THORNHACKETT PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Ordinary Council Meeting held on Wednesday 18th November 2026 at 7.00pm in Thornford Village Hall

> Minutes are not a verbatim record of the meeting, they should give an indication of the topic being discussed and any outcomes or decisions made. Minutes should be as brief as possible and just convey the sense of the discussion. They should not contain names of specific contributors other than any proposer and seconder.

Attendees: Cllrs. Hillier (Chairman), Thompson, Robins, Bromell, Baxter, Keene also Cllr R Legg Dorset Council

Also in Attendance: Mrs S Hillier (Clerk), and 3 members of the Public.

1. **Welcome** to members and to members of the public.
2. **Apologies for Absence** - these were received from, Cllrs Hoff and Small agreed and accepted.
3. **Declarations Of Interest:** Cllr Hillier declared a pecuniary interest in Item 17.
4. **Minutes of the meeting held on 21st October 2026 –** these had been circulated. The acceptance of the minutes was proposed by Cllr Hillier, seconded Cllr Robins , – **agreed with 3 abstentions as not present..**
5. **Matters Arising –** a) Blackberry Solar Farm – still awaiting grid connection, offer due March 2027. EIA (Environmental Impact Assessment still required. Planning case officer has not heard from company since May 2026. b) Tree Survey – following the two named storms in October the Chairman walked the area checking for any tree damage. None was found. c) Thornford Speed Survey all houses delivered a copy, survey closes 30th November. Cllrs thanked for delivering the forms. 20's Plenty webinar Friday 29th November. Beer Hackett scheme due for panel consideration Spring 2027
6. **Public Forum** – A member of the public gave a report on the two local Dorset Council Community Conversation sessions. Four learning areas: local needs, local decision-making, devolution of services, working together
   - Key themes from session 1 fed into session 2: transport, housing, flooding, young people, local environment
   - Session 2 focused on who does what, how, and at what level. Action groups to form within a month attendees can choose which to join The sessions were led by Dorset's Deputy CEO/CEO, who had run a similar successful programme in Cornwall Dorset Council is keen to devolve to parish councils where capacity exists. Examples raised: Yetminster PC wanting a drain-clearing operative; flooding emergency planning. What can't be devolved: statutory services (refuse collection, etc. Concern raised: risk of responsibility being passed down without adequate funding or resource. Previous Dorset survey (COVID era) already identified flooding and speeding as local priorities.
   - Agreed: distribute all session papers to councillors, then hold an informal meeting (mince pies and mulled wine suggested) to discuss how to respond! Jane Heard was thanked for attending and giving her very useful report.

   Council was asked whether the Public Forum could be moved down the Agenda. This would be considered.
7. **Finances** – a) Income and Expenditure since last meeting – a report had been circulated indicating the expenditure agreed at last meeting and future expenditure to be agreed, Income received included the precept for the next six months of £8609.00 and the quarterly bank interest of £451.11 and a CIL payment of £1269.30 all had been transferred to the Deposit Account.
   b) Future expenditure - Other than contracted expenditure there was a payment to DAPTC for Clerk's Conference (cost shared with Bradford Abbas PC) of £30.00, SLCC course for Clerk of £46.20, 4 new litter bin liners for play area £540.00 (est) SSE first payment on new contract of £72.49.Total expenditure £1258.49 An estimate for repairing the fingerpost at Beer Hackett had been received Cllr Hillier proposed and Cllr Robins seconded the proposal to complete the work – **agreed** A request for

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donation of up to £165 towards health support at the primary school (S137) – Cllr Baxter and Cllr Bromell proposed payment – **agreed**

c) Draft Budget for discussion and guidance – A paper indicating possible expenditure for 2027/2028 as at this moment in time, those items that are either fixed or contracted. Draft based on an assumption of rate of inflation of £3.5% as at end of October. It was suggested that any unspent funds for the 3 defibrillators be transferred to earmarked reserves as all 3 are out of warranty and will need replacing in future. Funds for the noticeboard will need to be spent as noticeboard door in the centre of the village had fallen off. Amount for stiles be moved to CIL expenditure CPRE membership be retained for present. Members requested to send budget feedback as soon as possible to the Clerk. It was suggested that Bank interest received could be used to offset some possible precept increase, The acceptance of the Financial Report was proposed by Cllr Hillier, seconded Cllr Robins – **accepted unanimously**

8. **Tree Policy –** The policy had been reviewed by the EWG (Environment Working Group) and a few minor Changes made. Including correction to numbering, adding '.. no hedge pruning during dates specified by DEFRA…' new paragraph 1.1 'Policy covers land owned by or leased by Parish council'. Cllr Hillier proposed, Cllr Robins seconded adoption of the policy – **agreed with one abstention** (Cllr had not seen the document). Three actions to follow up a) Speak to Allotment Association regarding their obligations under the policy. b) send a copy to the landowners for comment. c) Make budget provision for tree inspection costs.
9. **Report on Recreation Field –** a) Area around cricket net cannot at present be cut, due to iron works and an old roller(?) – contact Cricket Club to clear. b) 2 dead/dying trees – elm and elder by cricket nets tree surgeon to be asked to look at. c) Southeast corner of play area a lot of rubbish, a plastic box suggesting unsupervised youth activity. d) Wire fence broken down and two planks of wood over the ditch – fence requires repair and planks removing as site insecure and planks a hazard this is both a health and safety and Child Safeguarding issue Suggested working group to undertake repairs.
10. **Thornford War Memorial –** Names of the fallen are becoming illegible due to weathering. Ownership of the memorial is unclear, the churchwarden believes it was funded by a previous vicar who lost his son in WWI, but he did not believe it was church property. **Agreed** to write to Sherborne Royal British Legion, War Graves Commission, War Memorials Trust and the church for help and guidance. Grassbys Monumental Masons be contacted for an estimate on appropriate restoration and preserving its historic character.
11. **Keep Britain Tidy Campaign – 12th - 28th March 2027** it was suggested that Council sign up and lead on litter picking the villages of Thornford and Beer Hackett see if Sustainable Thornford would be prepared to support the project and ask Dorset Council if they could loan us high-vis tabards and some litter pickers. – **Agreed**
12. **Environment Champion report** - The report had been circulated. Comment was made that it was felt that there was too much general information when it was thought that the report would indicate what the Council could do as opposed to national items. Mention of the Wessex Water Watermark Towns was made. It was also noted that the Pumping Station in Beer Hackett had discharged 4 times in recent days (heavy rainfall) the majority of this material comes from Chetnole and Yetminster. The Water Treatment Centre was due to be upgraded in 2027 it was hoped that this may help with the problem of discharges.
13. **Reports from Working Groups –**a) **EWG** had met they had undertaken the 5 minute tree assessment and calculated that the Council rated as 10 - Good. They had also examined in detail the Tree Policy . It was Recommended that 'Thornhackett Parish Council would apply to become a Wessex Water Watermark Town with the aim of trying to increase the use of water butts' We could be the first in the Wriggle Valley. This was put as a resolution to Council - Proposed Cllr Hillier, seconded Cllr Robins **agreed unanimously** b) **Play Area Working Group** – The Clerk reported that there had been a meeting that day with the preferred play equipment contractor who had indicated that they could as part of the contract improve the access to the play area as well as undertaking other minor improvements.

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14. **Reports from Councillors with Responsibilities –** Village Hall – they had been contacted regarding ownership of the Jubilee Arch which is on Hall land but on Council Asset Register. Hall Trustees declined ownership but as they had recently paid for it to be painted not realising the ownership – the hall requested a grant of £210 towards costs. – **this was agreed and would be S137 funding.**
15. **Planning Applications –** There had been no new applications since the last meeting. There was one request for a Certificate of Lawfulness from **Scatheryk Kings Road Thornford** for the occupation of a residency without compliance with an agricultural occupancy condition. P/CLE/2026/06219
16. **Communications and Urgent Business communicated to the Chairman in Advance –** No urgent Business **Communications –**a) Flood Investigation Pack received – reports on system for both Thornford an Beer Hackett were 0 , Cllr Robins was undertaking to collate flooding reports, Councillors and public are urged to contact him with any reports and their effects. b) Next flood warden meeting 19th November 12.30pm

PART II

Resolution to exclude press and public to enable the council to discuss confidential staff matters (Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960) – **agreed unanimously**
Members of the public and press were asked to leave the meeting and councillors asked to turn off any recording devices – The Chairman left the room. Cllr Keene took the Chair.

17. **Report from Staff Working Group** – Cllr Keene presented the report. The group had met to conduct a staff appraisal. The forms and information used to conduct the appraisal had been circulated along with the report from the Chairman of the working group. The report was discussed and the working group had proposed that the employment contract be amended to show an increase in paid hours for the clerk as work load had increased. Effective from 1st December 2026 and hours worked reviewed quarterly and any adjustment made half yearly following a proposal to, and agreement by council.
Proposed Cllr Keene seconded Cllr Thompson – agreed unanimously.
The meeting was declared closed at 9.15pm

Date of next meeting **Wednesday 20th January 2027** Thornford Village Hall at 7.0pm

Signed: **Date:**

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