

THORNHACKETT PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Ordinary Council Meeting held on Wednesday 17th September 2025

Attendees: Cllrs. Hillier (Chairman), Hoff, Whitsun-Jones, Keene, Robins, Axten, Baxter, Thompson

Also in Attendance: Mrs S Hillier (Clerk), and 12 members of the Public.

1. **Welcome:** The Chairman welcomed Councillors and members of the public to the meeting.
2. **Apologies for Absence** - Cllr. B Taylor-Wade and Cllr Bromell, were accepted and agreed. Cllr Robin Legg (Dorset Councillor) also tendered his apologies.
3. **Declarations Of Interest:** Cllr Hillier declared a pecuniary interest in item 9c and would leave the room. Cllr Hoff would take the Chair for that item.
4. **Minutes of the meeting held on 16th July** – these had been circulated, no issues were raised, their adoption was proposed by Cllr Hillier, seconded Cllr Hoff -**agreed unanimously**.
5. **Matters Arising** – a. Blackberry Solar Farm – the Council had received a letter from the developers indicating that the delay in an application was due to the Government changing the way in which developers could access the National Grid and they had needed to re-apply.
b. Beer Hackett Speed Survey – the response from officers requesting an assessment of the survey results had been less than satisfactory. The Chairman had written to a leading Councillor on Dorset Council for assistance. The invoice would not be paid until we received an adequate response.
c. Councillor Responsibilities, Councillors were asked if anyone present was willing to fill the position of Press and Publicity vacated by Cllr Whitsun-Jones. It was agreed that for the moment Cllrs Robins and Thompson would cover the role.
6. **Public Forum** – 1) Did the Council have a Neighbourhood Plan? It was explained that the matter was being considered when the Government withdrew all support funding this year. Council had lobbied the M.P and the Minister for Housing, Communities and Local Government. It was expensive in man power, time and cost at some £6k per year for approximately 5 years and would require major commitment from both Councillors and volunteer members of the public and so at the present time the idea had been shelved. Residents and Councillors were urged to sign the on-line petition on the CPRE website.
2) The condition of the play area was raised, it is tired and needing investment, a paper was being presented later in the meeting.
7. **Dorset Council Local Plan Consultation** – Cllr Whitsun-Jones presented a paper to Council summarising the context relating to Thornhackett Council area, he explained the background and its importance. He explained the action required by the Council and outlined areas for future discussion. He advised that a 'no development' approach would not be appropriate. Council agreed that this would be appropriate and would listen to residents views on 1st October at the Extraordinary Council Meeting on this matter. The Paper can be found on the Thornhackett Council website, in Meetings It was stressed that the Plan was not just about housing but also Solar Farms, Wind Farms and Battery Storage Farms and vast areas of north Dorset were indicated as being suitable.
8. **Dorset Local Transport Plan Consultation** – This also closes on 13th October Cllr Robins had prepared a summary of the document (this can be found on the website) This is a combined Plan with Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole. It seems to concentrate on major A roads A30. A303 etc. There is very little West of Sherborne. Many areas concerning our area are not addressed. Cllr Robins indicated he was willing to draft a response to the consultation.
9. **Finances** - a. New Bank Account – The Lloyds Current Account is now closed. There are still problems with the other two accounts – a lengthy telephone conversation was held with the Business Banking manager and it is hoped that matters are now being resolved,
b. Payments Paid, and falling due – these had been circulated to Councillors. Their acceptance was proposed by Cllr Hoff, seconded Cllr Robins - **Agreed unanimously**. There followed a discussion on the grass cutting funding request for St Michaels. Accounts from the church had been made available to Councillors. After a lengthy discussion, Cllr Hillier proposed and Cllr Thompson seconded a proposal that the Council make a contribution towards the grass cutting – **For 7, 1 against**.

c. Pay Award 2025-2026. (Cllr Hillier left the meeting) NALC/SLCC had published the pay award for Council Officers for 2025/2026 in July, it amounted to an increase in pay of 3.2% backdated to 1st April 2025. The Budget had assumed an increase of up to 5% and so this is within Budget. Figures indicating the implications had been circulated Cllr Robins proposed and Cllr Baxter seconded that the increase be accepted – **Carried unanimously**. Cllr Hillier returned to the meeting.

- 10. Expenses Policy** – The Clerk presented a draft policy indicating that it had been produced as a result of a recommendation from an internal Auditor. There followed a discussion on if and when Councillors with special responsibilities could claim costs. The draft would be amended and brought back to the next meeting.

9,00pm Cllr Whitsun-Jones left the meeting.

Cllr Hillier proposed that the guillotine be lifted to facilitate the rest of the business – **Agreed**

- 11. Play Area** – The Clerk had produced a brief paper on the condition of the play area. A company had been engaged to repair the swing. There were problems with the grass areas, the matting under equipment and some of the equipment itself. There was little for toddlers to enjoy. The recommendation was to establish a working party of 2/3 Councillors to investigate funding opportunities, possible new equipment and other improvements. Cllr Hoff, seconded by Cllr Robins suggested that a resident with young children also be included, **Agreed** Cllr Axten and Cllr Baxter agreed to form the working party and a member of the public present also volunteered to help.

- 12. Street Lights** – Two quotations had been received. A third company that had indicated interest had failed to submit. A new company had just expressed an interest in the work. It was agreed to let this company look at the work. The decision to proceed was deferred to allow for third quotation. The Chairman and Clerk were meeting with the company next week.

- 13. Environment Champion** – no report

- 14. Reports from Councillors** – Cllr Robins indicated that he had followed up the report of Himalayan Balsam growing along the river with Dorset Council and the Environment Agency, he was awaiting a response from them.

- 15. Planning Applications** – There was only one new application and that was for Higher Farm Beer Hackett. The previous application to approve a Certificate of Lawfulness for the building to continue as a residential dwelling without agricultural occupancy had been approved. The new application was to allow C3 unrestricted use. There followed a discussion and a vote on whether to support the application was taken **2 For 1 Against 4 Abstentions**

- 16. Communications** - a. Request received from Life Education to support a day of Health and Wellbeing delivery at the school – the request to be circulated.
b. Letter received from Edward Morello M.P. regarding Neighbourhood Plans.
c. Notice regarding closure of the central reservation gap between Over Compton and Bradford Abbas as a safety measure,
d. E-mail received regarding improved stiles between Beer Hackett and Thornford

- 17. To regularise membership of the Environment Working Group (EWG)**- Prior to the co-option of Cllr Thompson to the Council, Cllr Whitsun-Jones had resigned his position on the EWG. Cllr Thompson had been a public member of that group. It was proposed by Cllr Hillier and seconded by Cllr Robins that Cllr Thompson be appointed as a Councillor to that group. **unanimously agreed** This created a public vacancy. A resident present expressed an interest in the position. Cllr Robins as Chairman of the EWG took the residents details.

The meeting was declared closed at 9.55pm

Dates of next meetings **Extraordinary Council Meeting Wednesday 1st October 7.00pm Thornford Village Hall** to discuss the Dorset Local Plan Consultation.

Next **Ordinary Council Meeting Wednesday 15th October 7.00pm Thornford Village Hall**