

Melton Parish Council

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT – 2006

The Parish Council has held six bi-monthly meetings since the last Annual meeting in March 2005 with an additional meeting held on 28th September to consider the Consultation Draft of the Melton Village Plan. There has been an average of 9.0 councillors per meeting. Also in attendance have been Mrs C E Aitchison (County Councillor), replacing Mr P.R. Bellfield, Mr Paul Callaghan, Mr John Perry (District Councillors) and PC Mark Thompson (Community Police Officer). Mr Graham Watkinson submitted his resignation due to the pressure of other commitments we shall miss his expertise and the active role he took in “getting things done”. It was with deep regret and shock that we learned of the untimely passing in May of Mrs Monica Davies, we will miss her endless common sense and her interest in the village particularly her help within the school. Mrs Mandy Pryke also resigned in May following Mrs Davies's passing. We thank her for her contribution. Subsequently, we welcome Mr Kim Tester who was co-opted to fill the vacancy and Mr Anthony Dunford joined the council in September. There have been meetings held by the Village Steering Group, the Planning and General Purposes Group. Various meetings with outside bodies and other councils have been attended by councillors, being Police Forums, the Green Print Forum, SALC, the Local Plan (Development Framework), the Burness Parish Room, and meetings with the Woodbridge Youths FC and Melton Sports and Social Club.

PC Thompson's presence in the village continues to be a very valuable asset and his regular attendance at meetings reporting on current problems within Melton have been greatly appreciated. Inspector Byfords attended the March meeting. He was able to answer many questions put to him by members of the Council. Crime remains fairly low in Melton, but burglaries of IT equipment recently has raised concerns, vandalism unfortunately continues in some parts of the village.

Throughout the year Mrs Aitchison has kept us up to date with Highway matters. There continues to be increasing traffic congestion particularly in the early morning and afternoon at the traffic lights. Road work and improvements have been completed in Pytches Road to address the development of the new school, unfortunately many of Melton Parish Council's recommendations were not implemented. Our District Councillors have played an active role and we have been kept up to date with planning applications and changes within the SCDC.

The Village Plan has occupied a great deal of time and work throughout the year. The Steering Committee designed three questionnaires for Householders, Young People and local Business, which were circulated to all householders in Melton. The response was good. Mr Butterwick presented the Consultation Draft to the Council on 28 September which was considered and small amendments made. In November Mr Butterwick provided the Council with the Definitive version of the Village Plan which Melton Parish Council endorsed. The official launch took place on 30 November. The Plan has since been printed and circulated. The Village Plan was flagged up as an item of good practice by Suffolk Coastal Local Strategic Partnership. The Steering Group was wound up and in its place the Village Plan Monitoring Group established. The Monitoring Group will report back to Melton Parish Council. The Council expressed thanks to Mr Butterwick and the members of the Steering Group for their hard work to activate such a successful project and to complete it. We are very grateful to them all.

This year has seen much activity and improvements made to the Playing Fields. The Pond was renovated and plants supplied to the surrounding banks and grounds. Already the wildlife has returned in abundance which has give people enormous pleasure. An illustrated Information Board and two benches are to be placed by the pond and hazel saplings planted this winter. The Awards for All was credited in September with the financial help which has made this project possible. Discussions in March with Komplan in respect of upgrading the play equipment in the play zone continued and Mrs Ferguson successfully secured the funding from BIFFA Award and the Play

Equipment was duly ordered from Komplan. Work started in early November and is now complete with reseeded of the ground to take place at a suitable time in the Spring. On behalf of the Council we congratulated Mrs Ferguson on her hard work in successfully securing the Biffa award as well as other funding to complete this successful project to which many young children and parents so greatly appreciate.

The Parish Council considered a total of 56 planning applications this year last year there were 64 applications. Most of these were for extensions and conservatories but also included were proposals for sheltered accommodation for 58 2-bedroom units and 25 one-bedroom unit at the GAH site, Melton Road. At the Railway Station the Council have been in discussion with "one"Railway and it is hoped we may have some progress on obtaining more car-parking spaces.

Following a proposal by Mr Butterwick to consider changes in the way the Council conducts it's business, The Clerk informed the Council that the role and responsibilities had grown enormously over recent years the Clerk's home as the sole administrative base for the council was no longer sustainable or appropriate and the additional premises should be sought within the village. Premises were duly found by Mr Laight and Mr Pratley at 14 The Street. It was agreed that the building be used for Council meetings other meetings, as well as a surgery to meet constituents. There will also be room for storage of Parish files and matters. At present planning permission is being sought for the change of use of the building and preparations for a five-year lease.

Financially the year has proved expensive but with reasonable reserves the state of balances are satisfactory thanks to the excellent work of our Parish Clerk, Mr Trevor Brown. The internal and External Auditors have again been complimentary to the presentation of the Councils accounts. Grant Applications were considered as usual in November

The Budget 2006/7 includes Parish reserves. At the suggestion of the external auditors during their review of the 2005/6 the Budget 2006/7 includes use of reserves. After consideration the council resolved to apply a precept of £27,600 an increase of 15% over 2005/2006 (equivalent to an increase of £2.28p per annum for the average Band D Council taxpayer. Funding and delivering the Village Plan has been taken into consideration when planning for the budget as well as the additional administrative costs of running the Parish Council.

Finally, at the end of my first year as Chairman, I would like to express my thanks to all the members of the Parish Council for their support during the last 12 months. In particular I'd like to thank Graham Laight for his guidance, patience, and help in taking over his exemplary role as Chairman and also to Mr Trevor Brown without whom we'd all be lost at sea.

Penelope C Warburg
Chairman
21 February 2006