

THORNHACKETT PARISH COUNCIL
THORNFORD ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

The Annual Parish meeting was held on Wednesday 16th April 2025 in Thornford Village Hall at 7.00pm

In Attendance: Cllrs. Stephen Hiller (Chairman), Jonathan Axten, Roger Baxter, Matthew Hoff, Nichols Whitsun-Jones and 9 members of the public

Apologies were received from: Cllr Ian Robins, Jane Rogers.

The Minutes of the Annual Meeting of 3rd April 2024 had been circulated, their adoption was proposed by Cllr Hoff and seconded by Cllr Baxter – carried.

The Chairman began by welcoming everyone to the meeting and hoped that they would be interested to hear what had occurred during the year.

Chairman's Report: The year began with the local elections. There had been changes to the structure of the Council and there were now 8 Councillors for Thornford (up from 7) and 2 for Beer Hackett (down from 3) Two long serving Councillors from Beer Hackett stood down. The election was uncontested with 2 vacancies in Thornford and 1 in Beer Hackett. These vacancies were soon filled in June and July.

There have been a number of changes to the way the Council works with the introduction of a Petitions Policy and an Audit and Risk Policy with Risk Register. An Environment Working group was established with terms of Reference. The Council has also decided to increase the number of times it meets to monthly except for December and August. It has also been agreed that Councillors will take on special responsibilities.

The Council held one main event this year to celebrate the 80th anniversary of D-Day.

Initiatives undertaken by the Council include a comprehensive look at perceived speeding issues involving 3 speed surveys, unfortunately they did not give us the result we had hoped for in support of a Speed indicator device but we did gain some extra 'Slow Down' signs.

The company that looks after the Thornford Clock identified the need for some remedial work to the clock face, hands and chapter ring before they deteriorate too much.

A proposal to extend the footpath to Lake has been considered. Dorset Council consulted and the work was estimated to be approx. £20k for just one side. Attempts have been made to get a permissive footpath in the fields but with no success.

The Council has supported the Wriggle Bus Project with a grant and the service is to be extended to include a monthly bus to Dorchester.

Blackberry Solar Farm. The Council held an extra ordinary meeting to discuss the proposal, it was attended by a large number of residents who expressed their views.

Thornford Halt work has progressed slowly and is now hampered by the Government Nationalising routes when franchises expire.

A petition was received from Beer Hackett regarding traffic issues and we are awaiting the outcome of a speed survey.

Neighbourhood Planning, a paper will be presented later in the year as to whether to proceed with such a Plan.

Environment Working Group has met three times to date, 3 Councillors and 3 local residents sit on the group and topics such as speeding, road flooding, water quality and a flood resilience plan have been discussed.

Reports from Councillors

Cllr Whitsun-Jones reported on a very successful D-Day celebration event held on 9th June to celebrate 80 years since the D-Day landings. There was a good show with display boards and tables. The WI supplied cakes and some members dressed in 1940's style. A big thank you to those who displayed maps and equipment, John Warr & son. Carl Dicer, Richard Goddard, Jane & Peter Akers, and Jane Partland, and of course all who attended.

Cllr Roger Baxter Recently new 'Slow Speed' Signs; were installed, we will be requesting feedback on these signs in forthcoming months.

Reports from Organisations and Groups

Sustainable Thornford – Trevor Rogers – A small but very active group whose aim is to share knowledge, good practice and improve biodiversity in the area. Our activities this year include, mapping sightings of hedgehogs, holding a very successful litter pick in March, a seed swap day, a wild flower patch by the Village Hall and primrose bank by the entrance and a swift box has been put up. In the Spinney, much of the vegetation has been left as habitat, but paths have been cut, nut and seed feeders put up and a nesting box. Additional native trees such as Hawthorn, Hazel and Spindle have been planted along the fence and log piles are being created. In the summer we held a stall at the fete which attracted interest especially from children. Some members have met with RWE regarding Blackberry Solar Farm to put forward environmental suggestions and members are also on the Parish Council's Environmental Working Group. To the future we are hoping to test river water quality as part of the WaterBiz, We have a Facebook page 'Sustainable Thornford' and send updates to 'Contact'. Anyone interested in joining the core group can make contact via the Facebook page or e-mail to sustainablethornford@gmail.com

Short Mat Bowls – Vic Furmage – We meet on Tuesdays 2-5.30pm and Thursday evenings 7-10pm in the Village Hall although sessions are suspended during July/August due to holidays. We have 31 members. We hold in house competitions and have one team in the Blackmore Vale league where we finished 4th this year. Anyone interested can play for free for 3 sessions. We play in grey trousers with white polo shirts and blue jumpers bearing the Club logo. We belong to the Dorset Short Mat Bowls Association.

Thornford Defibrillators – Liz Childs – We have two defibrillators, one outside the Kings Arms and the other at the Village Hall. We have service agreement which runs for 4 years, they are checked monthly. The Parish Council contributes towards replacement pads, batteries and upkeep, the rest being funded by appeal. There is a voluntary emergency system with 1- volunteers in the village. The machines have been used twice in the last 3 years. The annual cost for the 2 defibrillators is in excess of £700 a year.

Womens Institute – Pat Hogg – The Branch is 77 years old this year. We meet every 2nd Wednesday in the month at 7.30pm. We have guest speakers on a wide range of topics followed by tea/coffee,

biscuits and a chat. We also arrange visits to Gardens and Houses. The Group also meet to play skittles on Friday evenings, there is a boof group, craft group, walking group and some meet for lunch. There are also open meetings for friends and family to attend with food provided by the W.I.

Allotment Association – Roger Baxter – A very wet early spring hindered things but the allotments are now on the move. All plots are taken, the access lane has been cleared and the site is also gradually being cleared of useless waste. In the summer members held a family barbeque. There is a cider press and we can have the apples from 10 apple trees at Manor Farm, members can also bring their own apples. We hope to hold a Winter Wassailing . Fees depend on the size of the plot.

Bell Ringers – Roger Baxter- We hold come and try sessions, a recent session had 6 people attending. We meet on Thursday evenings 7.30-9.00pm in Thornford Church

Village Hall – Roger Baxter – They received a grant of £5k from Voltalia, originally for Solar Panels, but the feedback on these is now so low, the committee are now looking at heat pumps. The Hall now has Wi-Fi and 12 new chairs have been purchased. The committee room is to be refurbished as is part of the kitchen. A grant from the Parish Council paid for the Ladies Toilets to be completely refurbished.

Gardening Club and Horticultural Society - Michael Popinchalk – We have over 100 members and meet every 4th Wednesday in the Village Hall at 7.30pm. We have guest speakers on a range of topics often suggested by members. Membership is £10 per year and with this in the Spring members get a discount card for Castle Gardens In May and October they hold plant sales and in August run the Flower and Horticultural Show.

Made in Thornford – Running for one more year on 1st November, the fate is unknown after that.

Twinning Association – Trevor Rogers - The Bank account has been closed, the Primary School still meet and exchange with the school in France, there has not been a willingness to continue the association any further.

The Hub – Meets in the Village Hall every Wednesday morning for tea/coffee and a chat, All Welcome. The Hub contributed 50% towards the cost of the new chairs.

Generation Game – A group meet at the school to engage with the pupils, they play games like Bingo, undertake craft sessions and spend time talking to each other.

Blackberry Solar Farm Proposal. There is a Resistance Group that has been established and also a Community Benefit Group. These are outside the remit of the Parish Council.

The Chairman Thanked everybody for attending and their contributions to the meeting.

The meeting closed at 8.15pm