

**Melton Parish Council**  
**Chairman's Annual Report 2018/ 2019**

This is my fifth Annual report as your chairman and still I can't believe the speed at which the years go by.

Firstly I shall present the annual award for somebody who has gone the extra mile to help make Melton the place it is today. Nominations for this award go to individuals who beaver away quietly and often their efforts go unrecognised. I am pleased to say the award this year goes to Colin Birkbeck. He is the driving force behind this very building and since Colin has been involved the improvements to the building have been significant, it is a great asset to the village of Melton and much of it is down to Colin's personal commitment. So without further ado I would like to present the award from Melton Parish Council this year to Colin Birkbeck. Please accept this certificate and a gift in recognition of your significant contribution over the years.

Secondly I would like to welcome Allison Girling who is the manager at the National Trust's Sutton Hoo Centre, she will kindly give us a brief talk about all the exciting things going on following a period of construction works. We will also be hearing about the activities of the Melton Trust, The primary school and our tree warden later on.

It has probably been one of the most successful years in the long history of Melton Parish Council. Quite a number of pieces of long term work have come to fruition this year.

Of course challenges continue to come from all directions but somehow as a team we seem to cope with them.

Looking back over the last years articles I have written for the Melton Messenger, similar topics arise repeatedly.

These are :-

The Neighbourhood Plan  
Drainage of the field  
Woods Lane, Yarmouth Road and other housing developments  
Finding volunteers to help run the fete  
Melton Parish Council vacancies  
The village hall, the pavilion & meeting space

The southern end of the field has now been cleared and reseeded with grass, a mound has been built for the launch platform for the zip wire.

I suppose the biggest thing we have done this year is to buy Unit 17 at Riduna Park. It was quite a scary thing to drive this through but we did it. No longer will we have to keep moving, we also have an asset that will eventually be ours. We borrowed

the money from the Treasury at a low fixed interest. One of the most worrying aspects was that we had to pay £85000 VAT on the purchase which was completed in December. We claimed back the VAT and it arrived back in the bank in mid-January. It is looking very smart indeed, please come along to meetings and see for yourselves. We hope to have an open evening in the summer.

Just to remind you that Melton Parish Council consists of up to 15 full councillors who may also serve on the three committees. The current council has 13 members. All are standing for re-election with the exception of Andrew Corston who is stepping down after 8 years of service. Andrew has worked very hard especially in the area of doing battle with SCC highways, I am sure they will yield a sigh of relief! Thanks for all your hard work Andrew.

We have Full Council meetings every other month and we also 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. Especially at planning where local people may be affected by developments. 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. Carol Gradwell and also on the Melton Trust charity by Cllr. Carol Gradwell. 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 & TRANSPORT**

A lot has happened in the last 12 months with regards to planning and traffic matters that affect Melton.

We now have a 30 MPH speed limit on the whole length of Woods Lane, however I don't think that most people have noticed yet as the traffic still seems to be doing 40MPH.

Woods Lane still awaits resurfacing, we are told it will be soon when the ground settles. The surface is so poor that in a way it is now like a collection of speed humps.

We have been providing input into the SCDC draft Local Plan which we will refer to when we update our Neighbourhood Plan. It was quite worrying that just after Martlesham Parish Council NP was adopted that SCDC came up with proposals to build on the Police site. That development was not in the NP and has caused quite a stir.

We hope to get an electronic speed indicator that can be moved around a few different locations around Melton. SCC will fit the posts to mount the SID on. As it will be Solar powered, it needs to be sited in open areas to allow maximum light to charge the battery. We hope to buy one which will show speed and the happy & sad face depending on speed.

I thought it would be worth mentioning MPC's continuing and well-argued opposition to the cheese wedge planning application – currently withdrawn. The site remains idle, vandalised and time passes. It is a concern that the much discussed vacant building credit issue will re-emerge and the cheese wedges will come back onto the agenda again. I am sure it will be opposed but eventually something must happen on that site.

I was pleased to see that work has started on the old GAH site on Melton Road bringing another brown field site back into use.

During the year the Planning & Transport Committee have considered a lot of planning applications of varying complexity. As we only are consultees to the process, it is often better to approve applications but add caveats that the officers of the District Council can endorse. For example 'Agreed subject to the large oak tree being retained' or 'agree subject to the extension not overlooking the neighbour's garden'. If we just reject applications they often get approved anyway.

It is of great concern that Melton is growing rapidly whilst the infrastructure to support that growth is not being put in place.

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

Very little to report really, the support from the police is a shadow of its former self. They appear to be fixated on anti social behaviour which luckily for us is not a major problem. However we have had reports of problems with cars gathering in the recreation ground car park late at night, there have been suspicions of drug dealing and noise nuisance.

We are looking at fitting an electric barrier that will close at dusk. It would let vehicles out but not in. The main problem is getting access to 240 Volt power. We are getting quotes for that piece of work. Lately an armed Police Unit has been parking there as it's a convenient point to react incidents in this area. Strangely the nuisance disappears when they are there!

Hopefully we can borrow a digger to make a trench and also put a power box next to the tennis courts for use at the fete for mains power.

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

On Sunday 11th November 2018 at 7pm there was 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 was called the 'Beacons of Light' and the target was to light 1000 beacons.

The Melton WW1 Heritage group thought that Melton should be a part in this event and a permanent Beacon was erected on the Playing Field near to the car park. Nobody knew how popular it would be, lots of safety precautions were taken and everything was made ready. It was a mild and pleasant evening and well over 500 people turned up. It was a very moving event with readings and commemorations. It just goes to show that Melton can box well above its weight when people put their minds to it.

### **Recreation**

The Suffolk Wildlife Trust gate allowing access into Hutchinson's Meadow is a nice feature but I don't see many people using it, probably because dogs are not allowed and most people who walk in the field have a dog.

Suffolk NORSE's collection of doggy bin contents has been a bit sporadic this year. We have complained several times and it appears to be better at the moment.

The lower field now seems to be dry and work has been done to level it and return it to proper usable grass. Seed has been sown but now we desperately need rain to germinate the seed. The big hump at the north end is for the launch platform for the zip wire.

We are considering replacing the pavilion. It is a conundrum being not bad enough to demolish but not good enough to do it up. What is the pavilion for many folk ask? Well we will be having a working group to look at the problem.

Following discussion it was AGREED that the existing structure was not worth further attention, and the recommendation by Recreation Committee was that it should be replaced.

A new build on the existing site could use the existing service connections and save considerable costs. It is likely that the existing foundations would be adequate for a light building of modern construction (timber-framed / weatherboarding with a pitched roof) on roughly the same footprint, incorporating modern WC provision and improved kitchen facilities. This could also incorporate an awning to the front with an area to facilitate tables / chairs for use during events or in connection with limited café facilities.

Recently we have had a spate of petty vandalism and nuisance behaviour in the recreation ground late at night. It's hard to know what to do, the Police are scarcely around, CCTV would need lighting. We are considering a barrier at the entrance to allow vehicles to leave but not arrive after dusk.

We are also looking at fitting adult fitness equipment somewhere between the tennis courts and the pavilion.

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

After making a surplus every year for the last 3 years, this year we have had to dip into our reserves a little to fund the overheads associated with the purchase of our new premises – principally the Government's Stamp Duty on the purchase. However we have still ended the 2018/19 financial year with general reserves totalling over £68k, which is roughly the equivalent of nearly 90% of our annual income from your Council Tax and at a level that will keep our auditors happy. We have promised as a Council not to increase our share of the Council Tax to pay towards the cost of our new home. For 2019/20 a Band D taxpayer in Melton will only pay 96p more than last year – a 2.2% uplift for inflation only.

According to the National Association of Local Councils (NALC); the average Band D parish / town council precept is £67.69. This compares with Melton's £44.71. The average in Babergh District is over £70. Whilst the Melton figure can be used to demonstrate that we provide good value for money and is prudent with public funds, nevertheless it does of course mean that finances are somewhat tighter than they would be if MPC sought a precept around the national average. Our increase this year was 2.2% which were dwarfed by the other elements of the council tax such as SCC & the Police.

## **Staff**

William Grosvenor is our clerk, since he has been with us the activities of our council have grown like topsy. Somehow he keeps us on an even keel and keeps everything in order whilst complying with a lot of legislation. The turnover of the council has increased so we have recruited a new member of staff.

Her name is Pip Alder and she is taking on the role of Finance and Information Management Officer. I think many of you may well know her from her involvement in the primary school. Hopefully once she has learned the ropes then William will be able to reduce his hours to a more reasonable level.

We also have Phil Donoghue who is our village handy man who does a great job with all sorts of odd jobs around the village and the recreation ground.

Finally we have Lindsay Dann who is our volunteer tree warden and is doing a great job planting trees and bushes around the village.  
I think we have a really strong team in Melton & I am very proud of them all.

## **Other Melton Activities**

Melton is becoming a thriving community and despite the developments is fighting to retain a village feel. Groups like the WI and the Melton Local History Society continue to grow and it is worth remembering that these did not exist until a few years ago.

Major challenges this year about traffic and parking - we would like SCDC to divest the green space round the village sign and on the other side of the road where cars park on the grass. We would enhance that area for us all. We have tried to talk to them but just end up with a chap from Waveney who does not really understand the issue. The latest news is now looking a bit more positive, we have a new person at East Suffolk Council looking into this and seems to understand the problem. We will invest CIL money on the site if it is divested to us. We would maintain it, cut the grass etc. This of course would give savings to East Suffolk Council. We would make a part of the grass area into proper short term parking, ideal to pop into the shops or church, say 2 hours maximum stay. We could then landscape around this area and make it a pleasant place to be. It would be a good opportunity to name the road as at the moment it has no name. The address of Winifred Fison House is currently just 'The Street'.

We have been busy providing feedback to the Sizewell C consultation to Phase 3 plans. Personally I thought their plans were very poor and lacked detail and many howling errors, our feedback was very comprehensive and my councillors should be commended by the amount of work they put into it. Although I think we will have to build it unless we want to end up in the dark. How else will we charge up our electric cars and mobility scooters?

As a council we try to keep Melton residents updated via e-news, the Melton Messenger and Nextdoor. We have avoided going down the Twitter, Facebook and Instagram route as sometimes that brings more problems than it solves. We have had meetings to consult on things like Sizewell C and the purchase of the Riduna Park office.

As you can see there is a lot going on, we are all volunteers and do this for a hobby. We are still short of three councillors then let me know if you would like to join us.

I often get stopped by Melton villagers whilst walking my dog or out shopping to discuss local affairs, people do appreciate what we do and kind comments like this make it all worthwhile.

Thanks very much for coming along this evening and for your kind words of support & encouragement during the year.

Alan Porter  
Chairman – Melton Parish Council