



# MELTON PARISH COUNCIL

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## BUSINESS PLAN

2018

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## Chairman's Introduction

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## The purpose of the Business Plan

The aim of the Business Plan is to set out for Melton residents a clear narrative on the responsibilities of Melton Parish Council (MPC), what it spends its money on, both in terms of day to day expenditure and planned projects, and how it supports residents and delivers services within the parish. It will also help to clarify what the Council can and can't do, and how it works with other relevant providers of services, such as Suffolk County Council (SCC) and Suffolk Coastal District Council (SCDC). The aim is both for the Council to operate in a more co-ordinated and strategic way in both managing its assets on a day to day basis and in planning to meet the future needs of its residents. In so doing it will also aid transparency and accountability, in that the direction of the Council will be clearly set out in one document, together with any challenges that it faces. MPC will aim to consult on any major decisions that are required to be taken and which might impact significantly on the contribution that residents make via their Council Tax. It will be updated on an annual basis and be available on the Council's website.

The Business Plan is separate from the Melton Neighbourhood Plan which sets out in conjunction with the Suffolk Coastal District Local Plan the development plan for the parish over the period to 2030. The link to the Melton Neighbourhood Plan is here:

[www.meltonneighbourhoodplan.co.uk](http://www.meltonneighbourhoodplan.co.uk)

MPC's accounts and overall financial position can be viewed on its website

[www.melton-suffolk-pc.gov.uk](http://www.melton-suffolk-pc.gov.uk)

where the Annual Return and accounts are published and where regular detailed financial reports to both the Finance, Employment and Risk Management Committee and Full Council meetings are published. This Business Plan is designed to provide a coherent narrative to the Council's financial strategy.

## Melton Village Profile

**Melton is a large village lying on the River Deben. For many years, it has had a strategic role as the lowest crossing of the River Deben. This still holds true today.**

The village centre is about 2.0 km (1¼ miles) from the centre of the market town Woodbridge. Melton lies within or close to the Suffolk Coast & Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and two Special Landscape Areas (SLAs).



Melton is a village which has seen significant and rapid growth, with several large residential estates having been built in recent years and another is under construction adjacent to Woods Lane. Further developments within the village centre and nearby are under construction or approved for development, and plans for a large development off Yarmouth Road are under appeal to the Secretary of State. Melton is a scattered village; however most of its population of around 4,000 live within 1km (less than a mile) of the historic centre, with its church, primary school and local shops.

Melton has also developed as a centre for light industry and commerce, with over 70 businesses identified as being based within the village including the new offices for SCDC at Riduna Park.

In terms of facilities, its primary school has been rated as “Good” by Ofsted. It boasts a wide range of voluntary and other bodies which provide fellowship and a sense of community through their activities. The Burness Parish Rooms provide a well subscribed place for organisations to meet in the centre of the village, whilst a well-supported local church, the Woman’s Institute, a local history society, a village produce association and a community farm are just a few of the very many spiritual, social and community organisations operating within the village.

Melton is situated close to a number of well used public spaces including the village playing field and woodland, bridle paths, walking trails and the Deben River.

The 2011 census recorded the population as 3,741, since when it will most certainly have increased significantly. There are now around 2,000 households. It is one of the largest of Suffolk’s parishes outside of the main urban centres.

The logo for Melton Parish Council features a stylized, light grey graphic of a bridge or archway above the text 'Melton Parish Council' in a blue, sans-serif font.

## Melton Parish Council

MPC is the first tier of civil local government, closest to the community and has a key role to play in promoting and representing the interests of residents. MPC, which is non-political, is made up of 15 volunteer Councillors. Elections take place every four years, the last one being in 2015, when existing councillors who offered themselves for re-election were returned unopposed. Since then the Council has co-opted other new volunteer members to fill casual vacancies which have arisen in line with the legal requirements for the attainment of office.

The Council elects a Chairman and Vice-Chairman annually at the Council’s Annual General Meeting and reports to the wider electorate at the Annual Parish Meeting. Both these meetings are usually held in May. Councillors are unpaid and receive no recompense for their time spent on parish duties other than mileage for MPC related travel at the standard local government rate applicable at the time.

Parish councils have a wide range of discretionary powers (but very few duties). These can include the provision of recreation grounds, public open spaces and recreational facilities; the provision of shelters and seats, litter and dog bins, allotments, community centres, public buildings and village halls catering for a wide range of activities, the giving of grants to local community organisations and the power to acquire and

maintain land for public open spaces and amenity. In conjunction with the Highways authority (in Suffolk this is SCC) it can work to improve highways and parking facilities. Most importantly it has a legal right to be notified of any planning application made for a site within the MPC area and to have its comments taken into consideration by the local planning authority (SCDC).

One of MPC's most important responsibilities is the management, maintenance and improvement of its community assets; namely the playing field in Melton Road and the adjoining Burkes Wood. Both these important facilities have been in Council ownership since the 1950s, and provide very well used facilities for sport and recreation.

## How the Parish Council operates

The Parish Council carries out its statutory duties in the following ways:

- Aiming to meet as a full council on a minimum of 6 occasions per annum to deal with the business of the Council, and running these meetings within the Standing Orders of the Council. All full council meetings are open to the public with a period set aside for members of the public to address Council.
- The Council works to its Standing Orders and Financial Regulations, which lay down the rules by which it operates and conducts business. The MPC Standing Orders and Financial Regulations are based on models prepared by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC), updated and amended to meet local requirements as necessary. They are available on the Council's website at [www.melton-suffolk-pc.gov.uk](http://www.melton-suffolk-pc.gov.uk)
- All Parish Councillors are expected to adhere to the Council's Code of Conduct. This is also based on a national model. MPC first adopted this in 2012 and it was readopted (to take into account new members of the Council) in 2017.
- The Chairman will hold an Annual Parish Meeting in May of each year to review the activities of the previous year and to give an opportunity for residents to raise any issues of concern.

MPC has established three committees under delegated powers, which are reviewed annually, for the purposes of more effectively carrying out its day to day business. These are:

- Finance, Employment and Risk Management Committee
- Planning and Transport Committee
- Recreation Committee.

Members are appointed to committees at the Council's Annual General Meeting. the Chairman and Vice-Chairman are on all Council committees. For further details of these committees, their membership, terms of reference and the agendas, reports and minutes, please go the MPC website at [www.melton-suffolk-pc.gov.uk](http://www.melton-suffolk-pc.gov.uk)

The responsibilities of the committees are summarised below. As with the Full Council, all committee meetings are open to the public.

### Finance, Employment and Risk Management Committee

This meets bi-monthly.

The Finance, Employment & Risk Management Committee considers the financial matters of the Council including its accounts, audit, annual return, banking, insurance, preparing the budget, and reporting financial information to the full Council on a regular basis. It is also responsible for the Council's Risk Management Strategy and for ensuring that its employees are provided with the appropriate contracts, job descriptions and terms and conditions of employment.

### Planning and Transport Committee

This meets once a month.

As part of the statutory planning process, SCDC as the local planning authority has to consult MPC on planning applications. Every year Planning and Transport Committee scrutinises large numbers of applications and submits its observations to SCDC which is obliged to consider them in the decision-making process.

The Highways authority is SCC, and although highways and transport issues are not areas on which MPC has a right to be consulted, they are extremely important to residents. Consequently MPC aims to ensure residents' views are known and taken account of in the Highways' decision-making processes. MPC is also involved in facilitating community consultation on road improvement matters and, by working closely with Highways and investing its own funds, has been enabled to improve safety and amenity at one key location in the centre of the village.

### Recreation Committee

This meets bi-monthly.

The Recreation Committee is responsible for the management, maintenance and promotion of the playing field, the pavilion, play equipment, and the tennis courts, together with the four acres of woodland known as Burkes Wood.

The Playing Field in Melton Road is one of the proudest possessions of the village. It provides football pitches, both grass and all weather with floodlighting, together with tennis courts and play equipment with safety surfacing.

### Parish Council Staff

The Parish Council employs two part time employees.

- The Clerk to the Council is William Grosvenor. He administers the Council and carries out all the functions required by law. He is also the Council's Responsible Finance Officer (RFO).
- Phil Donoghue is the Parish Council Handyperson.

## The Business Plan Framework

### Introduction

The Business Plan will be the main way of communicating what the Council is doing to manage its assets responsibly and meet the needs of the community. It will be reviewed and updated annually.

MPC welcomes comment and feedback on this plan. Additional information on the contents of the Plan is available via the Council's website at

[www.melton-suffolk-pc.gov.uk](http://www.melton-suffolk-pc.gov.uk)

Additionally at the start of each full Council or Committee meeting there is an item on the agenda which allows questions to be put to Councillors on relevant topics. The dates and times of the Council's meetings are published on the MPC website. Comments may also be sent by letter to: The Clerk to the Council, Riverside Office, Robertson's Boatyard, Lime Kiln Quay, Woodbridge, IP12 1 BD or via email to: [clerk@melton-suffolk-pc.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@melton-suffolk-pc.gov.uk)

### Income

Every year the Council has to decide what it is going to do in the next financial year and what it is likely to cost. Once it has agreed its budget it then asks SCDC for the money it needs by way of what is called a precept on the Council Tax. It has to do this in January each year. SCDC then includes the parish element as a part of the Council Tax for the following financial year starting from 1 April. Most of the Council's income comes from the precept, although MPC does raise other income via grants and income generated from hire fees for the playing field, tennis courts etc. Due to the reduction of interest rates generally, MPC only receives 0.2% interest from its deposit account at Barclays Bank. However £50K invested this year in the Ipswich Building Society will yield £200.00 over a twelve month period.

For the year from April 2017 to March 2018 the Council has asked for a precept of £71,416.61. Overall income in 2017/18 is likely to be in the region of £82K (apart from Community Infrastructure Levy income – see below) with the balance made up from grants and fees.



## Expenditure

Budgeted expenditure figure for MPC in 2017/18 is £88.7K. Outturn however is likely to be below this figure and nearer the income level. The main areas of expenditure in 2017/18 are:

- Administration of the Council, including rent, salaries, insurance, office expenses.
- Maintenance of the Council's assets, including refurbishment of the Council's bus shelters, the greenspace management contract for the Council's playing field, together with safety works and planned improvement works to the Council's woodland.
- Village Hall feasibility study.

## Reserves

At the end of 2016/17 MPC had assets totalling £87.8K. As at year end 2017/18 the Council's assets will total about £85K and the unrestricted reserves will be in the region of £25K. This protects against major problems requiring emergency funding which could otherwise adversely affect the Council's business.

Additionally MPC currently holds Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) monies totalling £80k. These funds, which are a proportion (15%) of overall CIL amounts received by SCDC from developers building in the parish, are restricted in terms of both application and time. They have to be applied to capital infrastructure projects in support of growth and if not applied within 5 years, or applied incorrectly, are subject to repayment to SCDC. On adoption of the Melton Neighbourhood Plan the amount that MPC receives increases to 25%. Plans to apply these funds to projects to support growth in the village will be incorporated into the Business Plan. Additional CIL payments totalling £2.7K will fall due in 2018/19 and £138K in 2019/20.

## Setting the Budget for 2018/19

This was done formally at the meeting of full Council on 10 January 2018. In the light of the budget set Council decided to request a precept of £73,366.30 for 2018/19. For 2017/18, MPC resolved to increase the Band D charge from 2016/17 by 2%, an increase of only 84p. For 2018/19, the increase will be only 1.9%, an increase of only 81p for a Band D property. Council reviewed its needs taking all factors into consideration, as well as the need to minimise the level of any increase to support hard pressed working families. Total income anticipated in 2018/19 is £77.3K and expenditure of £97.8K. The budget can be brought into balance by careful use of reserves and CIL monies, and without any higher increase in the precept.

## Audit and achieving value for money

MPC has an effective internal control policy in relation to its financial management. The Council has an independent Internal Auditor who reports on the adequacy of all aspects of its system of internal control and who makes a written report to the Council. No internal control issues have been identified. The Council's External Auditor, until 2017 BDO LLP, has given unqualified audit reports for at least the last three years.

In terms of ensuring value for money in relation to contracts for works, MPC seeks prices in line with the requirements of its Financial Regulations. Substantial savings have been made from 2016 onwards by the award of a new Greenspace Management Contract, and the appointment of a Parish Handyperson in 2016 has led to additional savings in contractor costs.

## The Council's Forward Business Plan

### Finance, Employment and Risk Management Committee Objectives

This Committee is primarily concerned with the effective, cost efficient operation of the Council consistent with providing a good service to residents. It reviews matters such as accommodation, equipment, staffing and management of risk on a regular basis. In September 2016 MPC was required to relocate its office on the closure of the former SCDC headquarters building at Melton Hill. It currently has a short term lease of office and meeting accommodation at Robertson's Boatyard, Lime Kiln Quay, Woodbridge. The intention is to move the office and meeting accommodation back to Melton as soon as is practicable, and options will be considered to achieve this; one option is to link the strategy to the provision of a new village hall (see below).

### Planning and Transport Committee Objectives

In 2017 the Planning and Transport Committees' priority was completing the draft Neighbourhood Plan, getting it through the independent examination stage and to referendum in December 2017. Following adoption as a statutory planning document by SCDC early in 2018, it is being used to help decide on planning applications in the Melton parish area.

The period 2018 – 2019 and beyond is set to continue to be an extraordinary period of high activity in planning terms. Members of Planning and Transport Committee receive planning applications for comment on a regular basis and observations will continue to be made having regard to the six objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan. These are:

- Ensuring that development does not worsen the detrimental impacts of traffic congestion (including air quality and safety) along the main routes in Melton, whilst encouraging safe movement on foot and by bicycle.
- Ensuring that development provides for the infrastructure needs of Melton and does not breach the capacity of the parish's infrastructure to properly support the population.
- Protecting and enhancing the unique environment and heritage, particularly the rural, riverside and historical assets of Melton and its streetscape.
- Preserving the respective roles and identities of the different built-up areas within the parish, specifically Melton village (including its shops and services) and the northern part of "Greater Woodbridge".

- Protecting and enhancing the strengths of Melton as a community, in particular through the retention and provision of community infrastructure.
- Protecting Melton's business base and seeking to ensure that it can grow and thrive.

In the spring of 2018 the Public Inquiry will be held to consider the appeal by Christchurch Land and Estates (Melton) Ltd against the refusal of planning consent by SCDC for 138 dwellings and a 60 bedroom nursing home on a site off Yarmouth Road. MPC has already forwarded representations to the Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State and will seek to be heard at the Inquiry itself. MPC is also considering options, in conjunction with local residents, of challenging the decision by SCDC to grant permission for the redevelopment of the Melton Hill site.

MPC will work with developers to ensure that they deliver the community benefits, as set out in the Melton Neighbourhood Plan, for the 9.7 hectare site off Wilford Bridge Road. At the same time it will continue to work with local residents, particularly in Station Road and its environs, to achieve satisfactory traffic calming schemes for additional traffic caused by Riduna Park for which funding has already been secured.

### Recreation Committee Objectives

Recreation Committee's major preoccupations are greenspace and woodland maintenance and management. It is also concerned about footpaths and Rights of Way matters within the parish. It provides MPC's observations in response to applications to SCDC as the Planning Authority for works to trees covered by Tree Preservation Orders (TPO applications) and to trees in a Conservation Area (TCA applications). There is a contract in place to run until 2019 for the day to day work of maintaining the playing field and hedges, and works are commissioned for tree management in accordance with the result of the annual tree safety assessment carried out by the Council's arboriculturalist. Recreation Committee is also responsible for the play area equipment. This is checked weekly by the Council's Handyperson and subject to an annual inspection by a specialist company.

Recreation Committee has formulated a number of proposals to improve and enhance the current offer in terms of play equipment. The following schedule indicates a wish list and timescale to be considered after the drainage works have been undertaken to the lower field. Monies are likely to be available via the SCDC Play Pot funds or via use of CIL monies.

Objectives	Priority	Cost	Timescale	Comments
Woodland Management Plan	High		First stage by end of 2017/18	This will be implemented on an Annual basis
Zip Wire	High	£11,000	Before the end of 2018/19	For older children/teenagers, could be a quick win for the Council.
New swing	Medium	£4,100	By end of 2018/19	Will probably require the play area to be

				expanded and replacement of some or all the fencing.
Replace the surface area of the all weather football pitch	Medium		By 2020	
Replace wire netting around the Tennis Courts	Medium	£3,000?	By 2020	
Install a running track around the small field	Low		By 2022	
Pavilion – rebuild or remove once VH is built	Low		By 2022	
Improve lighting along footpath	Medium		By 2020	
New floodlights for all weather pitch.	Low		By 2022	
Replace All-weather pitch goal post netting.	Medium		By 2020	

In 2018, MPC is planning a major project to improve the drainage of the lower field. This will allow the Council to bring it back into full recreational use over time. The contract for these works has been let, and funding is being sought from the SCDC Sports Pot budget. Once the drainage works have been carried out, further stages of the woodland management plan will be undertaken, as funding can be allocated. This will involve thinning out and / or lifting the canopy of the trees, allowing more light to penetrate and support underplanting and natural regrowth. Full details of the Burkes Wood Management Plan (2016) can be found on the Recreation page of the Council's website at [www.melton-suffolk-pc.gov.uk](http://www.melton-suffolk-pc.gov.uk)

## Village Hall

In 2017, MPC commissioned a feasibility study on constructing a village hall on a small part of the Melton Road playing field site. In 1950 there was a resolution of the Parish Council to construct a village hall on the site, but it never happened, and the only village facility located on the playing field is the pavilion, of limited use and which now has all but come to the end of its useful life.

For a large and growing village Melton has very limited community facilities. The Burness Parish Rooms provides a fantastic resource to the village and offers accommodation to over 20 different organisations, groups and societies. However, this resource is almost fully booked. The facilities at St Audry's are due to close, and the village has already lost the Lindos Centre.

Following positive community consultation MPC commissioned Ipswich based architects Hoopers to look at the feasibility of building a new village hall in the north east corner of the playing field. The proposals were developed during 2016/17 via further consultation events and the resulting ideas can be viewed on the MPC website [www.melton-suffolk-pc.gov.uk](http://www.melton-suffolk-pc.gov.uk) To further assess the technical feasibility of construction on that site a separate geotechnical survey was commissioned in the summer of 2017. The opportunity was also taken to assess the site of the existing pavilion as well, in response to suggestions that a new village hall could be constructed

on the existing footprint. Both sites are suitable from a geotechnical perspective but construction would be cheaper if carried out on the original site in the north east corner.

**However no decisions have been taken in terms of taking this project forward. In 2018, MPC will consider afresh all the possibilities that exist for the provision of community facilities across the parish, and all proposals and options developed will be subject to full community consultation.**

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