

MELLIS PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Ms Jane Challis
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FINAL MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH COUNCIL MEETING (HELD BY ZOOM VIDEO LINK) ON THURSDAY 6th MAY 2021 @ 7:20PM

Present: Cllr L Read, Cllr S Barr, Cllr G Paterson, Cllr A Cross
Clerk & RFO – J Challis

Apologies: DC Cllr R Warboys, CC Cllr J Fleming

1 To elect Chair of Mellis Parish Council 2021/22

The Clerk has received one nomination for Chair - Cllr Read.
Proposed by Cllr Cross, seconded by Cllr Paterson, and agreed unanimously. The Clerk will arrange for Cllr Read to sign the Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

2 Chair's welcome and to consider and approve apologies for absence

Cllr Read welcomed everyone to the meeting.

3 To receive Declarations of Interest on agenda items

None received.

4 To consider requests for Dispensations on agenda items

None requested.

5 To resolve the draft minutes of the Parish Council Meeting (via Zoom) held on Thursday 22nd April 2021 are a true and correct record.

The minutes for 22nd April 2021 (via zoom) were approved unanimously.

6 Matters Arising / Update on actions from the 22nd April 2021 meeting.

- Cllr Cross has made contact with Mellis Primary School and the Chair of Governors, and will update further at a future meeting.
- The Clerk has updated the Financial Regulations.
- SALC have advised that the Council may be able provide assistance to the Primary School under S.137 Local Government Act 1972.
- Telephone Box – The Telegraph met with residents to take photographs Friday 23rd April 2021 as arranged, and their article is due to be published in the Telegraph this weekend. Councillors agreed to put the article in the Messenger once it is available.

7 Report from County Councillor

CC Cllr J Fleming sent apologies for being unable to attend the meeting due to the local elections. A copy of her Annual Report can be found as an addendum at the end of the minutes.

8 Report from District Councillor

DC Cllr Warboys sent his apologies for being unable to attend the meeting. A copy of his Annual Report can be found as an addendum at the end of the minutes.

9 Public Participation Session (10 minutes set aside)

No members of the public present.

10 Chair's Report

The Chair's Report is included within the Annual Village Meeting, minutes of which can be found as an addendum at the end of the minutes.

11 Clerk/RFO's Report

- Drainage Reports – to be added to the website.
- AGAR – the deadline for the Certificate of Exemption is 30/06/21, but an extension can be requested for up to 15th September 2021.
- Gislingham Parish Council have awarded their Watson Bowl to the Messenger Team for their work throughout 2020, and also created a new award for Volunteer of the Year. Councillors discussed the awards and agreed it would be a nice idea to look at something similar for Mellis, to recognise outstanding contributions made to the Parish each year. To be a future agenda item.

12 Planning Consultations

- **DC/21/02369 – Yaxley Manor House, Mellis Road, Yaxley, Suffolk**
After discussing this application Councillors agreed that they wished to submit the response of no objection, but would like to request a restriction on the hours the floodlighting is to be used in the evening.
- **DC/20/05508- Land at Bullocks Farm, Earlsford Road, Mellis, Suffolk**
After discussing this application Councillors agreed that they did not wish to submit a comment.

ACTION DC/21/02369 - Clerk to add comment on the MSDC Planning Portal.

13 Wellhead Reconstruction

Cllr Paterson is in the process of putting together a more detailed plan which will then be used to work out costings and materials required.

ACTION Cllr Paterson to continue creating a more detailed plan for the wellhead reconstruction

14 MSDC Tree, Hedge, and Wildflower Planting Initiative

Councillors discussed suitable locations within the village and highlighted Newsteads Land along with the village sign area. Councillors are aware that the submission date to MSDC is 20th June 2021.

ACTION

- **Cllr Paterson to speak to landowner for permission to plant trees around the village sign area.**
- **Clerk to submit application to MSDC once agreed.**

15 Finance

i) Confirmation of Barclays bank account balance:

The Barclays bank account balance was £32,731.00 as of 6th May 2021

ii) Review and authorisation of payments presented:

Expenses Cllr Read (Paint for phone box) - **£59.99**

Agreed unanimously with one abstention (Cllr Read)

16 Matters for future consideration

- A resident has requested a light be installed inside the phone box
- Budget for ongoing maintenance of the phone box and village sign
- Further work to the village sign to include the Mellis Coat of Arms
- Donation to the Church
- Speeding within the village
- Annual award for contribution to the village

17 Date of next Parish Council Meeting Thursday 24th June 2021, 6:30pm, Mellis Memorial Hall.

Meeting Closed at 8:39pm

Annual Parish Report 2020/ 2021

Mellis Parish Council

Councillor Jessica Fleming, Hartismere Division, Suffolk

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It goes without saying that this has been one of the most extraordinary years in memory. A year of intermittent lock down has had varying effects on people across the country, from financial devastation and loss to a renewed sense of the importance of a stable home life. During this time the Council public health team along with the NHS and CCGs have achieved a very successful testing, tracing and vaccination effort across the County. Suffolk's economic recovery plans are gearing up as restrictions lift, and attention is turning to support for businesses and people through grants, training and advice.

The work of the council has continued over the past year and all meetings have been held 'virtually' as of the end of March 2020. This has demanded a leap in technology and learning by officers and members as we have mastered chairing public meetings and voting remotely. The administrative staff and IT team have risen to the challenges. Moving forward, formal meetings are required to be in person again as of May 7th but less formal may remain remotely held.

During this period the Council has supported Suffolk schools as they moved to remote learning but key worker children still needed to attend classes, which has challenged teachers and parents alike; the return to school is welcomed by most. Other functions of the council have continued, such as the adoption and fostering programme, special education needs services and adult social care, all of which do not lend themselves well to remote working and have needed much organisational focus. There have been costs due to lockdown in mental and physical health, with lack of community activities, organised sport, and isolation particular concerns.

In 2019, most councils in Suffolk including the County declared a Climate Emergency, committing to work toward Carbon Net Zero by 2030. Initiatives have commenced over the past year with tree and hedge planting and the Plug-in Suffolk electric vehicle charging programme, which includes funds for fast charge points for parish and town councils and non-profit organisations in rural areas.

The Hold - Suffolk's flagship new heritage facility on Ipswich Waterfront- opened in September. It is now the permanent home of Suffolk Archives Ipswich and shares facilities with the University of Suffolk. This is possible thanks to a grant of £10.3m from The National Lottery Heritage Fund, and further support from national organisations and Suffolk heritage groups

Recycling Centres have remained open most of the time with a new requirement to book slots, plans to introduce automatic number plate recognition to ease site entry are planned later this year. Also upgrades are planned for Foxhall, Rougham and Stowmarket centres and reuse shops will re-open.

Without the support of community groups and volunteers the picture of our return to living more normally would be very different. The collective effort has been massive and life changing for many.

District Councillor's Annual Report 2020/21

May 2020 Due to the Covid-19 emergency, from 23 March 2020, all Council meetings were cancelled, and Council staff began working from home where possible. Many staff have been seconded to different service areas and some of the routine work has been paused for the time being.

The Home but Not Alone helpline - 0800 876 6926 - was receiving several hundred calls a day. Staffed 09:00 to 17:00, seven days a week.

MSDC have so far received £1.069M in grants from Central Government to assist towards extra costs and reduced income.

Since the lockdown there were no formal District Council meetings until a planning committee meeting was held on Tuesday 28th April with members and officers using Skype facilities from their homes. The May Cabinet meeting was held using Skype and more and more meetings were being set up. Where possible task groups and informal meetings are continuing to try to move forward as much council business as possible.

Under delegated powers, as augmented by government legislation, some key decisions have been made by the Chief Executive. Most significant are the approval of Section 106 conditions regarding the "Snoasis" development and amendments to MSDC's statement of community involvement which means no site notices for planning applications.

The majority of planning decisions are now delegated to the Chief Planning Officer. Ward members are able to provide information and advice which is taken into account as decisions are taken.

June 2020 Staff were continuing to work from home, making use of Skype (now Microsoft Teams) to hold virtual meetings with colleagues and residents; non-urgent site inspections are not taking place. Many officers have been seconded to different duties to help MSDC respond to the issues arising from the pandemic.

A new £300,000 funding programme, for small businesses across Babergh and Mid Suffolk, The Business Innovation and Growth Fund, has been agreed - with funds to be allocated over the next three years. The aim is to help sustain and create jobs, provide opportunities to grow and innovate as well as react to the changing business landscape.

MSDC has funds to support organisations providing help to vulnerable residents. Community groups, along with town and parish councils, are playing a key role in easing the challenges faced by residents at this time. A Covid-19 Emerging Needs Grant was set up last month, ensuring much-needed funding could be provided to new and existing groups.

July 2020 **The first full Council meeting since February 2020 was held virtually on 23rd of July and broadcast live via YouTube.**

First "post Covid" Review: Cabinet Targets. – Get economy moving again, get housing market moving again, improving housing standards, public health and wellbeing, climate change, innovation and transformation.

Proposals from the Cross-Party Task Force of Mid Suffolk and Babergh Councillors were considered by Cabinet on 6 July. They contained a number of environmental measures which could form the councils' first Carbon Reduction Management Plan, setting out how they aim to fulfil their ambitions of becoming carbon neutral within the next ten years. These included: B&MSDC will develop a plan to significantly increase tree and hedgerow planting in the district and B&MSDC will work with local communities and support them to develop local 'place-specific' solutions and build resilience to climate impacts.

Staff were returning from redeployments but systems such as the "Home but Not Alone" helpline kept in place.

Aug. 2020 The Green Group and the Liberal Democrat Group of Councillors joined forces to become 'The Green and Liberal Democrat Group' in order to more effectively hold the current administration to account. The new group has 17 members, one more than the Conservatives who will need to rely upon the Independent member and Chairman's casting vote. Rachel Eburne is the Leader of the new group; she approached the Conservative Leader with a request that the two groups work collaboratively for the benefit of residents of the District.

Babergh and Mid Suffolk are to share a £800,000 grant from the "Getting Building Fund" for the introduction of micro-generation and electricity storage solar carports in Sudbury and Stowmarket. The funding will provide 50% of the budget for Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council to install multifunctional solar carports which will generate and store electricity and provide a point for electric vehicle charging.

Sept. 2020 The Annual Council Meeting was held virtually on 24th September. Barry Humphreys was elected as Chairman and Paul Ekpenyong as Vice Chair. The Committees and Chairs were all agreed, with the Chairman using his casting vote to elect all the chairs and vice chairs from the Conservative and Independent Group, except for Overview and Scrutiny which is traditionally chaired by an opposition member and will continue to be chaired by Keith Welham, with Keith Scarff as vice chair.

The Councils have carried out a review of the delivery of the public realm service which includes maintenance of open spaces, litter picking, public toilets and tree maintenance. Currently the service is provided by MSDC staff in Mid Suffolk, whereas in Babergh that work is contracted out. The aim is to have a common service delivery across both districts. Changes will be implemented in summer 2021

Oct. 2020 Babergh and Mid Suffolk Councils have been awarded a grant of £100,000 to help cover the cost of temporary accommodation for homeless people over the winter. In Mid Suffolk there are few (possibly only 2) people sleeping rough but pre-Covid many others had been sofa-surfing or staying with elderly relatives. In order to protect vulnerable people, some of these people became homeless and were accommodated in hotels.

Government consultations on planning: *Changes to the current planning system* is about changes to planning policy and regulation including how the housing numbers for each local government area are calculated. *Planning for the future* is a White Paper that proposes major reforms to the planning system.

Nov. 2020 Mid Suffolk is administering the £500 compensation payment for those who have had to isolate due to Track and Trace. To date they have allocated £33,000. Separately, Government has provided £40,000 to the district council to use on compliance issues relating to Covid 19 such as environmental health or the need for Covid Marshalls in Stowmarket.

The Biodiversity Action Plan, produced by the cross-party task force, was adopted at the Cabinet meeting held on 9 November. The aim is to improve biodiversity in the way that MSDC operate, through specific initiatives and partnership working. One such initiative is to plant 500 trees and a kilometre of hedging during 2021/22. The task force will monitor the Action Plan and look for initiatives for increasing biodiversity.

Dec. 2020 Mid Suffolk is administering payments of grants to businesses forced to close or suffering a significant loss of income during the current lockdown period. The current assessment of additional costs is £800k and income reduction currently stands at £1.3 million. Support from Central Government has so far totaled £2.2million. When the shortfall in collection of council tax and business rates is also taken into account, the overall shortfall due to Covid 19 is £81k.

The budget setting process is under way; this will be a more difficult exercise than usual due to the uncertainty caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. MSDC has suffered a loss of income and extra costs. Also, more and more residents are unable to make payments of council tax and council rents.

MSDC has made further investments in properties in Luton and Epsom for £10.5 million and plans to spend a further £15 million making a total of £50 million, all paid for on long-term loans. These investments are managed by

CIFCO. The property portfolio continues to decrease in value; two of the properties have been without tenants and some 30% of rental income is unpaid or delayed. Nevertheless, the Leader of MSDC is quoted as saying, 'Through these careful investments, CIFCO will continue to bring in much-needed income to support our district's recovery post-Covid'.

January 2021 Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils will cut their fleet's carbon emissions by up to 90% – supporting the councils' carbon neutral aims. The move follows approval by both councils' cabinets this week, to switch their vehicle fleet to Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO).

Strategic Asset Management Plan announced following the appointment of a Corporate Manager for Strategic Property, this is being prepared to cover MSDC's physical assets from patches of open space to office buildings -total value £20,987,880. This does not include Gateway 14 nor CIFCO. This will include acquisitions, disposals and monitoring of the estate.

B&MSDC working with Norse Group. The underlying purpose of the Design Guide is to define the quality standards of new development, at all scales, and to create well-designed and well-built places that benefit people and communities

February 2021 MSDC Council: Budget Approved, Council Tax increased 1.66%, equates to £2.80 per year for a band D property, increases in social rents £1.30 per week.

In response to amendments proposed by the Green and Lib Dems Opposition Group the council accepted the motion: "That the General Fund Budget proposals for 2021/22 and four-year outlook set out in the report be approved, *and that recommendations to Cabinet be prepared, using a balanced, cross-party approach, for the allocation of the additional £4.1 million of funding for investment in our local economy, housing, the wellbeing of our residents and in our communities. This cross-party approach would also give consideration to the budget amendments proposed in 2020/21 and 2021/22.*"and be funded from reserves.

March 2021 Joint Local Plan submitted for examination by the Secretary of State. Following both councils opting to prepare a [Joint Local Plan](#) in 2016, careful consideration has been given to how the districts will balance the delivery of housing growth, important infrastructure, and essential employment, while safeguarding our natural and historic environment until 2037.

Full Council supports the motion: "That the Council carries out a review of green space to ensure that it is optimising the biodiversity and wellbeing aspects of natural and amenity green space in Mid Suffolk."

Gateway 14 Ltd has submitted a planning application to Mid Suffolk District Council for the development of Gateway 14, a mixed-use business park planned for land adjacent to junction 50 of the A14 in Stowmarket, Suffolk. Gateway 14 is one of a variety of sites in our region to be granted Freeport status.

April 2021 Since March 2020, 6,237 business grants worth £30,041,539 have been paid to businesses in Mid Suffolk. On 31st March the COVID support grant scheme ended. **However, there are still grants to help with business rates and a new Restart Grant to help retail businesses open safely.**

May 2021 County Council and Police Commissioner Elections 6th May.

End to Virtual Meetings from 7th May

Dear Group Leaders and Council Chairmen,

Thank you for the feedback you provided on my previous proposals for meetings after 6 May 2021. Based on that feedback and following the high court ruling this week, I have revised my recommended approach as per the attached document.

"I completely understand that some Councillors may be very anxious about returning to in person meetings, please rest assured that we will be taking all possible steps to ensure that the meetings are covid secure and that the health

and safety of councillors, staff members and any members of the public attending is protected. We will provide further information ahead of the meetings taking place, but you will typically see the usual covid secure arrangements – social distancing, hand sanitising stations, requirement to wear face coverings, one-way systems etc.

We will not be requiring Councillors to demonstrate that they have been vaccinated or to have a negative covid test before attending the meetings, however I would encourage all councillors to consider using the lateral flow tests that are now available to everybody. More information about obtaining the tests can be found at <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/coronavirus-covid-19/getting-a-test/covid-19-asymptomatic-testing/>”

In accordance with the Local government Act 1972

The High Court ruling has made it clear that councillors must be present in a single, specified geographical location for the meeting to be legal – I believe this confines us to a single meeting room.”

Ongoing issues: In the light of recent (and continuing) breaches of planning conditions by developers. Philip Isbell has advised that he is completely revisiting the Enforcement Policy and expects this to be done at Overview and Scrutiny Committee as soon as it can be. He also expects to reconvene the Member Working Group (that was used for the Joint Local Plan discussions) to discuss this in detail

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Clerk: Ms Jane Challis

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MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH (VILLAGE) MEETING (HELD BY ZOOM VIDEO LINK) ON THURSDAY 6th MAY 2021 @ 6:30PM

Present: Cllr L Read, Cllr S Barr, Cllr G Paterson, Cllr A Cross
Clerk & RFO – J Challis, Betty Wells - Churchwarden

Apologies: DC Cllr R Warboys, CC Cllr J Fleming

18 Welcome from the Chair of Mellis Parish Council

Cllr Read welcomed everyone to the meeting.

19 To receive Suffolk County Councillor's Report

CC Cllr J Fleming sent apologies for being unable to attend due to the local elections, and sent a copy of her Annual Report after the meeting which can be found as an addendum to the minutes.

20 To receive Mid Suffolk District Councillor's Report

DC Cllr R Warboys sent his apologies for being unable to attend the meeting with a copy of his Annual Report. Cllr Read read out highlights from the Report in his absence, and a full copy can be found as an addendum at the end of the minutes.

21 To receive the Parish Chair's Report

Cllr Read provided a report looking forward at two issues he feels need to be highlighted within the Parish; assistance for Mellis Primary School which is in need of financial support, and speeding within the village.

There was a discussion about both items. Mellis Primary School's situation has already been brought to the Parish Council's attention, and speeding within the village will be requested as a future agenda item for further consideration.

22 To receive the Clerk/Responsible Finance Officer's Report

New Clerk/RFO Jane Challis gave a short report advising she is still finding her feet having only been in the role for 5 months, and also catching up on the period for when there was no Parish Clerk/RFO. She thanked all Councillors for their support and warm welcome to the Council. Cllr Read commended the Clerk/RFO for her work so far.

23 To receive reports from those within the community involved in Mellis

Betty Wells - Churchwarden

Betty Wells read out her report, a copy of which can be found as an addendum at the end of the minutes.

Cllr Read thanked Betty Wells for her report and attending the meeting.

24 Resident's Questions

Cllr Paterson asked Betty Wells what happens when the Church is unable to raise their annual payment to the Diocese. Betty Wells explained that if the church is consistently unable to make their full payment, it means that in the future they may not be allocated a Rector.

Meeting Closed at 7:20pm

Mellis St Mary's Church Report - 2020

- A very difficult year for everyone - all church buildings locked in March - no services in church - steep learning curve for clergy who had to find ways of delivering worship on-line. Our Rector, Julia Lall, has done a remarkable job. Worship in some form has continued to take place every week in the benefice since the pandemic began
- Then - after strict safety precautions, open twice a week for Private Prayer. No kneelers, no paper backs for sale, no Coffee mornings, no Easter Egg Hunt, no Flower Festival, no Christmas Fair, no nothing normal...
- In church services then briefly resumed, only to be stopped again by Lockdowns two and three. Currently, worship is taking place both in church and on-line, but reduced from 'normal' times
- Huge financial concerns - income normally comes from services in church, occasional weddings or funerals and considerable fundraising. Two weddings were postponed, one funeral did take place.
- Sent two 'begging letters' to congregation and known supporters, receiving a very good response
- Christine Lanchester organised eight Cake Stalls in Eye on Saturday mornings, which raised £2000. We also raffled a Christmas Hamper, raising another £500
- Very well attended Remembrance Sunday service by the church porch
- The Parish Giving Scheme was introduced - like a direct debit specifically for churches. Anyone who wants to support the church but not come to services can sign up for it, and it's very easy to set up over the phone.
- Grant of £8000 received from government funded Taylor Review Scheme for renewal of soffits on nave and re-pointing on north side. This work was able to be undertaken during Lockdown
- Upkeep of churchyard/burial ground - really missed the Parish Council's usual annual grant of £500 to help with the regular cutting of the burials area
- In the future the church would like to find ways of working together with other village organisations, like the Parish Council and the Memorial Hall Committee so that if we are ever faced again with another emergency like Covid we could do more, together, to support the residents of Mellis

Betty Wells - Churchwarden