



# Thorncombe Village Trust

Wittey's Lane Bungalow  
High Street  
Thorncombe  
Dorset  
TA20 4PQ

29<sup>th</sup> April 2015

Dear Sirs

Re: Article on page 5: 'Thorncombe Snubs Neighbourhood Plan', Spring 2015 issue, **Beneath the Vale**  
(Published on behalf of Upper Marshwood Vale Parish Council)

We are writing to express our surprise that your article 'Thorncombe snubs Neighbourhood Plan' represents the view of Upper Marshwood Vale Parish Council.

The account is a complete distortion of the actual course of events. Thorncombe Village Trust (TVT) members did not in any way disrupt the meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> February, a meeting convened by Thorncombe Parish Council for the benefit of Thorncombe parishioners – if indeed this is the meeting referred to in your article – and where other attendees from neighbouring parishes were welcomed as guests.

The meeting was held primarily for Thorncombe parishioners to find out more about Neighbourhood Plans in general from a panel of experts, and secondly about the invitation to join with UMV, Netherbury and Hawkchurch in drawing up a joint Plan with them. The questions asked and comments made at the meeting were from Thorncombe parishioners, speaking as individuals not Trust members. Indeed, the vituperative nature of this published article might be seen to vindicate the attending parishioners' apparent decision of not joining up with yourselves.

Mr Robinson, West Dorset District Councillor, as chair of the Joint Neighbourhood Plan Committee, held the floor for the first 45 minutes of the meeting and indeed quoted from the Trust's own website to reinforce his presentation.

In your article you state that '*members of the Thorncombe Trust (sic) took over and posed their disagreement as questions*'; that '*most of the Thorncombe Trust complained.....,completely ignored....*' etc, and you call the TVT a '*ghost council*'.

In actual fact - two TVT committee members asked questions at the meeting, as individual parishioners, as is their right, not as representatives of Thorncombe Village Trust, one of whom was in fact a woman, not one of a '*vociferous and determined group of men*'! A second woman, a parishioner, asked a question, again not on behalf of the Village Trust. All other questions, legitimate and concerned, were asked by villagers/parishioners.

Nobody '*took over the meeting*' in any organised way at all. This paranoid view of events seems extraordinary. Furthermore, two of the strongest speakers against the Neighbourhood Plan are in fact Thorncombe Parish Councillors and neither are members of Thorncombe Village Trust.

Far from being a '*ghost council*', Thorncombe Village Trust has served the community for nearly 30 years as a democratically-run volunteer organisation working to preserve the area's special characteristics and rich historical environment.

The editor of Beneath the Vale has abused his position as editor to express his personal views, unless of course they are the views of UMV Parish Council?

**We would like to see published in the next issue of 'Beneath the Vale' an apology and full retraction of your article and for you to publish this letter in full as Thorncombe Village Trust's entitlement to right of reply, both in print and in your online edition.**

Yours sincerely,

John Whitbread

Chairman, Thorncombe Village Trust

Cc

Cllr Matthew Bowditch, Chairman UMV PC,  
John Vanderwolfe, Clerk to the Council,  
Cllr Ali Cameron, Editor 'Beneath the Vale'  
Cllr Dick Arnold, Chairman, Thorncombe Parish Council