

THORRINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held at the village hall on
Wednesday 6th September 2023 at 7.00pm



Present: Cllrs P Sadler, Dewar, Krinks, G Parks, S Parks & A Sadler

Also present: CCllr Goggin, DCllr Wiggins, E Crook (Clerk), K Lott (RFO) & 8 members of the public

The meeting was called to order at 7.02pm by Cllr P Sadler, Chairman

1. Apologies for absence

There were none.

2. Disclosure of pecuniary interests

Cllr A Sadler – item 8

Cllrs Dewar, G Parks & S Parks - item 11

3. Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 2nd August 2023, having been previously circulated, were called into question by Cllr Dewar with regards to item 12, that was motioned to be added to September’s agenda, he noted that it had not been. The RFO advised that due to the nature of the request it could be raised and agreed in the Councillor Reports section. The minutes were agreed by those present and signed by the Chairman as a true and accurate record.

4. Public Questions

Seven members of the public raised concerns about speeding vehicles on Clacton Road, expressing the severity of the situation and requesting speed cameras or speed humps. One of the residents read out a list of the companies that he alleged have drivers that are not adhering to the speed limit. The Chairman reiterated that Thorrington Parish Council cannot do anything directly, speeding is a Police matter. Cllr A Sadler suggested to the residents that they could set up a community speed watch. Cllr Dewar explained that a speed indicator device (SID) has been purchased by the Parish Council, which there had been difficulty getting permission to install but will be in situ in due course. One resident advised the Council that she had challenged a driver who had been speeding only to receive verbal abuse, Cllr Krinks suggested that if incidents of abuse are captured on smart phones that they could be reported to the Police. Another resident advised that she cannot get safely across Clacton Road at any time of the day and she would like a pelican crossing installed. The Chairman explained that as local residents themselves, the Councillors understand the problem. She suggested that a request could be made for a Police Officer to come and talk about speeding in rural areas or a report made to Tendring District Council (TDC) to raise concerns about the environmental impact of the increased traffic from the current Alresford bridge diversion. She explained that there will be retrievable data from the new SID which can be passed to the Police to strengthen a request for official speed checks to be carried out. Residents were advised to collect as many details about speeding vehicles as possible. The list of the companies was passed to Cllr Dewar but the Chairman noted that without registration numbers the companies would be unlikely to act.

A resident from the Chapel asked about the item concerning the playing field trees and wished to be made aware of the decision made by the Council. He noted two trees that border his property have overhanging branches. He also noted the undergrowth that needs cutting back. Cllr A Sadler explained that the Council are looking to wildflower that particular area so it had been left. The gentleman suggested that this might not be the best area, requesting other sites be looked into. The gentleman noted a tree adjacent to his property that he was not sure of the ownership of, Cllr A Sadler advised he will take a look. CCllr Goggin suggested that the resident could contact the Principle Tree and Landscape Officer at TDC, Clive Dawson.

5. Reports from District & County Councillors

DCllr Wiggins noted that she had forwarded the reports of the overflowing dog waste bins and the rat issue. Cllr Dewar updated DCllr Wiggins that one of the dog bins has been emptied.

Cllr Goggin noted the financial problems of Birmingham City Council and that Essex County Council (ECC) are seen as the exemplar with regards to the financial reserves it holds.

54 schools in Essex have been identified as having reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC). Only 15 of them are local authority maintained, the remaining 39 are academies.

Cllr Goggin urged Councillors to report any pot holes.

Cllr A Sadler asked Cllr Goggin when the 30mph limit will be extended from Avocet Place to Thorrington Cross due to the VAS unit going in, Cllr Goggin advised that it is on the list.

DCllr Wiggins was thanked by the Chairman and left the meeting at 7.58pm to attend the Alresford Parish Council meeting.

Cllr S Parks asked whether pot holes without a kerb next to them are considered to be pot holes, Cllr Goggin advised they are pot holes but that they are more difficult to repair.

Cllr Goggin was thanked by the Chairman and left the meeting at 8.07pm to attend the Alresford Parish Council meeting.

6. (a) Planning Applications

23/01173/FULHH	Windyridge, Brightlingsea Road Installation of PV panels to bungalow roof & part retrospective application for proposed new timber frame summerhouse/spa outbuilding to rear garden 6m, Maximum Height 2.85m, Eaves Height 2.55m.
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(b) Planning Resolutions/Determinations

23/00656/FULHH	The Rowans, Station Road Proposed two storey rear extension.	Approval Full
23/00818/VOC	Windyridge, Brightlingsea Road Application under Section 73 of the Town & Country Planning Act to allow a variation of condition 1 (Approved) of 21/00710/DETAIL to alter the approved access drive.	Approval Full

c) Planning appeal

22/01499/COUNOT	Apple Blossom Paddocks, Brightlingsea Road Prior Approval Application under Part 3, Class Q of the Town & Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (as amended) for a proposed change of use of a building & land within its curtilage from use as an agricultural building to a residential dwelling & reasonably necessary building operation.	Dismissed
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7. Council operating procedures

The RFO explained a brief history of the situation and that both her and the Clerk felt burnt out. Following a recent disagreement over the procedure between meetings, they had felt that the Council wanted new staff. In light of the Councillors wishing them to remain in post, it was thought to be beneficial to go over how the Council should operate. The RFO continued by

explaining how Councillors are individually elected and come together at meetings to form the Council, during the rest of the month the Clerk and RFO operate the business of the Council under the regulations agreed to. Clerks take their instructions at meetings so the Council agree to what work, letters or email are to be done. The Clerk sets the agenda with items agreed at meetings, statutory items and those sent through from Councillors. Recently the number of agenda items for each meeting has grown and meetings overrun the 2 hour limit. Agenda items must be clear to any member of the public as to what is being discussed for transparency. The Chairman is responsible for each meeting, the Clerk asked if Council members could try not to talk over each other so the recording was clearer. Having been to another Parish Council meeting and in light of some complaints about how votes were recorded recently, the RFO asked whether voting by a brief show of hands could be used to make it clear.

The Clerk noted that several times there has been a reluctance to accept the answer to a question which has increased the work load to have to continue looking into an item only to reach the same conclusion. The Clerk also noted a backlog of work, compounded by the external auditor questioning the raising of the precept two years ago. Cllr A Sadler questioned the audit process, noting that he had emailed the RFO with concerns about the grass cutting bills, listed in the minutes at £360 instead of the quoted price of £300. The RFO explained that whilst the Council are charged VAT it is reclaimed each year and used to pay the next years until that is reclaimed. Cllr Dewar noted that in his private business he must always provide quotes including VAT.

The RFO noted feeling overwhelmed especially when emails are sent asking and chasing for things to do done. Cllr A Sadler asked the Clerk how she allocated her 30 hours a month due to the RFO doing more than her 12 hours a month. The Clerk advised she does her work at evening and weekends and due to changes in her schedule since she took on the role that the RFO does some of the work. The hours are mainly spent either side of the meeting, with the minutes and the items from the meeting and then preparation for the next meeting. Due to the nature of every third month having five weeks the hours are not broken down by week. There are busier times of year, for example allotment rents, budgets and donations at the end of the year and audits from March. The Clerk spoke about the August break being the time when Clerks normally catch up but that Thorrington have a meeting so that has added to the work.

The Clerk and RFO both acknowledged enjoying the role but that it is supposed to be a part time role, amounting to just over a week of full time hours a month. The Clerk noted that requests for things to be done on behalf of the Council cannot come from Councillors outside of a meeting. Cllr Dewar expressed confusion about how this would help with the workload as it would all come at once. The RFO clarified that the staff work for the Council and not individual councillors, which should ensure the workload is monitored. There was a discussion about availability. Cllr Dewar stated that he was dealing with two matters that he had not told the Clerk about. The RFO noted that if it was within a councillor's role that was fine but that if it concerned council property or financing that he should bring it up. In the event of an urgent situation then leaving a message on the home phone detailing the issue is the best option.

Cllr A Sadler asked whether it is just a case of moving hours from the Clerk to the RFO if that is how the work is being carried out. The Clerk noted that the concern about workload was not a case of who carried out the hours but mainly because of how work had been coming in.

Cllr G Parks noted both sides of the situation and asked what the Clerk and RFO were willing to change. The RFO noted that the standard of work could be reduced to save time. It was noted that the main help would be if Councillors could remember that the staff work for the Council as a whole and that the Council are responsible as an employer.

Cllr P Sadler asked how the Clerk and RFO saw the issues being resolved, if at all, noting her confusion about how the decision that they should leave had come about. She explained that if there had been a concern about their work, she would have discussed it with them.

8. Allotments

Cllr A Sadler mentioned that due to surrendering his allotment tenancy his wooden 8x6 shed will no longer be of use to him and asked whether the Parish Council would like it for extra storage either by him donating or selling it to the Parish Council. Cllr Dewar suggested a price of £100 which Cllr A Sadler was in agreement with. Proposed by Cllr Dewar, seconded by Cllr S Parks. All in favour.

9. Allotment plot size

As at least four plots are due to be handed back, Cllr Dewar had spoken to some tenants and asked if they would prefer a half plot if it was available and they had said yes. The RFO noted that recently a tenant had emailed a request for permission to have a half plot instead of a full plot. The plots that will be divided will have membrane over the other part so that it will be one person per plot. Cllr A Sadler suggested gauging an interest at the allotment holders meeting next month. The RFO advised that for ease if the fees could be a half fee for the deposit, plot, water and manure. Proposed by Cllr Dewar, seconded by Cllr Krinks. All in favour.

10. Allotment insurance

The RFO advised that the insurance company were asked but would not provide a quote until 10th October. Motion moved to the October meeting.

11. Allotment fees

Cllrs Dewar, G Parks & S Parks left the meeting for this item due to a pecuniary interest. Figures had been circulated ahead of time and referencing these Cllr A Sadler proposed that the fee remain the same as 2022/23 at £50 a year. Seconded by Cllr P Sadler. All in favour.

12. Wildflower areas

Cllr A Sadler suggested the Council should concentrate on one area this year. Chapel Lane playing field and Thorrington Cross grass verge will continue to be cut. TDC have given permission for one area at Hazel Close Open Space (HCOS) to be wild flowered. Cllr Dewar has contacted Meadow Mania and has received a quote for £53.80 for the seeds for a 5x15m patch. Proposed by Cllr Dewar, seconded by Cllr A Sadler. All in favour.

13. Playing field trees

Cllr A Sadler noted the options were to obtain quotes for work to all of the remaining trees or to focus on the Church Road side, leaving the few on the Clacton Road side until a later date. The Council agreed to consider having all the trees done. The RFO asked whether that would include the foliage around the street light next to the Chapel, Cllr A Sadler noted he had reported it UK Power Networks but he would chase it. Cllr A Sadler to obtain quotes for discussion at the October meeting.

14. Accounts

Payments for approval and signatures at meeting on 6th September 2023

Cheque	Payee	Amount	Payment Details
300342	Elizabeth Crook	£413.60	Clerk wages, accom. & expenses
300343	Katherine Lott	£147.08	RFO wages & accom.
300344	Mr A Sadler	£93.38	Fuel, sanding disc & padlocks
300345	Mr A Dewar	£72.00	Pest control

300346	HMRC	£17.60	Quarterly tax payment
300347	RCCE	£72.60	Membership
300348	Landscape Services	£720.00	Grass maintenance
300349	DM Payroll	£66.00	Payroll service for first half 2023/24
300350	Bellet Ltd	£11,162.00	New mower
300351	NBB	£1,226.04	New picnic benches

Cheques written	BACS	Direct Debits	Receipts
£13,990.30	£0	£276.88	£0

Balance of accounts with Unity Trust = £50,452.30

20. Reports from Amenities Representatives

Allotments	No report
Playing Field	No report
Tennis Court	Well used. The net will be packed up at the end of September.
Footpaths	Footpath 2 has been cleared but two branches have been missed. Cllr Krinks noted he could remove them.
Tree Warden	No report.
Hazel Close Open Space	No report.

21. Clerk's report

The laptop is still having battery issues and has to be kept plugged in.

The Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS) eligibility has been confirmed.

Licencing application notices were received for events in the village from TDC planning.

The tenant of plot 21 has confirmed handing it back. Cllr Dewar had requested that the gentleman on the waiting list be contacted to see if he would like to take on plot 5 gradually but no reply has been received yet. A resident from Tenpenny Hill would like a plot and an existing plot holder wishes to take on plot 21 on as a second plot. Cllr Dewar raised concerns about not having been informed of these details. The Clerk explained that the procedure is to inform the Council at a meeting.

Cllr Dewar left the meeting at 9:54pm.

Donations time is coming up and Councillors were reminded that any organisations that would like to be considered should write in. The usual legal regulations apply.

The Clerk emailed Gt Bentley Parish Council about football groups. The Clerk had researched and the youth group there is run in part by some Thorrington residents. *Clerk to contact them.*

22. Councillor's reports

Cllr Krinks asked whether a crossing could be sought for Clacton Road, Cllr P Sadler noted that it took 13 years to get a crossing outside of Colne School, so it was unlikely.

Date of next meeting 4th October 2023

Closure. There being no further business to discuss the Chairman closed the meeting at 9:56pm

SIGNED 

Date. 4/10/23