

Chair's Annual Report to Thornham Annual Parish Council Meeting

Wednesday 18th May 2022

It has been another busy year for council, which for most of the year has worked with six councillors and its Clerk/RFO. Many people think that Parish Councils have significant powers, this is far from the case. As the lowest tier of local government our statutory powers are few. We are, however, the voice and representatives of the local community and so we seek to use our influence to persuade and encourage the many other bodies and personnel that we work with. This is I hope reflected in the following report.

Perhaps the most significant factor of the year was the formal adoption of the Neighbourhood Plan as a 'Made' plan following the referendum on 22nd July 2021. Thanks are due to Cllr Bob Gulliver who led the team and brought the plan to conclusion, all the members of the team from inception to completion including our consultant, Richard High, the officers from KLWNBC who assisted at various key stages of the project and finally but most importantly the parishioners who informed the plan by their responses and by voting substantially to adopt the plan. The Plan now informs the thinking of both TPC and KLWNBC re planning applications and council are working on how to make most effective use of the plan.

Cllr Gulliver resigned through ill-health in December 2021 with all our best wishes and thanks. Cllr Mocatta was elected unopposed in September 2021. There remains one vacancy on council.

I believe that council has worked closely and with good effect with both our borough and county councillors, Cllr Bob Lawton and Cllr Andrew Jamieson. Both have provided TPC with help, guidance and support and their work and liaison with us is highly valued. Similarly, council has worked closely with various departments of KLWNBC and NCC. Planning is the most obvious and frequent example where Cllr Chesterman has liaised with planners, architects and developers so council have as much information as possible. Planning issues continue to be one of the major issues that parishioners rightly raise with council and some long-running developments continue to occupy council's thinking. Highways, speeding, parking, road closures and repairs, particularly Staithe Lane, hedges, ditches and maintenance are staples of PC work with all councillors involved in these issues. Council has had strong links and support from Sally Bettinson who was our local Highways Engineer who was ever helpful but has now retired. We have also maintained close contact with the Trails team and seen eventual success with the major improvement to FP3 – the part of the National Coastal Trail that runs from the base of old windmill by Staithe Lane to the footbridge on the Fen path. We expect a similar improvement to the raised section of boardwalk on the path to The Firs/NWT reserve scheduled for May/June this year.

Council has kept pressure on Anglian Water re the overflow/flooding issues that particularly impacted Church Street. We wait to hear the outcome of the analysis of the system's capacity to cope and the possible additional sewer section to ease the pressure on Church Street. The Shore Road legal dispute has continued through the year and has been reported on at every council meeting. Council is hopeful this may be moving to a conclusion and council is going

register Shore Road with Land Registry. This has been discussed and agreed with the other parties to the dispute. Financially, council is in a good position thanks to the work of the finance team led by Cllr Barrett and Chesterman and with the work of our Clerk/RFO, Sarah Bristow.

Council has maintained its close links with other village bodies TVHPF, TUC, PCC and the Big Tent quarterly meetings have been a helpful development ensuring co-operation and co-ordination via the information exchange to the mutual benefit of all. The Saxon Shore Parishes Forum serves a similar function for the parishes within the benefice and while neither Big Tent nor Saxon Shore have executive powers over any council most members are convinced of their value.

Council agreed to support the two current village projects: the West Bottom Field project to enhance the field when the current lease arrangement comes to an end and the new sports pavilion project to replace the old wooden pavilion moved from the former playing field and initially erected in 1984. This support includes designating £5K from our CIL funding income stream not the precept to both projects when certain criteria are fulfilled. Council have also supported the Queens Platinum Jubilee Events team both with finance and guidance and we look forward to the events planned for early June. Council also gives annual grants to PCC and to TVHPF, both providers of important community facilities. This is an appropriate point at which to thank all those volunteers who make so many events happen within the village and thus help to sustain our sense of community.

Since June 2021 all PC meetings have returned to open public meetings in the village hall and despite council's requests to our local MP the government went ahead with cancelling the legislation that allowed remote meetings. The meetings held monthly report on the various work undertaken by councillors, all of whom have specific roles which they carry out assiduously. These include, apart from those previously noted but are not limited to, checking our assets, including streetlights, ditches, drains, verges and hedgerows and liaising with landowners to ensure maintenance and health and safety, and our contracted grass cutter who does an excellent job, potholes, bus shelters, phone boxes, risk assessments and insurances, policies that are essential to ensure we meet statutory requirements..... All of these are reported on in the monthly Link parish magazine and also in the TVHPF newsletter.

As my council colleagues will no doubt tell you I could always say more but this now feels long enough. So, I will conclude with more 'thank yous'. Thanks to those of you who support the council by attending meetings and /or bringing matters to our attention and telling us your views and opinions.

Thank you to all my fellow councillors, and their families who support them in their work, for their time and unstinting effort on behalf of the community. They all give many hours of unpaid time not only the meetings that you will be aware of but all the work, reading, talking and training events that you may not be aware of. We are fortunate to have such a committed team. Finally, of course our thanks to our Clerk/RFO, Sarah, who similarly does so much more than is seen in public meetings to help make council work effectively.

Colin Venes, Chair Thornham Parish Council.

7th May 2022

