Council have objected to the proposed planning application opposite Barn Ruche, as this we felt will have detrimental effects on our Village.

The Council have produced and distributed to new comers in the village a small booklet “Welcome to Thompson”. This includes details of local services and the fridge magnet with emergency numbers for the defibrillator. Any local businesses wishing to be included in the next edition please let us know. The CPRE footpath project reported on last year is now complete. The group competed for funding from Breckland Council and were successful in receiving enough money to cover an interpretation board and an update to the Thompson leaflet.

As trustees of the Town Land charity £480 was paid out this year to 5 recipients.

Again the Council held 2 litter picks during the year, in October and again in April; in and around all the approach roads to the village and the village itself. This proved very successful with several parishioners helping. These have now become a regular event.

The Council raised the precept this year, but with no additional cost to parishioners, as our tax base had been increased.

Breckland have increased the items that can be recycled, including glass. But we do urge all villagers to continue to use our bottle bank at the Chequers, as the money received from this comes directly back to the village, this year in the region of £230. If we do not use it we will lose it!

I would like to thank Ann Kean for keeping our planters on the bus stop site looking magnificent all year and to all fellow Councillors’ and the Clerk for their hard work and their support to me during the last year.

3. Reports from Local organisations:

3.1 Report from Thompson Millennium Green Charitable Trust: Mike Corrie reported on behalf of Thompson Millennium Green Charitable Trust saying that the Millennium Green Committee saw changes in personnel effected at its AGM last October. Mike Corrie was elected as Chair, taking over from Laurie Hull who resigned in the summer; Chris da Rocha was elected to replace Mike as Treasurer; whilst Teresa Blake was re-elected as Secretary. Duncan Gregory, Amanda Borrows and John Scott complete the Committee. Mike said that he had recently tendered his resignation, effective 30 June, as he and his family are looking to move out of Thompson.

The Trust was not involved in the strategic planning for Thompson Live, but its permission and tacit support was acknowledged with a £200 donation from the organizers.

The Thompson 5k/10k was repeated in September. Although not as well attended as 2013 due to late publication of the event, the event still realised net proceeds of £296.

A key source of funding for the Trust continues to be from the weekly Lottery contributions; in 2014 this raised £868 (2013: £1,082).

There is a general consensus that the pond is in need of work to clear it of bulrushes, the fallen tree and goat willow on its banks. When and how to do the work is more debateable, as is the need for further expert environmental advice in addition to the survey undertaken in 2012. A specialist company, but without environmental expertise, was contacted in February and quoted £4,300 to dredge the pond and ditch, with all materials retained on site: of the money allocated by the Big Lottery in 2011 for rejuvenation of the pond, £650 remains.

Although the Green was maintained in generally good shape through the year, CGM had to be contacted more than once in respect of protracted delays between some cuts.

The cutting contract expired at the end of the year and CGM was not reappointed, their quote being the highest of three received. Serco was appointed and has been cutting since the beginning of April. This is a one year contract – they were disinclined to offer a three-year deal on this occasion as they were expecting to undertake an internal reorganization and did not wish to commit.

CGM also carried out work to cut and clear the 'wild flower meadows', in line with a plan drawn up by Amanda. The intention was to do this three times in the year, but it was achieved only once. They were advised in October that we considered the contract void since they had failed to complete the work required: CGM has not acknowledged or otherwise commented, nor have they invoiced for the work they did do. A new plan of action remains to be initiated.

Arrangements were made to remove self-set trees from the meadows (to be reused by the Parish) and carry out maintenance on other trees. Unfortunately, the contractor became indisposed and was not able to do the work before the end of the winter so, inevitably, at least in part, this must now wait until the autumn.

Following a series of enquiries, meetings, discussions and (re)quotes over the course of the last year, new playground equipment has been installed, and very well received. (At the time of writing, 28 April, a spring rocker remained to be delivered and installed.) CDHWoodworks undertook the work, which included repairs and enhancements to the pre-existing equipment. The cost, approx £19,000, has been met by a bequest from Basil Bird.

The Trust's funds at the end of 2014 were approx £2,000 higher than the start of the year, primarily due to a compensation payment from Flagship Homes for an Easement permitting discharge of excess rainwater into the Millennium Green's ditch. The total reserves were a little over £33,700 on 31 December, following a net profit in the year of £1,997.99. The 2014 accounts have been passed to Lisa Harrison for inspection.

At the start of 2014, a budget for the year anticipated a loss of £230, including £100 contingency but did not factor in donations from the Rix oil syndicate and Thompson Live event, nor the compensation from Flagship, as the amounts were unknown at the time. As at 31 December, there was an outstanding payment due for mole control services in the fourth quarter (£200), but this is mitigated to a large extent by the online registration fees for the 2014 Thompson Run, which were subsequently received in February 2015 (£176).

The budget for 2015 shows a net deficit over the course of the year of -£22,040, including a contingency of -£197. This allows for £19,500 to be spent on fixed play equipment, although the final amount will be closer to £19,000. Other key expenditure is anticipated for the work on the meadow area (£1,500), which was not performed by CGM in 2014. It should also be noted that, whilst revenues of £832 have been planned from Lottery donations, no allowance has been made for potential donations from the Rix oil syndicate or Thompson Live event, as the amounts are unknown and uncertain at this time.

3.2 Report from Thompson Church: Katherine Wolstenholme reported on behalf of Thompson PCC that

the church year has continued with united worship rotating between the six churches of Breckles, Caston, Gt Hockham, Griston, Stow Bedon & Thompson and we have continued to benefit from the generous support of everyone in the other five parishes in these times of financial difficulty.

The PCC consider it is vital to try and maintain Thompson Church not just as a historical monument, important as that is, but as part of a growing and thriving united benefice for the needs and service to the people of Thompson now and in the future.

St Martin's has stood at the eastern end of Thompson since 1349. We are only caretakers of St Martin's and the PCC feel it is imperative to maintain the building for future generations. With this in mind we have commissioned an updated Quinquennial report with a view to applying for a grant from Heritage Lottery Funding. The report highlighted significant issues with the roofs & associated structure, gutters & drains, which are 'generally very poor & are contributing to the decay of the very

fine interior', & to other areas including the bell frame, doors & lighting & heating system. The report also stated that 'the nave roof is in a perilous state, it needs urgent structural repairs'. We are taking advice from a structural engineer on temporary protective measures.

We are at the very early stages of an application to Historic England (the new name for English Heritage) and hope to have more to report at the next meeting.

Plans are progressing well for the spectacular flower festival that is Blossom & Yarn taking place in six of our churches in the benefice. The festival will run for 4 days from 10th – 13th July and it is hoped that as many people as possible will come along and show support for the huge effort that has been made to stage this ambitious festival. Special thanks must go to the many ladies of Thompson who have been knitting madly for the festival.

Since our report last year the Friends of St Martin's Fund Raising Team last year we have held the following events and would like to take this opportunity thank everyone who has come along and supported these many events:

June 2014

Midsummer merriment – a family picnic and entertainment in the Church

July 2014

Art & Flower Festival

September 2014

Cream Tea & College Farm as part of the Brecks Food Festival

September 2014

Lavender's Lunch

October 2014

Harvest Lunch in the church following our Harvest Festival.

December

All natural stall at the Village Christmas Fair

January 2015

Grandma & Gertie play at St Mary's Watton

January 2015

Cheese & Wine evening at College Farm

May 2015

Kieran Goss in concert at St Martin's

The PCC would like to thank the Parish Council for their generous donation which goes towards maintenance at the church, eg, hedge cutting, lawnmower costs (petrol & repairs), the mole man and general maintenance. If there is any surplus we are still hoping to spend some of this money on a bench and landscaping an area at the back of the church for people to have somewhere to sit quietly in the graveyard. This is subject to permission from the Diocesan faculty department which has not yet been agreed.

We are planning to have a tidy up in the church grounds (all welcome) on Saturday 27th June.

3.3 Report from Thompson Village Hall Committee: Mrs Norris provided a report on behalf of the Village Hall Committee which was read by the Chair. "Because of the regular bookings the Hall is self funding. The Watton Pantomime Group rehearse twice a week for 3 months. The Children of Chernobyl use the hall as their headquarters free. The hall is used weekly for Pilates and by Stitchers and the WI hold monthly meetings.

Our grateful thanks go to the ladies who run the regular Coffee Mornings for our funds. Thanks are also given for the gift of a serving counter and the padded chairs.

After some loss of tables and china it was decided to change the lock with keys provided only to regular users who have agreed not to allow anyone else to use them to stop anyone getting a key cut which had happened in the past.

Our finances are sound with a balance of £2500.

3.3.1 Coffee Mornings: Lynn Callnon reported that during the past year we have raised over £600 for the upkeep of the Village Hall.

The Walking for Health Group has continued to support our Coffee Mornings and the walkers look forward to their cup of tea or coffee after a sometimes challenging walk.

Thanks too to the Thompson residents who join us on a Tuesday morning (usually the first and third Tuesdays of the month, plus any additional occasions when the Walking Group comes to Thompson - dates are shown in *The Waylander*), and thanks to the friends who lend a hand when either Jo or I are unavailable.

3.4 Report from Thompson WI: Kate Winslow reported that we had a varied mix of speakers and events again this year. We followed on from our successful film night again, this time as it was held in the winter with hot chocolate and popcorn. After the resolution discussion we held a craft night making “bee” related crafts, another crafty evening saw our members making bag charms; we had a trip around New Zealand, and another around the world entitled “my suitcase, my patience and Him!” A few quizzes followed our AGM; another successful evening had a local solicitor taking a question and answer session and as he said it is not very often you get solicitor’s advice for free! Another evening we were given advice on how to take better digital photographs. We held our usual garden party again in the village hall. Again we had an extra meeting in August, this time we went to Miss Savidges house in Wells, and we followed this with a superb lunch provided by Wells W.I. Our birthday meal was celebrated at the Wagon and Horses. It was Thompson’s turn to host our group meeting, our hall being too small to accommodate everyone was held in Caston and we had Doreen Read as the guest speaker she is Norfolk’s answer to Pam Ayres and had everyone in stitches for most of the evening. We were praised for the superb buffet spread.

We again entered darts and ten pin bowling competitions. One of the darts team again won through to the finals unfortunately not successful and the bowling team moved up the league a little again (not by much though)! As we won the group quiz last year our reward was to host this year’s event. Six teams took part, with two from Thompson and depending on how you look at it we were again successful!! Our membership continues to be steady losing some members but gaining others.

Again there was no election at our AGM and the main officers continue in their posts.

This year is the 100th year of the W.I. and many special events are being planned by Norfolk Federation and National. September 16th will be the actual “birthday” of the first meeting of a WI. And Thompson is planning to hold a celebratory event in the Village Hall on that day to which everyone will be welcome.

3.5 Report from Stitches Group: Bronwen Tyler reported on behalf of Stitches that we continue to meet each Wednesday at 7.15 in the village hall. Although there is a steady attendance, numbers have been rather reduced in recent months due to a number of genuine reasons but we do need to find new ways of attracting people with creative skills, or who wish to learn new skills or who just fancy a chat. Our original purpose was not really to stitch but to provide a place and time to socialise, so you don’t need to knit or sew to come along.

We had a very enjoyable evening out at the Chequers for our Christmas meal which was largely paid for by the surplus in subscriptions over the year; we have shared cars to visit quilt shows ; taken part in some mini workshops; helped each other learn new skills; or provided a support network. Some of us took part in a wreath making workshop using rag rugging techniques which were very effective, especially when mini lights were concealed in them. Several of those of us who can knit (not all can) are making items for the Blossom and Yarn Festival. If anyone is knitting for the festival why not bring it along to Stitches and knit in company.

We are considering new ways in which we can continue to make Stitches the successful group it has been for so many years now and looking at whether we need to change our approach. Some ideas put forward are: holding daytime workshops to learn to make specific craft items; or perhaps workshops following the current trend for home dressmaking; or whether we should consider more daytime meetings in the winter months. So if you have any suggestions to make we welcome them.

3.6 Report from Thompson Community Hall: Bronwen Tyler reported that on behalf of Thompson Community Hall say that “We have had a busy year of fundraising with a range of events. The car treasure hunt, Christmas fair, themed meals at the Chequers, our home-made soups and cakes have all been popular and the gardens open event was very successful despite mixed weather. Most recent was a spring plant fair which attracted a steady flow of people keen to purchase plants which were all grown in the village.

Our AGM is on June 18th when final figures for the past financial year will be presented but as of the last meeting we have £31,637 in the funds, plus the profits from the plant fair. Over the past year we have spent money on architect’s fees for preliminary sketches and feasibility study, and had a new survey completed. Having had poor results from the original architect provided free of charge by Norfolk ProHelp we decided to employ local firm Clayland to conduct the feasibility study necessary in order to apply for Lottery funding. Lottery rules state no application will be accepted if a project is deemed to have been started so we could not obtain other than basic ideas as part of feasibility. The sketch plans have been more in line with what the village has suggested they would like to see. Since

these are only guideline plans to enable costings to be done to obtain funds, they are by no means what we might finally end up with! We will be consulting the village for opinion.

The most exciting piece of news was that we are the residual beneficiaries of the estate of Mr Derek Jessup who lived in Sycamore Close and who died last December. It was the wish of his late wife and himself to benefit Thompson to enable the creation of a new hall. Although we know the estate is worth well in excess of £500,000 we do not as yet know what sum will be received until probate has been granted, and other bequests, fees and taxes paid. This should be within the next 6 weeks. The chair has met with Mr Jessup's financial advisor who is happy to continue to support and advise us through the handover process, and beyond if we so decide. This latest news may mean we do not need to apply for full Lottery funding, which is a very lengthy process, but we could instead go to smaller funders and pots of money for specific parts of the build, still being mindful of keeping a reserve for contingencies until the building earns its keep. These decisions cannot be made until we know the results of the bequest. In the meantime we have put the feasibility study partially on hold.

At the same time we have been working hard on an application for CIO status as a community charity. We have submitted the application and been granted a case officer who has asked for a few minor amendments in our wording, which we have done. We have also been working on a business plan as part of the application. A decision will be made by the Charity Commissioners within the next few weeks. The majority of the members of the current committee agreed to become first trustees with the remainder combining with the trustees to form the management committee.

Our treasurer has indicated a need to stand down and we have appointed a new one following the AGM, although that role will change slightly once we have charity status. We are enormously grateful for the efficient and dedicated way in which June has managed our finances since the committee was formed and hope she and Les will remain part of our group as long as they are able, as their input has been invaluable.

For the forthcoming months we plan to discuss more themed meals with Richard at the Chequers; in September we plan to hold another of the popular car treasure hunts which Derek Webb has kindly offered to put on for us; and possibly have a stall at the Watton Christmas market. Once we are sure about the financial situation and are in a position to move forward we plan to hold an information and consultation event, date to be decided.

This is a very exciting time for Thompson and the long-held goal of a new hall seems finally to be in our sights. If anyone would like to contribute to the project in any way please do get in touch".

3.7 Report from Wayland Partnership: Bronwen Tyler reported on behalf of the Wayland Partnership saying that European funding was now coming on stream. That the Partnership was working to make Watton Dementia friendly and that the Heritage Group were holding a WW1 in Wayland commemorative event.

4 Village Appraisal: Kate Winslow said that she had recently attended a meeting organised by the Wayland Partnership to discuss neighbourhood plans. The relevance of the meeting is that Breckland are required by Government to produce a new Local Plan, which must dovetail with government plans. The value of neighbourhood plans is to allow more local input into the discussions. Neighbourhood plans are required to in turn dovetail with the district's Local Plan. Neighbourhood plans are relatively expensive for a small council and require legal input and ultimately a local referendum. Grants area available (up to £8,000 from government sources and an additional 50% of the amount awarded by government from Breckland – total £12,000).

In addition to the cost to Thompson over and above the extra funding we would need to raise from a precept to produce a plan, is the problem of dovetailing with Breckland's Local Plan. We do not know where they will ultimately stand in their new Local Plan on the issue of settlement boundaries and the like and as our current low growth status requires these making it would make it difficult to produce a neighbourhood plan that would dovetail into any Local Plan that is produced which does away with them.

She suggested that we need, at least, to carry out an appraisal of the village and how the residents want to see Thompson develop. This would give your Council information with which to comment on proposals for the Local Plan as it is developed and could if so desired, lead to the development of a neighbourhood plan should conditions require it.

To carry out an appraisal we will need input from the residents of Thompson at its planning stage

- Last time we did appraisal was in 2002

- Need to update
- Breckland are in process of updating their Local Plan
- Neighbourhood plans are very expensive to produce although there is funding available. If we go down this route and submit it to Breckland it will only be valid until they produce their new plan
- Village appraisal is the cheaper option and this can be updated more easily at a much lower cost, but it will give the Council an indication of how you perceive Thompson at the moment or in the future i.e. regarding development etc
- Would like to set up a small committee to produce the appraisal questions, distribute, collate and analyse the answers (with help).

A number of residents expressed interest in helping with the project and a meeting is to be held convened shortly.

5 Any business not already notified:

5.1 Pockthorpe Lane to Sparrow Hill Footpath: Before leaving the meeting Mrs Scott raised the matter of Pockthorpe Lane to Sparrow Hill footpath and read out a statement and also a letter to the Parish Council outlining the inadvisability of proceeding further with the application to have it put on to the Definitive Map and statements of Public Rights of Way for Norfolk and instead accept it use as a permissive footpath. Kate Winslow pointed that the application was made at the request of Parishioners who were concerned at its absence from the Definitive map and that the matter was now being considered by Norfolk County Council who would report in due course. A member of the electorate said that on his Ordnance survey map of the area the path is clearly marked a public right of way.

5.2 Thompson Live 7: Ron Powrie announced that Thompson Live 7 would go ahead on Saturday 01 August 2015 with funds going to Children's Hospices. He also said that they as organisers had a fund from monies raised from the hire of their marquee available to local people short of money. He also said that he had gym equipment in his garage where it could be used by anyone interested.

5.3 Thompson Hearts: Mike Corrie said that defibrillator battery had been replaced thanks to a donation from the organisers of Thompson Live.

The meeting closed at 7:35pm.