



MELTON PARISH COUNCIL



REPORT ON THE WORK OF MELTON PARISH COUNCIL FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2010

"Melton is a large, pleasant and well built village on the western side of the river Deben, about a mile north-east of Woodbridge"- from White's Suffolk Directory 1855

"Melton. Practically a suburb of Woodbridge with pleasant houses and mansions" – Taylor's 'Tourist's Guide to Suffolk' 1892

"Melton became late Georgian suburb north of Woodbridge when grand broad turnpike built-itself now superseded by by-pass of 1930's. Playing fields, petrol pumps, pleasant Regency Hall, old shop fronts, modern farming implement retailer, charming stucco-fronted cottage, 'Plantation Place' 1833, and very well laid-out estate on Hall Farm Road" Norman Scarfe 'The Suffolk Guide' 1988

"Melton joins itself equably to the town of Woodbridge without any noticeable break and then carries on along a fine straight road to the village proper. The village of Melton keeps itself properly to its side of the bridge nursing the beautiful church and the community centre which has been spared the trials of passing traffic by the introduction of a by-pass road." H. Mills West 'Suffolk Villages' 2002

As recorded in the 2008 report, following the annual election for the new council separate committees were established for Planning, Recreation, Employment and Finance.

I am going to break down my report into those committees. I am not going into details as Minutes of the Committees can be found on the Council's website

Firstly Full Council.

The new year of the council begins in May when we welcomed Mr Howard Needham to our ranks and since then the Full Council met on twelve occasions. Overall attendance, affected by one councillor having an accident and another giving birth to a new resident, was nearly 80%.

Attending, apart from parish councillors, has been District Councillor Jim Bidwell. He and parish councillor Michael Bond who is also a District and County councillor have kept us informed on not only District and County Council matters. And as many will recall, backed up our representative Mr. Geof Butterwick in speaking against the Girdlestone planning applications when they came before the South Area Development Committee of Suffolk Coastal.

We have also had attendance from members of the local police Safer Neighbourhood Team who have given reports on crime as it has unfortunately affected Melton. The village is covered out of Woodbridge police station by PC Karle Howard and Police Community Support Officer Marie Smith.

Under the SNT arrangements, Community Forums are held on a monthly basis in villages within the district, to which members of the public are at liberty to attend.

Those Forums put forward to the Tasking Panel upon which the council is represented.

Despite a series of incidents late last year and early this year, including one recent serious matter, the overall level of crime in Melton fortunately remains low. However it has to be acknowledged that there has been some and residents are asked to be alert and report their suspicions to the authorities.

We have had but a few members of the public attend our meetings. Please remember that this is your parish council and you are invited to attend, to make representation or to just watch, not only these meetings of the council but others as advertised.

The Council voted to apply for 'The Power of Well-being'. This required councillors to attend specific training before it could be implemented. 'Power of Well-being' is the informal name given to the statutory power enabling a local authority to do anything which it considers likely to achieve the promotion or improvement of the economic social or environmental well-being of their area.

That assumes that it has the financial ability to do so

This year Council considered and debated long and hard about the precept that should be requested for the year 2010/11 bearing in mind the financial situation applying in the country and locally.

The amount finally settled upon was £52,500 or £31.36 per annum for a Band 'D' property.

This means that although we are the seventh biggest local council, by way of population within Suffolk Coastal, on a 'per head' basis we are 39th out of 93 and in terms of charge per Band 'D' 34th.

We have now established five large notice boards in various parts of the parish. In addition we have established the 'E-news' facility which anyone can use for the further communicating of news and events, subject to certain restrictions as to content.

I now turn to another matter that has exercised us in the past year namely the Melton and Ufford civil parish boundary review. It has been broadcast that this parish council was behind wanting the change. We were not. We were responding to requests by residents at Melton Park who were, out of the blue, informed by the District that an error had been made in the designation as to which parish their properties had been allocated. The boundary change was finally approved and we now have some 58 additional properties to whose electors we are responsible effective as of April 1st and we give welcome to the residents involved.

We have commented on the Boundary Committee enquiry as to a Unitary Suffolk which at the end came to an unsatisfactory conclusion, basically 'sort it out yourselves'. So many wasted hours expended for nought.

Our Transport Representative Cllr. Butterwick has kept us and the community informed of changes to both rail and bus timetables and we have asked for and received new bus stop timetable notice boards and with up-to-date timetables at those stops where they previously existed.

Planning.

This Committee met eleven times, the only occasion when it did not was in December when the severe weather resulted in its cancellation, matters being dealt with via electronic correspondence.

We have had a busy year with some 45 planning applications coming to us for comment. These have of late been primarily for extensions to properties and the relaxation of tree preservation orders, the latter mainly concerning their removal or lopping particularly in new build situations.

We have also reviewed speed limits and endeavoured to have them reduced in certain situations; and Traffic Restriction proposals about which the County Council will be coming out to the general public for consultation.

The majority of our attention has of course been given to the Girdlestone redevelopment which has caused many hours of burning of the midnight oil primarily by the Chair of our Planning Committee Mr. Geof Butterwick. Without his knowledge and perseverance I think we would have been completely at sea, given the machinations of some at the planning department at Suffolk Coastal in their endeavours to get this project through.

Acknowledgement must also be made to the leadership and membership of the Girdlestone Action Group. Without that organisation, their fundraising to get legal opinion and counsel, many objection points would not have been available.

Other applications of note concerned the construction of a new Montessori school in Old Church Road; and the plans for affordable housing on land behind St. Andrews Place and the development of the waterworks site on Bredfield Road.

Unfortunately all a parish council can do is comment based on planning rules. And comment we have, with specific examples of where we think that planning law is not being followed.

We have also commented upon the Local Development Framework plans particularly as regards the provision of additional houses in the area. Housing is a very emotive subject and no-one wishes to begrudge the opportunity of anyone to live in what is a very beautiful part of the county. Indeed we have the redevelopment of the GAH site on Melton Road, the additional properties at Melton Mill, the development at Melton Grange and new properties in Bredfield Road. Those are the applications that have been approved and either started upon or completed. Other applications have been made or revised and await approval.

But that beauty is likely to be spoiled by an excess of new housing bringing as it will additional traffic on to roads that cut through Melton. Those roads happen to be in the middle of our designated conservation area- another area where our comments have been requested and submitted. We have proposed that the current area be expanded but that does not mean to say that it will, or that it will affect out of character buildings.

The amount of traffic that traverses our roads has grown enormously over the last few years much due to the developments on the Peninsular. No thought seems to have been given that the rail crossing at Melton is a bottle neck as many who have observed the lorries trying to traverse the sharp corner there will have observed. And yet the District Council has acknowledged that this is a gateway to an area of outstanding natural beauty. Some gateway.

And now we have the Adastral Park development into which the district council has pumped our money.

If that development of housing proceeds as indicated we will have traffic coming at us from all angles, Just wait until the traffic lights fail at the Melton crossroads and see what standstill that brings about, just outside one of the Primary schools in the parish.

Latest news is an indication of proposals for the CEL site and we shall have to wait and see if firm proposals come forth; and the situation pertaining at Bentwaters where seemingly uncontrolled development has been allowed to take place.

Recreation Committee

This committee met on five occasions. It's main objective is the oversight of the playing fields with the children's play area (with it's annually inspected equipment to ensure that it is fit for purpose), the all-weather pitch, two tennis courts, seating etc, about one hundred trees of different varieties plus all those further trees and the pond in Burkes Wood.

Part of the area of the fields is used in the football season by Woodbridge Town Youth Football club who hire two pitches. Unfortunately, possibly due to previous mild winters, the pitches suffered attack by the chafer grub and the damage was exacerbated by the birds trying to get at them. A safe to humans' chemical control was applied in the autumn, and that together with the prolonged cold winter has hopefully put an end to that pest.

During the summer we have the car boot sales funds for cancer charity. This is given at no charge.

We have recently reviewed a request to establish a BMX (bicycle motor cross) track on part of the field. Originally an application was made for this to be established in Burkes Wood but that was considered impracticable.

The development of the track is going to be overseen by the youth charity Just42 who will also be responsible for necessary insurance. The number of positive requests for there to be a track established was quite surprising, so in allowing it to go forward, subject to certain conditions, your council is meeting local need. Being an Olympic sport, who knows that in some future years a medal winner in this event may come from Melton.

The Tennis courts continue to be well used as do the children's playground and the artificial football pitch.

We have embarked on redevelopment of the pavilion. This is a parish council property that has got into some state of disrepair over recent years and is little used from its original purpose. There was talk of it being demolished, but we are hopeful of getting planning permission to have it converted into

parish council offices and meeting room. This, over time will help save monies, as we will no longer be using hired premises however useful they have been.

We have also had a path laid from the main entrance to the tennis courts giving easier access for the disabled, and extending it to the pavilion.

What of the future. We are determined to retain the playing fields as a lung of open space. We will continue to endeavour to enhance its attraction and public use.

I mentioned Burkes Wood. Our newly appointed Assistant Clerk has volunteered to take on the task of developing a management plan for this. Some of her background experience is as a Countryside Ranger and she has already resumed contact with some of her past colleagues in connection with this project.

Employment

Yes, the council has employees. Not only our Clerk, Mr. Malcolm Green who was appointed in December 2006. He continues to guide the council to ensure it stays on the straight and narrow.

Additionally as already mentioned, an Assistant Clerk, namely Mrs Diane Linsley.

Diane was appointed in December replacing Mrs. Holly Palmer who left for a position with Suffolk County Council.

Neither of these work full-time but are responsible for the administration of the Council's finance, correspondence, committee meetings and all that goes on, on a daily basis.

And also Mr. Keith Stebbings, Park Warden, who continues to keep a watchful eye on activities on the Playing Field and assisting when action is required. His work is very much 'behind the scenes' but much appreciated for all that.

Finance

Here I would firstly like to give thanks to Mr Tony Dunford who so ably chaired the Finance Committee until he tendered his resignation in February.

Monies will always have to be expended. Nothing stays the same. There is always a repair cost, salaries, insurances, maintenance of the playing field and play equipment, hire of premises etc. etc. Nothing is expended on Councillors except incidental expenses such as printing costs.

We have bought and situated additional notice boards around the village.

The work of the council cannot be maintained on a shoestring and many hours were spent trying to keep the increase in this year's precept at a minimum

Our accounts are inspected as required by law.

In conclusion.

I know that each of my colleagues has done their best for Melton and whoever is chosen as Chair for the forthcoming year will continue to maintain that process however difficult it might be.

So I thank my colleagues, as I also thank you. Melton can be a nice place to live. If we work together we might have a chance of keeping it as such.

The coming year will be the final year of this Council after which there will be the opportunity for any resident to put themselves forward to become a parish councillor. I hope that there are numbers of you out there so that an election is required.

If so many can get together over the Girdlestone issue then I hope that some can be persuaded to become parish councillors. The needs of the parish are so much greater than one issue. And the way the District is formulating policies we need a full council membership.

As an example of this we have advertised to co-opt a replacement for Cllr. Dunford but so far without success.

So finally. I introduced the references at the beginning to indicate how, in the intervening years, Melton seemed to have lost its individual identity and become an adjunct of Woodbridge. But Melton is not and should not be subsumed. It should remain independent despite what Suffolk Coastal

Planning and their Core Strategy document have effected and proposed. Otherwise how can we control our environment?

So I leave you with this thought.. Back in the year 1549 it was a time of civil unrest. Rebels set up camps near centres of local government since their main grievance was the mismanagement of the ruling classes.

In Suffolk one such camp was established at Melton.

I trust that the parish council of this village will continue to act to protect the village where it is right and lawful to do so.

Cllr. Peter Brockett
Chairman,
Melton Parish Council

Below is a list of bodies and organisations to whom we are associated and to whose meetings at least one councillor has attended, often more than once, in their own unpaid time.

Suffolk Association of Local Councils
Woodbridge and Melton Riverside Action Group
Melton Trust
Burness Parish Rooms Management Committee
Woodbridge and District neighbourhood team (Police)
Deben Estuary Partnership
Girdlestone Action Group (GAG)
Save Our Rural Roads (SORR)
Greenprint Forum
SCDC LDF
Martlesham Action Group
Suffolk ACRE

The following is what the parish council has in its ownership in addition to those items mentioned in the main body of this report.

Grit bins
Various public seats
The village sign on The Street and its surrounding 'green'
Two bus shelters (in The Street and Bredfield Road)
Two historic pumps
Various items of office equipment.