

**Melton Parish Council**  
**Chairman's Annual Report 2016/ 2017**

This is my third Annual report as your chairman and although I am now more comfortable in the role, it has been both a successful but a frustrating year. Challenges continue to come from all directions but somehow as a team we seem to cope with them but it is becoming increasingly more difficult to deal with everything going on at once!

We were faced with the tricky problem of accommodation as SCDC have given us notice to quit Melton Hill so we left in the late summer of 2016. We were unable to find any suitable accommodation in Woodbridge and we are now temporarily located in an office at Robertson's boatyard in Woodbridge. It is a nice building and we also use it for committee and small meetings but it is not where we want to be in the long term.

Melton Parish Council consists of up to fifteen full councillors who may also serve on the three committees. The current council has 15 members but two of our councillors are stepping down for personal reasons so we shall be looking to recruit a couple of new councillors using the casual vacancy process. If we can find some willing volunteers then it would certainly help to spread the workload. My thanks to Julie & Moyra for all their hard work

Just to remind you that we have full council meetings every other month and we have 3 committees

- Finance Employment and Risk Management (FERM)
- Planning and Transport (P&T)
- Recreation (REC)

All our meetings take place in public and everyone is welcome. We do get members of the public coming along which is lovely to see.

Agendas and minutes are published on our website. [www.melton-suffolk-pc.gov.uk](http://www.melton-suffolk-pc.gov.uk)

Melton Parish Council works in partnership with local organisations in the village to strengthen community, identity and involvement. We are represented on the governing body of Melton Primary School by Cllr. Katy Martin, at the Burness Parish Rooms by Cllr. Astrid Stevens and also on the Melton Trust charity by Cllr. Astrid Stevens. Geof Butterwick does a grand job of being our transport representative and maintains the local transport guide available from the MPC website

Activities over the past full council year include the following highlights from our work.

## **PLANNING**

Planning matters in Melton this year have, as always, been a challenge. Whilst there have been many smaller applications for extensions and so forth which have all been easy to consider and (usually) raise no objections we have also had to support residents in battling against less welcome applications such as the Yarmouth Road proposal and the new business in Dock Lane.

As always, we look objectively at any application and assess what planning reasons may, or may not, weigh against it. However when there is an overwhelming response from Melton residents it is our job, as Parish Councillors, to support them. Having said that there is only so much as a Parish Council we can do.

1. We can register our own objection to an application. By law the District Council has to seek our views.
2. We can help people access the right information and talk to the right people
3. We can make an official representation at a Planning Committee Meeting at the District Council – if indeed the application even goes to a committee for consideration
4. We can also try to get the Neighbourhood Plan done finally so that we have some degree of statutory protection from the wrong kinds of development

This fourth point is perhaps the most important and it is what we have been working hard on in this last 12 months. Right now the plan has been through it's last round of consultation and is now with an Independent Inspector who will let us know what changes still need to be made and whether it complies with all the relevant planning guidance from our District and County Councils, as well as Central Government.

This has not been an easy process (and that is a big understatement) and we have had varying support from our District Council – but we hope that you will all get the chance to vote in your Neighbourhood Plan in this coming early Autumn in a Referendum.

It is imperative we get the Plan voted in by you all as this will mean:

- Unsuitable and unsustainable planning applications will be easier to fight
- We can provide more facilities for the community
- We can provide a level of affordable housing for elderly couples wishing to downsize as well as first time local buyers wishing to stay in the area

- Our CIL contribution will increase from 15 to 25%. CIL is a percentage payment made to us for any development over a certain level in this Parish and it is money we can spend on community projects such as a new village hall, outdoor fitness equipment in the playing field and money towards road improvements when Highways are unable to pay. The CIL would also be uncapped rather than £100K.

## **Traffic & Transport**

This leads on to news about traffic and transport in Melton.

### 1. Saddlemakers Lane

Thanks to continued lobbying and support from Suffolk County councillor Michael Bond warning signs to deter HGVs from using Saddlemakers Lane have been erected on the A12 and at the junction with The Street as well as 'Sharp Bend' signs each side of the Lodge Farm Lane bend. After 4 years of wrangling over the price of this work with County Council Highways department we are pleased to say MPC received the funding through a grant from Cllr Michael Bond's locality budget. We are still trying to get agreed 'SLOW' signs painted on the road too, at the sharp bend.

### 2. Village Sign parking

MPC is engaging with the landowner of the grass verge by the village sign (County Highways) to ensure this remains a nice place for people to be able to sit and prevent cars being parked on this small patch of grass. Parking here is dangerous and obscures vision from drivers trying to exit onto The Street in front of McColl's shop although as a Parish council we are very aware of the lack of parking for residents and people who want to pop into local businesses in the centre of the village. We hope to be able to add some oak bollards to preserve the grassed verge.

### 3. Parking on Yarmouth Road

Following representations from residents MPC has taken action to reduce the bad parking along Yarmouth Road opposite the junction with Old Church Road to make people parking cars more aware of the needs of local residents and to park safely. Excess speed remains an issue and MPC will continue to work with the Police on this issue over the coming 12 months. We did manage to get the white lines put back near the Station Road junction.

### 4. Riduna Park

As part of the planning permission given to Riduna for their development opposite the station they have to contribute money to Highways so that Station Road gets

some suitable traffic calming measures as well as providing a new pedestrian crossing on Wilford Bridge Road. The Parish Council has been putting a lot of pressure on SCDC and the developer to get these things done sooner rather than later and we are making slow progress. The next stage is to discuss options at a public meeting TBC.

#### 4. Melton Road

Suffolk Highways have just begun a fresh consultation on parking restrictions along Melton Road. Your Parish Council will be supporting residents and trying to get the optimum solutions for preserving amenity and community safety.

### **Crime reports and policing efforts**

Compared to local towns, Melton remains a safe place to live, although we do have ongoing parking & traffic problems. The Police no longer attend our parish council meetings due to their cutbacks but are available to assist as required.

We do attend priority tasking meetings and flag up any hotspots that need police attention. Luckily these are few in comparison to other areas.

### **'Beacons of Light'**

On Sunday 11th November 2018 at 7pm there will be an event taking place throughout the UK, Channel Islands, Isle of Man and UK overseas Territories to commemorate the ending of World War 1. The event is called the 'Beacons of Light' and the target is to light 1000 beacons then. The Melton WW1 Heritage group believe that Melton should be a part in this event and are proposing to erect a permanent Beacon on the Playing Field near to the 'Garrod memorial'. We will be talking to Suffolk Coastal for their permission to erect this Beacon subject to any relevant planning safeguards. We are going to use a local company to manufacture it and it is hoped that the Beacon can be funded by local donations.

### **Recreation**

The playing field continues to be well used with youth football through the winter months and car boot sales through the summer, boot camp classes, dog walkers, a visit from the circus and, of course, the annual village fete. The play equipment and tennis courts are also well used and very popular. We are hoping to add to the play equipment in the coming year.

At the end of last year, we commissioned a management plan for the woodland and have started carrying out the recommended work. This included having the cricket bat willows harvested. The trees were reaching the end of their healthy life and some had already started to split. After the trees were removed, young replacements were planted and should be ready for harvesting again in about 20 years. As well as being good tree management, this brings the council an occasional income. There have been concerns about the way the ground was left, rutted and wet, but we have had some of this corrected and will be looking at more planting in these areas. General maintenance is carried out on the trees throughout the year. Last year, a very large branch fell from the old oak just inside the wood. This is always a danger but annual inspections are carried out by a qualified arboriculturalist. As a result, when the birds have finished nesting, we will be removing some dying and dangerous trees and also opening up a test area to try to encourage the understorey to regenerate.

We have greatly benefited from the engagement of a “handyperson” who keeps an eye on the field and woods and carries out many necessary repairs, recently replacing the seats and chains of some of the swings. He is qualified to carry out routine play equipment inspections, which are done weekly. He also cleans the bus shelters and notice boards.

The County Council Highways Department have now completed the work on the drainage in Melton Road enabling us to start work on the flooding on the smaller field. We should hope to get this done before the end of this year. A lot of people have come to love the wildness of the “wetland” but this is, first and foremost, a playing field and needs to be put back into use.

### **Finance & Risk Management (FERM)**

In December we awarded grants to :-

Deben Community Farm £500

Burness Parish Rooms £500

Melton Messenger £1000

The total discretionary grants was £1000 as the grant to the Melton Messenger is now an annual budgeted item.

On the employment front the Village Handyman received a certificate in ' Routine Inspection of Children's Playgrounds' and Full Council has approved the recruitment of an Assistant Clerk, subject to a review of this year's budgets.

## The Village Hall Project

### Why do we need a Village Hall

As you know we are carrying out some work to decide whether we should build a village hall for Melton because:-

- Feedback at Neighbourhood Plan ("NP") indicates a lack of community facilities;
- Loss of Lindos centre exacerbates that;
- Feedback that Burness, whilst popular, is not large enough, often fully booked and has inadequate parking;
- Melton has a growing population with no civic centre- could be 5000 plus residents within 3 years, possibly 10,000 in ten years;
- We are paying a high cost of office rent for a nomadic MPC.

### Work done to date

- Architects feasibility study/outline design completed together with estimated costing of **£1.2m**;
- Proposed site is the Recreation field to save on land cost and provide central a location with parking;
- Suggestion for the site is the Melton end of field as soil and entrance/exit difficulties at the Woodbridge end;
- There have been several meetings with community on the need, design, uses and location and how to engage the public;
- We have also been contacting clubs, potential users and interest groups to identify users and design requirements;
- Feedback has been mixed, with lots of support for concept but concerns on cost, location, running costs and usage;
- **To be clear we have more work to do and the Village Hall will only be proceeded with if accepted in ballot by the people of Melton.**

### Further Work that needs to be done

- Liaise with architects to refine design and costings and confirm Woodbridge end of field is a non-starter;
- Information from this should help better identify construction and running costs;
- Put more information for residents on website and update regularly;
- Financial feasibility study to be done on best estimates of running costs, rentals and build costs
- Make estimates on how funding can be met by Community Infrastructure Levy ("CIL") versus rates increases;
- investigate grants, donations and other fundraising options
- More engagement with local community to take place via volunteers, surveys, social media and outreach to schools and community groups. Our objective is as many residents as possible vote and all have the information they need to make a decision they are happy with.

- Leading to a final design and costing that can be put to a vote **-earliest likely date Sept 201**
- **Timing and Issues**
- We need to complete the Neighbourhood Plan ("NP") and ballot as until NP in place amount of potential CIL is impossible to forecast, indeed without access to higher rate of CIL, Village Hall may be rejected as too expensive;
- Therefore NP ballot must take place first, suggesting Village Hall ballot will be Sept 2017 at earliest;
- The longer we take the more building costs will rise (10% plus p.a.) and the more rent we spend on offices;
- **Estimated Timeline {note dependency on NP approval which must take precedence}**
- Initial Architects feasibility study **Complete**
- Public Consultation and re-design **Ongoing**
- Review of usage and Running costs **Ongoing**
- Presentation of anticipated design and cost estimate to public **June 2017**
- Public ballot Go/no go **September 2017**
- If Go, submit planning application **plus 3 months from go/no go**
- Planning approved **plus 5 months from go/no go**
- Financing obtained **plus 5 months from go/no go**
- begin construction **plus 10 months from go/no go**
- complete construction **plus 20 months from go/no go**

As you can see there is a lot going on, we are all volunteers and do this for a hobby.

Thanks very much for coming and your kind words of support during the year.

Alan Porter  
Chairman – Melton Parish Council