

THORNHACKETT PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Ordinary Council Meeting held on Wednesday 15th January 2025

Attendees: Cllrs. Hillier (Chairman), Baxter, Bromell, Hoff, Keene, Robins, Rogers

Also in Attendance: Mrs S Hillier (Clerk), Dorset Cllr. Legg and 7 members of the Public.

1. **Welcome:** The Chairman welcomed Councillors and members of the public to the meeting.
The
2. **Apologies for Absence** - Cllrs. Whitsun-Jones, Taylor-Wade and Axten were accepted and agreed.
3. **Declarations Of Interest:** Government Guidance states that there is a dispensation for declaration of interests is waived when discussing the Budget for 2025-2026 and the setting of the Precept items 11a and 11b on the Agenda.
4. **Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held 20th November 2024.** These had been circulated to Councillors. Their acceptance as a true record was proposed by Cllr. Hillier Seconded by Cllr. Rogers - **Agreed**
5. **Matters Arising from the Minutes –**
 - a) **Wriggle Valley Bus** New timetable issued. Uptake in Thornford not as high as hoped. Particularly good uptake in Yetminster and Bradford Abbas. Please encourage use as there will be no hope of either extending the timetable or increasing the number of days. **USE IT OR LOSE IT!**
 - b) **Blackberry Solar Farm Update** – Revised Plan issued which reduces the land area covered by solar panels by about a third, the capacity remains the same but they are closer together. Areas around the residences have also been excluded. The red line seems to have changed, not sure whether Thornford has now been excluded. Councillors should still be careful about what they say. The community benefit amount has also been increased from £400k to £800k. There is a Public Consultation event on 22nd January in Thornford Village Hall 1pm – 6pm to consider the new plans. All residents present had received a copy of the leaflet containing the new information.
 - c) **Street Lights** more companies have been contacted for quotes.
6. **Public Forum –**
 - a) The Blacksmiths Lane hedge line was raised. A contractor had been engaged to cut it by March. Who cuts the inside of the hedge? The inside of the hedge was cut on a rotation basis as advised by an ecological consultant last year.
 - b) Station access – Cllrs. Hillier and Keene to talk with John Parker who had lead on this when he was a Councillor. Cllr Legg requested being ‘kept in the loop’ as it was possible that the link to Yeovil Junction may be resurrected. It was possible that only every other train may stop at Thornford and Chetnole due to access problems. Both do not have ground level access, both come down from a road bridge.

Report from Cllr Legg

c) Grange Park sign, it has been made, difficulty finding Highways land as where it used to be sited had been sold, may have to be on other side of the junction.

d) Thornford was not to be included in the Atlas communications consultation re mobile phone connectivity.

e) Engaging with Parishes – Greatest issues raised were Highways, including mud on road, Planning, Mobile phone connectivity and Transport. First session on 20th February.

7. Frequency of Council Meetings – Cllr Hillier and Cllr Whitsun-Jones had collaborated to produce a paper suggesting that the number of meeting be increased by 4 a year and that the number of hours worked by the Clerk be increased by 2 hours a month to cover the extra work involved. This had budget implications and equated to approximately 3.1% on the Precept. Meetings would be cancelled if there was insufficient business and it was proposed that the scheme would be reviewed in a year. Concern was expressed that there may be more people not attending. It was proposed by Cllr Baxter, seconded by Cllr Rogers that the scheme be trialled for a year. **Carried with one abstention.**

8. Proposal that the Council join CPRE – This had been proposed by Cllr Whitsun-Jones (in his absence by the Clerk). Joining would help the Council with its Environmental work and they could also offer advice on a number of other areas, especially BlackBerry Solar Farm. The cost to the Parish Council is £60 for a year. The proposal was seconded by Cllr Robins – **Carried unanimously.**

9. Proposal that the Council invest in an Accounts package. The Clerk had circulated a paper on why it was a good idea, it would make the Council more professional and that following research the Clerk was recommending Scribe who provide a specialised package especially for Town and Parish Councils. The cost was envisaged at £288 per year. The package would be able to present comprehensive reports, it would make records easier to keep, reduce risk and save time. Proposed that a package be purchased as described by Cllr Hoff, seconded Cllr Robins – **Carried unanimously.**

10. Planning Update

Thornford

P/TRT/2024/05375 – Thornford Church of England va Primary School Boot Lane DT9 6QY. T2 Horse Chestnut remove **Consent Granted – Replace with Oak or Field Maple at least 2m high.** Cllr Rogers declared a non-pecuniary interest as a school governor.

Beer Hackett

P/FUL/2024/06276 Lower Farm, Beer Hackett Road DT9 6QP – Erect an agricultural Building. – **No decision.**

There had been no new applications

11. Financials – a) Budget for 2025-2026 There followed a discussion on the proposed Budget. The items agreed above were included in the calculations. Concern was expressed regarding payments to the churches in Beer Hackett and Thornford. This would be looked

into. Acceptance of the Budget was proposed by Cllr Baxter, seconded by Cllr Bromell – **Agreed with 1 (one) against**

b) Precept for 2025-2026 – This was discussed in the light of the agreed Budget . It would mean an increase in the precept of 8.8% per Band D equivalent property. It was explained that the increase was based on the extra meetings, hall hire and consequent increase in Clerk's hours, the accounts package and a 2.5% increase in cost of living adjustment. It would mean that the Thornhackett precept would still be the lowest in comparison to surrounding Parish Councils. Concerns were raised at the size of the increase. It was decided to raise the Precept by 8.8% to £40.67 per annum per Band D equivalent property a rise of £3.25 on the year. Proposed Cllr Hoff, seconded Cllr Hillier **Agreed with 1 (one) against.**

c) Payments due or January - These had been circulated in advance to Councillors. A payment from the Allotment Association for rent (£800.00) for the year had been received. It was agreed to investigate a replacement noticeboard outside the Village Hall as the present one was starting to deteriorate. The possibility of working with the Village Hall on this was also agreed as they were looking to replace theirs. Proposed Cllr Hoff, seconded Cllr Hillier **Agreed unanimously.**

12. To receive papers for future adoption. a) Petitions Policy, b) Audit and Risk

Management Policy c) Officer Positions– It was explained that these were new policies and had been arrived at by looking at similar policies from other Councils. Cllr Hillier and Cllr Whitsun-Jones had worked on the Petitions Policy, Cllr Hoff and Cllr Hillier had developed the Audit and Risk Management Policy. Cllr Hillier and Cllr Whitsun-Jones had worked on the Officer Positions document. Councillors were asked to review the Policies and they would be brought to the next meeting for discussion,

13. Traffic Issues a) Report on 20's Plenty Zoom presentation – a report had been circulated to Councillors – Costs were an issue, costs of Traffic Road Order and new signage, speedwatch teams may be required, other measures should be considered like traffic calming measures and flashing speed indicator devices, 20mph zones are most effective when rolled out as a zone covering areas where people live, work, play, shop and educated. Dorset Council supports the Policy of 20mph zones but has only allocated £75k to cover the whole of Dorset.

b) Speed Survey Results. - A report from Dorset Council had been circulated to members. None of the areas surveyed supported the installation of a Speed Indication Device (SID), The area around Boot Lane down to the old Chapel did support the introduction of a 20mph zone. This would include Church Road, The Drove, Boot Lane and the housing estate. There followed a discussion on possible speed calming measures some of which would require Road Traffic Orders. Clerk asked to investigate whether the Parish Council could purchase its own SID and also to confirm the extent of a 20mph zone. (Results of the Speed Survey are on the Parish Council web site)

At this point there was a proposal to raise the guillotine so that business could be concluded, proposed by Cllr Robins, seconded Cllr Baxter – carried

c) Beer Hackett Traffic issues. A summary of progress to date was circulated. The petition was being presented to Dorset Council. A second speed survey to be requested in the centre of the village and a meeting with the Cabinet Member for Highways. Proposed Cllr Keene, seconded Cllr Baxter - **Agreed unanimously.**

14. Yeo Valley Trail – a paper had been received and circulated to Councillors regarding a proposal for a cycling/walking route between Milborne Port and Yeovil via Sherborne, Thornford and Bradford Abbas. A feasibility study was required, Dorset and Somerset Councils were being consulted. The paper was for information and requesting only expressions of interest at this stage. (Proposal is published on the Parish Council web site)

15. Environment Working Group – The Group met on 18th December 2024. Council would need to nominate a Councillor to Chair the Group. Cllrs Hillier and Robins were willing to chair the meetings, as a result of a vote Cllr Robins was elected to lead the group on behalf of the Council. The Terms of Reference were agreed and it was requested that the minimum number of meetings be raised from 3 to 4 -**agreed.** That the Sustainable Thornford Action Plan be incorporated into the Community Action Plan agreed at Council on 17th May 2023. – **agreed.** That all reports to Council in the future have an Environmental impact assessment and that the work plan include as a priority flooding issues.

16. Environment Champion Report – Mr Young gave a report which can be found on the Parish Council web site.

17. Government Consultation on ‘Strengthening the Standards and Conduct Framework for Local Authorities in England’ – A briefing paper had been circulated and Councillors were urged to review and complete the document. A link could be found on the MHCLG website or the DAPTC website.

18. Correspondence – Thank you letters had been received from Royal British Legion and Life Education for their donations. (Life Education runs courses for children at the school.)

The meeting closed at 9.30pm

Date of next Ordinary Parish Council Meeting 19th March 2025 at 7.00pm at Thornford Village Hall.

The Annual Parish Meeting for Thornford would be held on Wednesday 16th April at 7.00pm

Annual Meeting of the Parish Council would be held on 21st May 2025

ADDENDUM

Subsequent to the meeting, and following concerns raised regarding the level of increase in the Precept, the Budget and Precept have been reviewed and it has been possible to reduce the precept by 2% to 6.8% an increase of £2.54 on the year per Band D equivalent property.