



MELTON PARISH COUNCIL

BUSINESS PLAN

Revised July 2019

ISSUE 3

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Chairman's Introduction

Melton Parish Council continually develops a vision for the parish into a plan that shares its purpose, values, objectives and key priorities on what we can achieve, either alone or by working with partners such as East Suffolk District Council and Suffolk County Council.

The Parish Council builds on and develops the business plan with statements of intent to give Melton residents a clearer understanding of what the Parish Council does and what it is striving to achieve.

This Business Plan is reviewed annually and used in the budgeting process to include planned activities for each coming year which can be monitored against key priorities.

Melton Parish Council has become more proactive rather than reactive in its decision-making by operating in a more co-ordinated and consistent way. The Business Plan helps our local community to have a better understanding of what we do and clarify what we cannot do.

There are occasions when the Council must make decisions contrary to our stated commitments if budget constraints, new legislation or changes in policies make that necessary. However, any changes will eventually be reflected in an updated Business Plan.

To ensure this Business Plan is consistent with our residents' wishes, we seek help from the community. We periodically consult on the plan's contents through our website, meetings and The Melton Messenger column. We request and respond to feedback. Please tell us what you think about it as we welcome your comments. The Business Plan is available on our website.

The Business Plan is aimed at reflecting the priorities of Melton Parish Council for the coming year. We are committed to running the council as efficiently and smoothly as possible. We set ourselves a high standard of professionalism and aspire to maintain good health of the parish council financial resources.

We aim to manage our community assets on behalf of the village, namely Melton playing fields, Burkes Wood, the tennis courts and the pavilion. Of course, the number of assets continues to grow as the village expands.

We are determined to guard the legacy of these assets for the benefit of current and future residents. Melton Parish Council has come a long way in the last few years and much has already been achieved. I intend that this process will continue as you can see from the interesting projects listed in this plan.

Alan Porter

Chairman - Melton Parish Council

11th July 2019

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 the new East Suffolk District Council (which took over from the former Suffolk Coastal District Council on 1 April 2019). 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

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

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 partially completed adjacent to Woods Lane. Further developments within the village centre and nearby are under construction or approved for development, whilst the site of the former Suffolk Coastal District Council offices at Melton Hill is the subject of yet another planning application. 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 the East Suffolk District Council 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.

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 May 2019, when existing councillors who offered themselves for re-election were returned unopposed and the remaining vacancy subsequently filled by co-option.

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. In 2019 the Annual Parish Meeting was held in April and the Council’s AGM 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 (East Suffolk).

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
- 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 has been readopted (with minor amendments) in 2017 and again at the commissioning meeting of the new Council on 8 May 2019.
- The Chairman will report to the 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 the two Vice-Chairmen are on all Council committees. For further details of these committees, their membership, terms of reference and the agendas, reports and minutes, please go to the MPC website at 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 responsible for the Council's accommodation and also 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, East Suffolk 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 East Suffolk 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 using funds provided by a developer.

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 three 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).
- Pip Alder, who joined the Council in April 2019, is employed as Finance and Information Management Officer.
- 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

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, 17 Riduna Park, Station Road, Melton, Woodbridge IP12 1QT or via email to: 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 East Suffolk 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. East Suffolk 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 minimal interest from its deposit account at Barclays Bank. However £50K invested in 2017 in the Ipswich Building Society will yield £200.00 over a twelve month period. Recently, in response to increased bank charges, the Council has opened a Treasurer's account with Lloyds Bank, which provides free banking provided that the amount deposited does not exceed £50,000.

For the year from April 2019 to March 2020 the Council has asked for a precept of £77,998.27. Overall income in 2019/20 is likely to be in the region of £109,744 (apart from Community Infrastructure Levy income – see below) with the balance made up from grants and fees.

Expenditure

Budgeted expenditure figure for MPC in 2019/20 is £127,672. Although this will create an in-year deficit of around £18k, this can be absorbed by the Council's existing balances. The main areas of expenditure in 2019/20 are:

- Administration of the Council, including salaries, insurance, office expenses, together with the repayment of the Treasury loan taken out for the purchase of the Council's new office and meeting accommodation at 17 Riduna Park.
- Maintenance and improvement of the Council's assets.

In December 2018, after years of occupying temporary accommodation, first at the former Suffolk Coastal District Council offices at Melton Hill, and then at Robertson's Boatyard in Woodbridge, MPC purchased the freehold of 17 Riduna Park, Station Road, Melton. The repayment of the Treasury loan used to fund the purchase, at £17,330pa, is only just over £1k more than MPC was paying in rent for smaller accommodation at Robertson's Boatyard, and it is intended to recoup much of that outgoing by letting part of the building on a commercial lease. Overall this is a long term investment for the community of Melton which will enable substantial savings in accommodation costs to be made in years to come.

Reserves

As at 31 March 2019 MPC had balances totalling £157,188, consisting of general reserves of £69,855, earmarked reserves (for specific projects) of £6,113 and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) monies totalling £81,220. The level of general reserves adequately protects against major problems requiring emergency funding which could otherwise adversely affect the Council's business.

CIL / Grant Funded Projects

The CIL monies, which are a proportion of the overall CIL amounts received by Suffolk Coastal / East Suffolk Council from developers building in the parish, are restricted in terms of both application and time. They have to be applied to projects in support of growth and if not applied within 5 years, or applied incorrectly, are subject to repayment to East Suffolk Council. Initially the proportion received by MPC was 15%; however on adoption of the Melton Neighbourhood Plan in 2018 the amount that MPC receives increased to 25%. Of the £83,544 CIL monies received to date, £2,324 has been spent on improving the Council's meeting facilities, leaving the balance of £81,220. Additional CIL payments totalling £247,546 are due to be received in 2019/20. Full Council on 19 June 2019 agreed a schedule of projects to be funded either by District Council grant (from developer contributions) or by CIL funds. This schedule is set out below and shows (a) Projects to be undertaken as a priority in 2019/20 following publicity, (b) Projects to be subject to community consultation and (c) Future projects to be considered.

Setting the Budget for 2019/20

This was done formally at the meeting of full Council on 9 January 2019. In the light of the budget set Council decided to request a precept of £77,998.27 for 2019/20 as explained above. This increased the Band D charge from 2018/19 by 2.2%, an increase of only 96p 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.

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 for 2018/19. The Council's External Auditors have given unqualified audit reports for at least the last three years. Although for 2017/18 they raised in error a qualification to the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, this was withdrawn and an apology received when the accuracy of the qualification was challenged.

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 substantial 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 2018 the Committee's main priority was the relocation of the Council's office and meeting accommodation back to Melton, and the successful purchase of and move to 17 Riduna Park, which was achieved on time and within budget.

Planning and Transport Committee Objectives

In 2017/18 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 Suffolk Coastal District Council in January 2018, it now forms part of the statutory planning guidance for Melton and is being used to help decide on planning applications in the Melton parish area.

It is likely that 2019/20 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.

MPC aims to 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. It has successfully worked with local residents, 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. These should be delivered in 2019.

Together with Woodbridge Town Council, MPC will continue to oppose unsuitable development proposals for the former Council offices site at Melton Hill, and their replacement with proposals which are more in keeping with the sensitive nature of the site and better reflect the wishes of the community.

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 for the day to day work of maintaining the playing field and hedges, which will need to be reviewed in 2019. 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.

In early 2019, MPC completed a major grant funded project to improve the drainage of the lower field, followed by full reinstatement. This allows the Council to bring it back into full recreational use. Additionally in June 2019, a new aerial runway and nest swing have been added to the play equipment now available for younger residents. The Council is also looking at provision of adult exercise equipment. The Council's Tree Warden is carrying out planting schemes along the ditch between the playing field and woodland, and there are plans to create halos of light in the woodland which 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

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 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 in the light of understandable concerns about the loss of greenspace in a growing community which is heavily used, it was decided not to take this project forward. 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. Included instead in the schedule of potential CIL funded projects for community consultation is the demolition and renewal of the time expired pavilion building on the playing field.

How Melton Parish Council commits to communicating with its residents

As the most local democratically elected tier of local government Melton Parish Council is committed to a process of openness and transparency in all its dealings with the community it serves. Council meetings and Committee meetings are all held in public and advertised widely both electronically and in print and the public are encouraged to attend. Time is always set aside at meetings for residents to raise matters of concern or to ask questions of Councillors on any matter within the terms of reference of the meeting. At Full Council meetings, both County and District Councillors usually attend and are equally happy to engage with residents on matters within their respective responsibilities. Agendas, supporting papers and minutes of meetings are always published on the Council's website.

In addition to holding its regular meetings in an inclusive way, the Council normally communicates with its community in the following ways:

- Via notices posted on the 5 (shortly to be 6) public and community noticeboards strategically placed around the village
- Via a regular article (augmented if required by an inserted flyer) in the *Melton Messenger* community magazine which is delivered to every household in Melton. The Council supports the *Melton Messenger* and is represented on its editorial board
- Via the Council's own website www.melton-suffolk-pc.gov.uk
- Via Melton e-news, an electronic messaging service that reaches all those who have subscribed (it is free of charge)
- Via holding public meetings to discuss matters of high / urgent local importance.

Additionally there is sometimes a requirement for a specific consultation exercise to meet the requirements of grant funding for a particular project which will benefit the community, for example evidence that children and young people in the village want particular types of play equipment, or that there is support for the Council to spend its money in a specific way. In such cases the Council may use targeted consultation methods e.g. survey forms or employ limited use of social media. In such cases their limited use will be approved by Full Council in advance and be fully compliant with the Data Protection Act 2018.