

# Welcolme to the 2025 annual parish meeting

It's been a year of highs and lows, we began 2024 with 7 parish councillors but no clerk or RFO with one of the councillors acting in the rolls.

A temporary clerk came on board mid way through the year to help us out, unfortunately due to other commitments she resigned in December. We've since been running with Cllr Bakes as acting clerk and RFO.

We've been dogged by further resignations, with the council becoming inquarate and Cllr Aldridge and Cllr Marfleet joining us to enable us to continue to function. Unfortunately ex Cllr Marfleet lost his seat in the May elections and can no longer sit on the parish council. I don't think the majority of parishioners realise how hard Hugo worked on behalf of his constituents, and particularly North Thoresby. So I would like to publicly thank him for his dedicated hard work.

I feel at this point, that it is crucial to stress how difficult it is to maintain a functioning Parish Council with so few members and therefore we as councillors are unable to guarantee that this can be sustained into the future.

If the area no longer had a functioning Parish Council, then this would inevitably impact on local services and emenities, such as the upkeep and access to the village hall, village grass cutting etc, as the responsibilities of the Parish would revert to The District Council, who would then only be obliged to provide essential services such as grass cutting only three times a year and would have no requirement to keep the village hall open.

That's the lows

Now the highlights

Despite resident reservations which seemed to centre around the tradition of children walking along the village hall wall the new railings were fitted along with 3 smart new notice boards. The general consensus expressed directly or on social media is positive. The design and way they've been installed still gives space for children to walk along the wall, obviously whil holding a grown ups hand.

One of the great successes of the year has been our free little library, it was even featured on BBC radio lincolnshire this week, at one point it was being overrun with books and we were having to remove some of the more unsuitable books, who wants a 1972 road map of Belgium? We now have a volunteer parishioner who does an amazing job of looking after it, colour coding books so older ones can be identified and removed they're now even sorted in alphabetical order.

The villages greatest asset is our village hall. For several years there has been no hot water feed to the toilets due to a broken boiler. This needed urgent attention. In spring last year we purchased and installed a sunamp phase change material heater. (Explain). Improvements have been made to the electrics and fire alert systems. There is still much work to be undertaken. Unfortunately following advice from a serving fire fighter who pointed out if a fire started in the entrance hall anyone in the committee room would be unable to escape. As our main priority is your safety, it was proposed we do not use the committee room until safety measures are in place, more on this later.

What makes North Thoresby so special are its residents and there are some I'd personally like to thank.

I've mentioned the village hall as our greatest asset however the structure is only part of the picture, our caretaker Mark Wilson looks after the hall to an high standard, it's always clean and prepared for customers. Faults are identified and fixed quickly. Safety is always a high priority and this year Mark has undertaken and passed several health an safety courses.

David and Barbara Cooper tirelessly look after the Memorial garden making sure it is always in pristine condition.

No doubt you'll have seen a gentleman sweeping the leaves up, keeping our streets clean. Robin volunteers in all weathers and throughout the year to undertake this job. On behalf of the council I would like to thank him for his tireless work.

We would also like to thank

Emma Kay organises the successful live and local events on behalf of the Parish council.

Heather Howard and her team for organising the monthly soup and social and for Di King and her team for co-ordinating the Pop-in Lunches

There are so many more I could mention who work in the background to make our villages warm friendly and inviting. Hopefully we will hear from them during the evening.

So on behalf of North Thoresby Parish Council thank you.

There have been some changes this year, The Halfway House changed hands and we welcomed Pete and Sara who opened Venneys at the Granby, following an extensive refurbishment. Both have worked so hard on the improvements. Every time I've visited Pete is always in his working gear doing something.

The New Inn on Station Road closed suddenly last year, always a popular local pub so it was a relief when we learned experienced publicans Rachel and Dale were taking it over. Dale is a trained chef and was soon creating delicious new menus.

When pubs are closing at a rate 100 per month We are so lucky to have 2 excellent establishments serving high quality food and drink in the village.

Another new addition is the North Thoresby Community Orchard on Station Road, more on this project later.

Back to the parish council,

At present we have 3 parish councillors and no clerk. Cllr Bakes is our acting clerk and RFO and between the 3 of us, we're trying to maintain all the essential services for you. We don't always get things right with people quick to point this out, but we're doing our best. Our main aim is to protect your money and deliver value for money We are advertising our the clerks position at 15 hours per week that's 60 hour a month. Cllr Butters and Bakes work full time and I'm busy with consultancy work so it's proving virtually impossible to find enough hours in the day to fulfill all council requirements.

The one positive thing to come out of this, is the savings. Since February 2024 we should have spent over £15,300 on a clerks wages we actually spent less than £5000. However, this is not an ideal position to find ourselves in. Our finances are in good shape, in February 24 the PC had £30 on deposit however unpaid bills and grant money allocated to the fencing project reduced that down to £17k. Today we have around £39k on deposit.

Moving forward with plans for this year.

Number 1 item on the agenda is to employ an experienced clerk which will enable us to focus on other projects. We need to attract more parishioners to join us as parish councillors, I understand peoples reluctance but hopefully with what we have achieved last year members of the parish will consider joining us.

Through my association with the community orchard and the help of the YMCA Lincolnshire I have been very successful in obtaining specific targeted grants, something that I have now applied to the

Parish Council. Our first grant application this year was successful and with the funds awarded, we have been able to purchase a new digital piano for the village hall.

Our vision for the now unused committee room, which we have already voted to rename the Community Room is to apply for and secure a grant to carry out alterations which will enable us to safely use it. We're looking to remove the 3 long windows on the northern side and replace them with doors which will act as a fire exit. Create a patio area outside and purchase tables and chairs to create an outside area to be enjoyed by anyone using the facility. The new community room will then be redecorated. We'd appreciate your input on how it should be finished.

Over the years we've heard many times how the village hall loses money or isn't profitable. We all pay a precept (an amount of money) collected by the county council and distributed to the parish council. If we can obtain the grants to create a community room I intend to propose that the room is made available free of charge to any not for profit groups to use, groups like the soup and social, I was going to include our new village cafe but after visiting the last one at the weekend, it was so well attended I don't think this area would be big enough.

The Parish Council has published its grant scheme where anyone can submit an application for consideration subject to the criteria which are published on our website. This year we have made donations to the cricket and football clubs, approved a grant to enable the publication of a news letter and agreed to support the North Thoresby Academy residential trip.

This year we will be looking at refurbishment of the play park starting with the seating which has now seen better day.

Thank you for your time and attendance this evening and we now look forward to hearing from any groups who wish to tell us what they've been up to this year.