

THORPE MORIEUX
ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
14 MAY 2026 AT 7.00PM IN THE VILLAGE HALL

Present: Cllr John Squirrell (chair), Cllr Louisa Pepper (vice-chair), Cllr John Gagen, Cllr Jules O'Brien, Cllr Garry Russell, Cllr Keith Lee, Cllr Ashley Simpson
District Cllr Deborah Saw
Sarah Headland (Clerk)
No members of the public present

1. Apologies for absence

County Cllr Robert Lindsay

Apologies were accepted and approved by The Council.

2. Approve the Minutes of the 2025 Annual Parish Meeting - APPROVED

Proposed by Cllr Gagen

Seconded by Cllr O'Brien

3. To receive District and County Councillors Annual Reports

Some points that were noted:

- Cllr Deborah Saw mentioned that there will be £2000 grant money available to share among her 7 parishes
- LGR – the plan is to continue with unitisation and Thorpe will be part of West Suffolk in 2028. There will be 66 Cllrs for West Suffolk.
- There are 23 months left of the District Council.
- New recycling starts 1st June. Same collection day but different bins for different items
Further information can be found here <https://www.babergh.gov.uk/future-changes-to-bin-collections>
- A point was raised that rural areas are deserving of greater investment in relation to the £287 million budget available. Concerns were highlighted regarding deprivation measures in rural communities, which can often be less visible than in urban areas, alongside issues such as the high rates of suicide among farmers. It was suggested that more investment should be directed towards remote areas, as there is a perception that they are frequently overlooked in favour of urban communities
- The Parish Council thanked Deborah for her help in dealing with some tenant issues over the last year.

4. Reports from village organisations for 2025-2026

Village Hall Chairpersons report received with thanks

PCC Church Wardens report received with thanks

Coffee, Cake, and Chat report received with thanks

Thorpe Times Magazine report received with thanks

All reports in full can be found at the end of these minutes.

5. Date of the 2027 Annual Parish Meeting- to be agreed later in the year.

Meeting closed at 19:52

Village Hall Chairman's Report April 2026

The Hall continues in good fettle. Regular maintenance and improvements ensure that it still serves its purpose well and continues to be well used.

We hosted 'Thorpe Morieux Remembers' on 4th May the National remembrance for VE Day's 80th year. The get together included Fire Globe lighting, Hall full of food and drink, a free event for the village, well supported.

The big fundraiser this year was the Mid Summer Ball, a hugely successful evening and tribute to all Sue's hard work in organising.

Serenity Suffolk Yoga celebrated 10 years of evenings and weekend events at the village hall, continuing to be a regular booking enjoyed by many.

The Village Hall is also a favourite venue for the Heart of Suffolk Art Show which returned in November, for two weekends featuring local art for sale. The Hall is now well established in the art world due to its ability to transform into art gallery mode.

Regular Cafe/Warm Hubs are popular and incorporated our new annual Festival of Lights evening, which lit up the Whitethorne Ley Christmas Tree for its second time, including the decorating of the tree and carols being sung by local children, followed by mince pies and mulled wine.

The year was rounded up with the hugely successful Auction of Promises in February. A joint event with St Mary's Church the evening raised over £10'000. A very big thank you to all who donated and purchased promises, Jasmin for the organising, Keith our Auctioneer on the night, Team Village Hall and supporters for producing and serving a delicious home cooked dinner, accompanied by a busy bar.

Our committee is beginning to feel a bit depleted. Our small but happy band gets all the necessary jobs done, but we do need more people involved for the Halls survival into the future. The most pressing matter is the issue of ownership and management structure. This is to ensure the long-term future of the Hall going forward. Our Secretary Gail is working with the Parish Council towards making the Hall a Community Interest Company

John Gagen

Church Warden Report 2026

My thanks go to Sharon and our benefice Lay Readers for maintaining our weekly services.

With the relocation from the village of Simon and Annie Clarkson-Webb and Cathy Hobbs our team is now a bit depleted. So far the Church Wardens have only had to conduct two services to fill the gaps.

Attendance generally is down on previous years, which is worrying. While this is not just a Thorpe Morieux problem it is still of concern.

The team helping to decorate and clean is also not growing but continues to do an excellent job both inside and out in maintaining St Mary's to a high standard. My thanks go to all who help throughout the year, Phil Large mowing and Colin and Gail Walker for electrical assistance.

Our year had probably been dominated by fighting Santander Bank who after two years of trying to change the account signatory's blocked our account without notice in July, resulting in six months of worry with bills that could not be put off being paid from Church Wardens personal accounts. Our MP James Cartlidge helped in raising the issue with the bank which attracted the East Anglian Daily Press twice giving St Mary's front page coverage God vs Bank and Un – Holy Row! This matter does seem to be rectified now but decisions about moving our account still need to be finalised.

Our Fabric Fund has been nicely topped up this year with a well sponsored, Suffolk Historic Churches Bike Ride in September and more recently the fantastic Auction of Promises in February raising over £7,500. A huge thank you; to Jasmin for organising the event, Keith Lee our auctioneer on the night, and everyone who donated their *promise* attracting generous bidders. Thanks also to the village hall team and helpers who catered so well on the evening. Good time had by all.

John Gagen

Coffee, cake and chat Sessions 25/26

These sessions have continued throughout the year rotating between Saturday mornings, Friday early evenings and Monday mornings. During the winter months we have met twice a month and over the summer there is a slightly reduced frequency.

The Friday evening sessions has continued to be popular extending the reach of the café with different people attending and we are seeing a few more families attending these sessions too. We are trying to provide some activities for the children on the Saturday morning and Friday evening sessions, and these have proved quite popular.

People appear to value the social opportunity to catch up with people they know and make new connections to those they don't.

We have had a very successful event when we supported the village hall committee for their Festival of Light in early December when the Christmas Tree in the village was decorated and the lights turned on. We are all hoping to make this an annual event and are planning a joint summer event too.

We have been fortunate enough to have secured another grant from Babergh District Council and enjoyed another grant monitoring visit from Sarah-Jane Hatt the communities grant officer earlier this year. She reported to have enjoyed the session and could see the benefit of the sessions to the community. The sessions are free for all with a subsidised bar open on the Friday evenings. People can make a donation should they want to.

Between May 2025 and May 2026, we have met 20 times with an average attendance of 25 people per session. (attendance ranging from 9-60 people) This is a slight increase on the average attendance last year of 23 per session.

We would like to thank both the village hall and the band of wonderful volunteers who make these sessions possible. To John Gagen who organises and mans the bar for our Friday sessions and the Thorpe times and others for helping to advertise these sessions. I would also like to thank Babergh District Council who have given us another grant this year to support these sessions

JOB 10/5/26

Thorpe Times 2025-26

The four Thorpe Times editors (Ade Barber, Heather Boisseau, Sue Cowper and Jules O'Brien) produce a bi-monthly village magazine of between 12 and 20 pages. This consists of local articles, written by the editors and other village contributors which cover subjects that we hope will interest our readers such as local history, wildlife, gardening and cooking.

Through advertising, we support several local businesses ranging from pest control to a local chimney sweep.

Over the past year we have continued to produce the Thorpe Times in full colour, thanks to the continued support from the Parish Council and more recently Babergh District council thanks to our district Counsellor Deborah Saw. We are continuing with an editorial at the beginning of every magazine produced by some of our editors, which gives a more personalised start to the magazine.

Throughout the year we have included interesting articles including 'how our village is changing' , 'Whitebeams, Rowans and Service trees' and 'The day that the ISD came to Thorpe Morieux'! We welcome any new contributors, any articles to be sent to thorpetimes@gmail.com by the copy date on the front of the previous copy.

We try to cover any other occasions that might be interesting to our readers including village hall events, the Coffee, Cake and Chat sessions, the local gardening club and much more.

Thanks to our District Counsellor Deborah Saw who this year has provided financial support with the colour printing costs via her locality grant and recognises the importance of the Thorpe Times to all of us living in the village.

We would also like to thank Jasmin Gagen, who organises the advertising and pays all the bills and, of course, the Parish Council for continuing to support us.

The editors welcome any feedback on the magazine and look forward to even more contributions to the magazine in the coming year. The Thorpe Times is only as good as the copy we receive so get writing everyone!

Thorpe Morieux Annual Parish report by Robert Lindsay County Cllr 15.5.26

County Election and the new Cosford

I am relieved and pleased to have been re-elected as your county councillor. The new Cosford division is much larger than before – 21 parishes councils (as opposed to 18 before) – and seven of them, including Boxford, Little Waldingfield and Alpheton are new to me.

This extra number of Parish Council meetings to cover does mean that my attendance at every PC meeting for all 21 PCs – difficult before - will not be possible. I will necessarily have to focus on the seven new ones to start with to get to know them. Luckily Thorpe Morieux parish councillors know me well enough to be able to approach me about issues without the need for a formal meeting.

The new county council

The elections cut the Conservative councillor numbers down from 55 to just nine with Reform winning 41 out of 70 seats, enough to form an administration on their own. Greens increased seats from nine to 13 – making us the official opposition - while LibDem and Labour seat numbers were roughly halved.

Reform	41
Green	13
Conservative	9
LD	2
Labour	2
Independent	2

At this stage it is not clear what Reform's policies are on county council matters. There are press reports that the chairman of Ipswich Reform Party has banned its new councillors in Ipswich from talking to the press. At the time of writing Reform had not yet chosen a leader and there are said to be three contenders. One of them, the former leader has said that all the new councillors will need to be "put in an academy" for six months to train them up to the job.

We have our first full council meeting next Thursday at which the Reform leader will be voted in. Green members will be discussing ahead of that meeting what kind of group to form. I and my fellow Green councillors will do our best to hold the Reform administration to account for the remaining two years that the county is in existence.

Reform have indicated they do not support the government's decision to scrap the county council and create three unitary councils in May 2028. They may launch a judicial review of the decision. Non co-operation with the Government on creating the three unitaries would not be to the benefit of Suffolk residents if the three unitary council plan does go ahead.

Two more elections in next two year - 2027, 2028

If the Government does stick to its plan, in a year's time, in May 2027, there will be elections of "shadow" unitary councillors – in our area for the new unitary of West Suffolk. Those elected will not actually be representing residents until the unitaries are legally created with full staff in May 2028.

Alongside this, the Government is creating the office of a Norfolk and Suffolk Mayor, elected by all the voters in the two counties. The Government has delayed its plans for that election by two years to May 2028.

New 51 bus service

Looking back at the year, I'm delighted to say that the new 51 bus service has been running (since April 14) between Hadleigh and Stowmarket six times daily, five days a week. The new service is the result of an application for bus funding I encouraged three other parish councils to make two years ago. The 15 seater bus appears already to have a core of regular passengers.

Since then £27m has become available to Suffolk for new bus routes over the next three years and parish councils are being asked to bid again for services they might want. I will be trying to ensure the new administration allocates this money where buses are most needed.

Five month closure Bildeston High Street

The replacement of the water main on Bildeston High Street will mean its closure of different stretches over the five months between start in mid June to end in mid November. The surgery will still be accessible by car throughout, from one direction or another at any one time. And all businesses will be open to pedestrian access.

The county has not yet responded to my suggestion that they use the works to resurface the High Street. I can pick that up now the elections are over. I have repeatedly asked the bus company and Highways what they will do about the 51 bus route given the closure and they have so far told me that they are in discussions and awaiting a decision.

I have met Highways network assurance with local parish council chairs to see what can be done to mitigate the use of ratruns – particularly through the villages of Wattisham and Kettlebaston and Monks Eleigh – it is likely to involve the use of warning signage.

Test case for new simplified 20mph policy

On Monday 27 April I was informed that Cockfield parish council have been granted approval for reduction of speed limits from 30mph to 20mph on the three roads that surround Cockfield Great Green. So far as I know, this is one of the first test cases of the council's new, simpler policy on 20mph being put into action. It required just three speed surveys on the three roads and each one came in with an average speed below 28mph – the sole criterion now in place. However, funding will still need to be found. The new administration's policy on funding is not yet known.

District Councillor's Report to Thorpe Morieux Parish Council Annual Meeting

14th May 2026

Thorpe Morieux Issues

In February I contacted Orwell Housing at the request of the Parish Clerk to get them to repair the fence at the Whitethorn Leys estate. This fence marks the boundary between Orwell Housing property and Parish Council land and it is also helpful in discouraging vehicles from accessing the meadow. This issue had been ongoing for some months but I got this issue elevated from the repairs team to the Estates Services Manager and the fence has now been repaired.

I also dealt with an issue for a tenant of Samphire Homes which was resolved successfully.

I was delighted to assist in securing a grant for the printing of Thorpe Times and for alerting the Parish Council to the opening of the funding window for the Living Well Grant.

Local Government Reform

An enormous amount of time was spent in responding to the Government's desire to unitarize councils in England, and discarding county and district councils. The preparation of the Suffolk to the Power of Three business case was a huge task last summer, involving all the county's districts, but the hard work has paid off. The leaders of the districts and Ipswich borough are delighted that our proposal was selected and we firmly believe that the government has made the right choice for Suffolk. There is a huge amount of work to be done before the new councils take over, but this is underway.

The key to success is to ensure that we take the opportunity to transform all public services in Suffolk and ensure they work more effectively for our residents.

Council Finance

Councils have been asking successive governments for clarity over the level of funding they can expect over the medium term rather than waiting for the week before Christmas to receive notification of the funding level for the financial year ahead. This December the Labour government gave Babergh a three year settlement.

This would have been good news however like many rural councils across the country Babergh received a net funding cut of £717k for the next three years and our proportion of business rates will decline in addition.

Urban councils will receive 32% more per head than rural councils. By 2028/9 urban councils will have received a 20% increase in government funding compared to only 2% in rural areas.

We do not want to give our successor councils a poor financial position so we will have to take radical action to balance the budget. The net cost of providing Babergh's services in 2026/27 will be £13.7m, down £1.3m from £15m in the current financial year. We had to make difficult decisions to identify savings and additional income.

When the Government communicated the settlement to councils it stated that its expectation was that district councils would have to increase council tax by 2.99% to balance their budgets which means a Band D household in Babergh will pay £199.52 per year, a total annual increase of £5.79 - or 11p a week.

It is important to stress that Babergh only takes nine per cent of your total council tax bill. The majority goes to the County Council and the Police and Crime Commissioner.

Joint Local Plan

With a new plan-making system as well as our greatly increased housing targets, we have made the prudent decision to start the JLP again, rather than to press ahead with part 2 of the current plan. The government's regulations have said we will have to commence formal plan making by 31st October. The Notice to Commence will be going to a special council meeting next week.

We are aligning timetables and methodologies with the other districts and Ipswich borough.

Neighbourhood Plans

Following the government's withdrawal of financial and technical support for Neighbourhood Plans, Cabinet has now agreed alternative funding of up to £20,000 to support groups to prepare Neighbourhood Plans which help to meet housing need in the area. There isn't a lot available so it will be first come, first served. To qualify, plans must allocate sites that will make an agreed contribution to meeting the district-wide housing number.

LLBCO

After two years work, we approved our Local Listed Building Consent Order for double and secondary glazing, making it easier and quicker to complete these energy efficiency improvements to some grade 2 listed buildings. We are the first rural councils in the country to successfully achieve this. The first property to achieve this was Dukes Hall in Bildeston.

HRA Business Plan

In January, we approved the new HRA Business Plan. This sets out our economic plans for repairs, maintenance, capital works and spending on council housing management over the next 30 years. We now have a plan that is sustainable over the long term: it maintains the minimum revenue balance of £1m in the early years and shows a substantial surplus by the end of the plan period. A great legacy to hand over to the successor councils

DRAFT