



# MELTON PARISH COUNCIL

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BUSINESS PLAN

Revised July 2021

ISSUE 4

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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 as circumstances change to give Melton residents a clearer understanding of what the Parish Council can do and what it is striving to achieve for the benefit of its residents.

This Business Plan is normally 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 improves accountability.

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, flyers/posters, social media, meetings and columns in the *Melton Messenger* and *In Touch*. We request and respond to feedback. Please tell us what you think about it as we welcome your comments.

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's financial resources.

We aim to manage our community assets on behalf of the village, namely the Melton playing fields, play parks, the woodland at Leeks Hill and Burkes Wood, the tennis courts, the pavilion, together with other parcels of amenity land distributed across the parish divested in March 2021 from East Suffolk Council.

We are determined to safeguard 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 included in this plan.

Alan Porter

Chair - Melton Parish Council

## 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 East Suffolk District Council (ESC). The aim is both for MPC to operate in a more co-ordinated and strategic way in both managing its assets on a daily 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 regularly and be available on the Council's website.

The Business Plan is separate from the Melton Neighbourhood Plan which sets out 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 the website [www.melton-suffolk-pc.gov.uk](http://www.melton-suffolk-pc.gov.uk) where the Annual Return and accounts are published. Regular detailed financial reports to both the Finance, Employment and Risk Management Committee (FERM) and Full Council meetings are also published on the website. This Business Plan is designed to provide a coherent narrative to the Council's financial and business 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. Further developments are under construction or seeking approval for development, whilst the future of the site of the former Suffolk Coastal District Council offices at Melton Hill is still undecided. 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 ESC offices 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 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 several well used public spaces including the village playing fields and woodland, bridle paths, walking trails and the Deben River. A recent walking leaflet with circular trails was created by MPC in conjunction with SCC.

The 2011 census recorded the population as 3,741, which continues to increase. There are now over 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 and subsequent vacancies filled by co-option.

The Council elects a Chair and Vice-Chair annually at the Council’s Annual General Meeting and reports to the wider electorate at the Annual Parish Meeting, which is normally held in April. The Parish Council’s AGM is 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 (ESC).

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. In the Spring of 2021 ESC divested 21 parcels of land to MPC including the Beresford Drive play area, Hall Farm Road Sports Ground, the woodland adjoining Burkes wood and an area of land by the river Deben.

## **How the Parish Council operates**

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

- Aiming to meet as a full council on a minimum of 6 occasions a year 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 Councillors.
- 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 has been readopted (with minor amendments) in 2017 and again in 2019 and 2021.
- The Chair of the Council will report to the Annual Parish Meeting in April 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 (FERM)
- Planning and Transport Committee
- Recreation Committee.

Members are appointed to committees at the Council's Annual General Meeting. The Chair and the two Vice-Chairs 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](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 (FERM)**

This meets bi-monthly.

The FERM 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 every 6 weeks (or as required).

As part of the statutory planning process, ESC as the local planning authority has to consult MPC on planning applications. Planning and Transport Committee scrutinises large numbers of applications and submits its observations to ESC 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, can improve highway safety and amenity within 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, and all the land that MPC owns, including extensive areas of woodland.

The playing field in Melton Road is one of the proudest possessions of the village. It provides football pitches, tennis courts and play equipment with safety surfacing.

## **Parish Council Staff**

The Parish Council employs three part time employees:

- The Clerk and Executive Officer 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 is employed as the Assistant Clerk and Management Officer.
- Phil Donoghue is the Parish Council's Maintenance Officer.

# 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. Accordingly it will be reviewed and updated regularly.

MPC welcomes comments and feedback on this plan. 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](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 ESC for the money it needs by way of what is called a Precept on the Council Tax. It must do this in January each year. ESC 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 and Ipswich Building Society. In response to increased bank charges, the Council has additionally 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 2021 to March 2022 the Council has asked for a precept of £93,706.34. Overall income in 2021/22 is likely to be in the region of £117,581 (apart from Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) income – see below) with the balance made up from grants and fees.

## Expenditure

Budgeted expenditure for MPC in 2021/22 is £124,989. Although this will create an in-year deficit of around £7.5k, this can be absorbed by the Council's existing balances and payment of some items using CIL. The main areas of expenditure over the next 18 months 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 office and meeting accommodation at 17 Riduna Park
- Maintenance and improvement of the Council's assets, including the recently divested land from East Suffolk, including the provision of improved facilities
- Rebuilding of the Pavilion at the Melton Road playing field
- Road safety improvements



- Landscaping and parking improvements in front of Winifred Fison House.

In December 2018, after years of occupying temporary accommodation, MPC purchased the freehold of 17 Riduna Park, Station Road, Melton. The repayment of the Treasury loan used to fund the purchase, at £19,640pa, is recouped by letting part of the building on a commercial lease at market rent. 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 2021 MPC had balances totalling £555,212, consisting of general reserves of £63,971, earmarked reserves (for specific projects) of £214,687 and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) monies totalling £276,554. 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

Community Infrastructure Levy is money paid by developers who are building in the parish. A proportion is given to County, District and MPC. 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%. The use of CIL is 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.

Year	Amount of CIL received
2020/21	£183,667.33
2019/20	£245,651.05
2018/19	£3,651.87
2017/18	£75,172.16
2016/17	£4,720.20

Further CIL payments will be received in 2021/22 relating to the Deben Meadows estate construction off Melton Road and other *ad hoc* developments.

In June 2019 Full Council agreed a schedule of projects to be funded either by District Council grant (from developer contributions) or by CIL funds. A public consultation was carried out in January 2020 where residents were invited to comment on the proposals which helped to form the focus for how the CIL funds should be spent. The table overleaf shows the projects that were identified, and the work carried out to date.

Project	Budget	Actual cost	Sources of funding	Consultation	Current position and notes
Playing field security measures <i>(originally to have been a physical barrier and then altered to CCTV)</i>	£10k	£3,890 + £690pa maintenance / servicing	CIL	MNP consultation showed 33% in support	<b>PROJECT COMPLETED</b> Subsequently upgraded with the purchase of an additional CCTV camera at a cost of £245
Speed Indicator device (SID)	£2k	£2,050 + further cost of £85 for additional battery = £1,135	£1k grant from ESC £1,135 from CIL	Discussed informally at meetings and in published Business Plan	<b>PROJECT COMPLETED</b> 2 <sup>nd</sup> SID subsequently purchased at a cost of £3,205
Landscaping / creation of car park in front of Winifred Fison House	£50k	£50k + depending on design and landscaping	CIL	Residents of WFH / Suffolk Highways / East Suffolk Council	Brief issued to Highways. However, planning consent may be required for change of use and also formal release from the restrictive covenant which limits the land use to public open space
Melton Road safety measures	£40k	Latest estimate £17k but likely to be exceeded	CIL	MNP consultation showed 72% in support	Final round of consultation with affected residents in relation to design proposals has been undertaken
Pavilion project	£220k	Estimate = £225k inc fees	CIL	MNP consultation showed 44% in support	Planning consent granted. Asbestos survey completed and prices being sought for demolition of the existing building
Tennis Court refurbishment (replacement of fencing)	£25k <b>Revised to £20k</b>	£19,640 - this is fully funded from the ESC Playpot.	Playpot	N/A	<b>PROJECT COMPLETED</b>
Car park improvements (including new knee high fencing)	£15k <b>Revised to £40k in view of enlargement</b>	Car park enlargement / resurfacing £38,187 Fencing £5,450	CIL	N/A	<b>PROJECT COMPLETED</b>

## Other Potential Projects

Project	Budget	Anticipated cost	Sources of Funding	Consultation
New Play Area fencing	£10k	£10k	CIL / Playpot	Play area users / parents / carers
Improvement of the pond in Burkes Wood	£4k	£4k	CIL	Council asset to be maintained. Proposal by Recreation Committee 11 November 2020
Improvement of facilities at Hall Farm Road Sports Ground	Not known	Not known	CIL/Playpot/Grants	MNP Consultation showed 25% in support
Improvements/maintenance of other divested land	£30k	Not known	CIL	Council assets to be maintained. Sinking Fund established for this purpose.

## Setting the Budget for 2021/22

This was done formally at the Full Council meeting on 13 January 2021. In the light of the budget set Council decided to request a precept of £93,706.34 for 2021/22 as explained above. This increased the Band D charge from 2019/20 by 5.6%, an increase of about 5p a week for a Band D property. The Council reviewed its needs taking all factors into consideration, especially the increased responsibilities the Council has undertaken with the divestment of land from ESC, 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 by the Internal Auditor for 2020/21. The latest report from the Council's External Auditors (for 2019/20) was unqualified.

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 2020 onwards by the award of a new Greenspace Management Contract, and the appointment of a Maintenance Officer 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.

Going forward, the Committee's main priority is the financial stability of the Council and the ongoing maintenance of the Council's buildings and land.

## **Planning and Transport Committee Objectives**

The Planning and Transport Committee's priority was completing the Neighbourhood Plan and getting it through the independent examination stage and to referendum in December 2017. Following adoption as a statutory planning document by the former 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.

There has recently been 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 strongly objected to the planning application currently proposed that has access through St Andrew's Place rather than Riduna Park or the land currently used as a transport depot.

Together with Woodbridge Town Council, MPC will continue to oppose unsuitable development proposals for the former Suffolk Coastal District 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 ESC 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 greenspace and its hedges, which was awarded to CGM Ltd in 2020. Works are commissioned for tree management in accordance with the result of the annual/18 month tree safety assessment carried out by the Council's arboriculturalist. Recreation Committee is also responsible for the play area equipment at Melton playing field and Beresford Road. This is checked weekly by the Council's Maintenance Officer and subject to an annual inspection by a specialist company.

In March 2021 the tennis fencing was replaced and the Council is also looking at the provision of adult exercise equipment. The Council's Tree Warden is carrying out planting schemes throughout the village, and 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)

## **Pavilion**

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 come to the end of its useful life.

For a large and growing village Melton has 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.

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. 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. Instead it was agreed that the existing pavilion would be demolished and a replacement building, incorporating public toilets, would be built in the same location with the same footprint. Planning permission for this has been granted and demolition is expected to take place in 2021 and the new pavilion constructed in 2022. Full details can be found on the website <https://melton-suffolk-pc.gov.uk/recreation/pavilion-project/>

## How Melton Parish Council commits to communicating with its residents

As the most local democratically elected tier of local government MPC 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 6 (soon to be 8) 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 a regular article in the local *In Touch* magazine
- Via the Council's own website [www.melton-suffolk-pc.gov.uk](http://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 NextDoor – a free social media platform
- Via online surveys
- 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 EU General Data Protection Regulation 2016 as updated by the Data Protection Act 2018 (the UK GDPR).