

The Parish of FINNINGHAM

*Minutes for the ANNUAL PARISH MEETING held on
Tuesday 10th May 2022
in St. Bartholomew's Church, Finningham, starting at 7:00pm*

Chairman: Mr A Kilbee

In attendance: Cllr A. Kilbee (Chairman), three members of the Parish Council (Cllr Winter, Cllr Miller, Cllr Charter), Jane Challis (Parish Clerk) and two members of the public.

1. Welcome & introduction by the Chairman

Cllr Kilbee welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Minutes already approved of the Meeting held on 18th May 2021

The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 18th May 2021 were approved at the Parish Council meeting held on 8th June 2021.

3. Annual Report from the Chairman of Finningham Parish Council

At the beginning of the period covered by this report, on-line meetings, which had been conducted to comply with the Government's Covid requirements, were made illegal. So, we were able to revert to our usual meetings in the Church.

I am very pleased to announce that, after many years being under strength, the Council now has a full complement of members. Paul Trew joined us during the period and has already proven to be a valuable member of the team. He has a background in the Fire Service and his experience will be very useful in helping the Council Draw up an Emergency Plan.

On a similar subject, I am sad to announce that Natalie is leaving us as Parish Clerk. In her years in that role, she has proven to be enthusiastic and skilled in her knowledge of procedures and adept at keeping us in line. She has taken this step as she has recently changed jobs and she does not feel that she can devote the time needed to complete her Parish Council duties to her satisfaction; a typical Natalie rationale.

However, I was very fortunate to contact Jane Challis, the Gislegham, Mellis and Wortham Parish Clerk just when she had decided to expand her activities. She attended our March meeting and was offered the post unanimously. I am pleased to say that she accepted and is currently undergoing a handover period. Natalie, will retire finally at the end of May. We trust that this will not be the last we see of her.

At the May 2021 elections, Andy Mellen won the County Council seat for our ward. He had already won the District Councillor seat, so now he is both County and District Councillor for Finningham. We are very lucky to have him and he has already been heavily involved in trying to remedy our flooding issue and actively supported the village's objection to the planning application for an additional 8 houses alongside the existing 6 new dwellings on Westhorpe Road. He has also been very generous by helping us with various projects from his Locality Budget.

A thank you is in order to Doug Aiken as our unstinting Footpath Warden. He has walked all our footpaths many times over the year and reported various problems to the Suffolk County Council. Doug was heavily involved (together with Councillor Catherine Winter) in the design and manufacture of the Village Footpath Map, which was installed at the entrance of the Green. This is the first phase of measures to encourage residents and visitors alike to utilise and enjoy our foot path network.

Following more storm damage to the trees on the Green, the Council employed an Arborist to report on the health of the Oak trees that are parallel to the B1113. The report received itemised various areas that needed attention so, the Council put the work out to tender and awarded to contract to the most suitable candidate. Not the cheapest but the one with the best track record and gave the Council confidence.

Also on the Green, the Council oversaw the resurfacing of the track around the Green as the proliferation of potholes made it dangerous for pedestrians and vehicles. The residents of the Green made a contribution to the cost.

The speeding of traffic through the village, particularly on Station Road to the crossroads, is continuing to be problematic. Interest shown by the Police and other Agencies seems to be spasmodic and to little or no effect. The CSW system fell apart this year due to lack of support by residents. Andy Brownlie did a sterling job trying to keep it together but decided, in the end, that he had had enough. The VAS is still in operation and from past experience, does help to keep down the number of speeding vehicles. Our new Councillor, Paul Trew is currently acting as manager of the VAS. For which we thank him.

Communication with village residents has always been difficult and now made even more so with the demise of the Village Newsletter. It suffered under the Covid restrictions and has not been revitalised since. Richard & Lorraine Groundwell did a wonderful job for a number of years but have now retired and the Friends of Finningham are looking for new Editor(s). The only media open to us for dissemination of information to the village are, the Notice Board, the Website, Facebook and occasional Newsheets from the Friends of Finningham. To overcome this problem, the Parish Council is preparing an annual information booklet which we hope will be of benefit to new arrivals and current residents. In spite of previous objections, a village database of names and email addresses should be considered again. This would give the Parish Council instant communication facilities.

Flooding has been an issue in the village during this past winter, with some dramatic results. As I have said before, we owe Andy Mellen a debt of gratitude for the work he has done on our behalf with appropriate Agencies, such as, Suffolk County Council Highways, Network Rail and MSDC Planning. Added to this, the Parish Council has also involved Anglia Water. We should like to also thank resident Chris Goddard for his actions with Anglia Water.

A team of volunteers spent a number of weekends clearing the Dove of fallen branches and other debris. We thank them for their efforts on behalf of the village.

To help the team of volunteers who cut the grass around the Church and the Cemetery, a ride-on lawnmower was purchased. This should make the process less arduous. As the Friends of Finningham purchased their own lock-up and move all their equipment to it, the Parish Council had the room in theirs to accommodate the new machine.

Unfortunately, due to total lack of support, the Village Litter picks have been suspended pro tem. Luckily, certain residents have adopted roads and have kept them free of litter. The B1113 is particularly bad, as it is a main thoroughfare of the village.

Councillors Lisa Charter and Paul Trew are currently preparing a long-awaited Emergency Plan for the village. Volunteers are needed to fill the various roles they are required for the Plan.

Currently, the Parish Council is engaged in negotiating for a footpath to be laid between the crossroads and the entrance to the Green. This is proving to be a costly and involved exercise but it is hoped that work will begin soon.

As Suffolk County Council no longer undertakes replacement of missing or damaged road signs (unless they consider them to be hazard warnings), we have decided to purchase and, where possible, erect new ones. The long-disappeared village sign at Rob Hall Corner is scheduled to be replaced but the SCC require a considerable sum of money to replace the poles which have rusted away. As Gislingham can mount their village sign on the other side of the poles, we have agreed to split the cost between us.

The major celebrations for the Queen's Jubilee are being arranged by The Friends of Finningham and The White Horse Public House. The Parish Council are erecting a Beacon on the Village Green which will be ignited at 9:45 pm on Thursday 2nd June. The Beacon, donated by Councillor Jim Miller will remain in place for future celebrations.

Finally, I should like to thank the Members of the Council who have given their time and efforts for the benefit of the community.

4. Other Reports:

The following had been invited to report, subject to availability:

- a) **County and District Councillors** – CC and DC Cllr Mellen was unable to attend the meeting; his Annual Reports can be found as addendums at the end of the minutes.
- b) **Footpath Warden** – the Footpath Warden, Mr Doug Aiken, was unable to attend the meeting. His Annual Report was read out by the Parish Clerk and can be found as an addendum at the end of the minutes.
- c) **Friends of Finningham** – the Chairman of Friends of Finningham, Mr Greg Atkins, was unable to attend the meeting. His Annual Report was read out by the Parish Clerk and can be found as an addendum at the end of the minutes.

5. Open Forum

There were no questions or items of discussion raised.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 7:13pm

Footpath Warden's Annual Report

Over this last year I feel that our local public rights of way have not suffered too much, and any reports of damage/hindrance has been dealt with in reasonable time.

The grass cutting however, by SCC on the designated public rights of way at the beginning of last year, in my view, did not start early enough, and therefore some routes were a little difficult due to the long grass, nettles and sheep's parsley. We will see whether this year, the SCC mowing team are 'on the ball!'

I would like to thank our local farmers in our parish for their cooperation in keeping our public rights of way clear, and in some cases have levelled out some rough areas, and cut grass which is not part of the SCC mowing schedule.

Doug Aiken

District Councillors' Annual Report (2021/22) – Councillor Andy Mellen

Mid Suffolk District Council – Bacton Ward
(Bacton, Cotton, Finningham, Westhorpe & Wyverstone Parishes)

For Annual Parish Meetings Spring 2022

- **Governance**

The Council remain hung, with a Conservative administration. The Green party had a successful by-election result in Thurston Ward in February, retaining the seat. Many decisions are therefore being decided on the Chairman's casting vote and there has been limited collaborative working between the administration and the Green and Liberal Democrat opposition group.

Council meetings are now being held in person, but virtual platforms continue to be used for briefings and internal meetings. It is hoped that the Council will in future be able to hold 'hybrid' meetings where voting Council members need to be physically present at meetings, but some officers and members of the public will be able to make presentations and representations online.

- **Budget and investments**

Mid Suffolk's general fund budget continues to be in a healthy condition, and so there will be no raise in the district council's portion of the council tax. The council agreed the proposal from the Green and Liberal Democrat group to spend some of the Growth and Efficiency Fund to purchase 2 electric bus services to help residents get into Stowmarket, and support this service for a 2 year period. The Council's wholly-owned investment company CIFCO continues to provide revenue despite the value of the assets deteriorating.

- **Climate Change and Biodiversity**

The Council has recently adopted a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) to encourage more residents to travel sustainably in the district. This plan lists various schemes across the district and prioritises these so that, where funding is available, improvements to footways and cycle paths can be made.

As part of the Tree and Hedgerow planting scheme over 200 trees and around 2,500 hedgerow plants have been delivered to parishes. Over 250 trees were given to celebrate births during 2021 as part of the 'Tree for Life' scheme.

The construction of solar carports is well underway at Mid Suffolk Leisure Centre and the new visitor centre at Needham Lake will open this summer – an eco-friendly building.

The waste collection lorries are now all operating on hydrotreated vegetable oil (HVO) instead of diesel, which should cut carbon emissions by 90%.

MSDC adopted a Net Zero Carbon Toolkit as technical guidance for both developers and homeowners to help reduce the carbon footprint in new and existing buildings.

- **Housing**

The Housing Revenue budget was agreed by full Council, and as the Government has lifted the rent cap, Council tenants will see a 4.1% increase in their rent. The HRA business plan is to be developed and will include a programme of improvements to existing Council house stock as well as building and acquiring dwellings.

Part of the housing development on the old HQ site in Needham Market has been completed and this included 3 new council homes, and a further 15 affordable homes were acquired across the district in 2021. Over 100 residents were prevented from becoming homeless and the Council provided 16 dedicated beds for Rough Sleepers courtesy of grant funding. As part of the response to the Ukraine crisis, MSDC officers will be carrying out housing checks on the properties which will be offered to Ukrainian refugees, once the applications have been processed by the Home Office.

- **Planning**

Following the inspector's examination of the Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local plan last autumn, the inspector and the two Councils have decided to proceed with a 2-part local plan. This will enable the important social, economic and environmental policies to be published in a Part 1 Joint Local Plan which will be adopted first, whilst the remaining work on spatial strategy matters and housing allocations will be addressed in a Part 2 Joint Local Plan. MSDC currently has over 9 years housing land supply (permissions granted or in the process).

Locally we have seen work commence on three of the large developments in Bacton, with three further sites close to starting. This will inevitably result in lots of disruption and HGV traffic in the area over the next few years. We aim to minimise this by Bacton parish council holding regular coordination meetings with all the developers, and including myself as District Councillor and Andrew Stringer as County Councillor.

- **Wellbeing**

The council adopted its first Wellbeing Strategy this year. A number of initiatives across the district took place during the year including Family Park Cooking session in Stowmarket, free Christmas Holiday activity sessions, Our Parks (free outdoor fitness sessions) in Stowmarket and the Active Schools programme.

Mid Suffolk District Council together with Suffolk County Council and Stowmarket Town Council supported the launch in July of the Chilton Fields parkrun held every Saturday morning.

- **Economy**

The Council continues to support the development of Gateway 14 business park which is now part of Freeport East. The business case has been agreed by Cabinet.

Almost 200 young people attended the Careeriosity event in Stowmarket at October half-term, focussing on jobs in STEM and cultural industries. The Council held its first Local Energy Showcase event, which attracted over 200 visitors and several local businesses. BMSDC's Virtual High Street project won a Gold IESE award.

- **Communities**

Almost £400,00 worth of grants were distributed to support the communities across the district.

I was pleased to be able to allocate locality grants to parish councils and community groups across the five villages. These included: support for the good neighbours scheme, garden club, Bacton bowls club, contribution toward sound equipment for Bacton PC, a new coffee machine for Cotton community café and support for various jubilee-related activities.

The next tranche of locality funding is now available and I welcome applications from any community group, in particular any who have not benefitted previously.

Mid Suffolk District Council information is available via www.midsuffolk.gov.uk or by phone **0300 123 4000**

I would like to thank all the Parish Councils for their work done throughout the year.

Andrew Mellen

Mid Suffolk District Councillor – Bacton Ward

Email: andrew.mellen@midsuffolk.gov.uk

Phone: 07790 992619 or 01449 782971

Annual Parish Report – 2021/22

Councillor: Andy Mellen

Division: Thedwastre North

Councillor contact details:

Mobile: 07790 992619

Email: andy.mellen@suffolk.gov.uk

Monday 18th April 2022

It is almost a year since I was elected to be your County Councillor in the May 2021 local elections. Since then I have sought to represent these communities to the best of my abilities. I have attended all Parish Council meetings unless a clash prevented it. I always try to find an answer to residents' queries, and continue to follow up on long-standing issues of concern. The subject that I get the most e-mails and phone calls about is Highways: potholes, flooding, signage, speed and safety. There is clearly a shortage of funding for Highways work at this time, which can cause an enormous amount of frustration for communities who want their problem resolved straight away. However, I am learning how to get things done, and with strategic use of my limited local highways budget I have been able to progress a few small projects.

Please do contact me if you have an issue where I can help.

May 2021 elections

At last year's elections, the Conservative gained a large majority on the County Council: 55 of the total 75 Councillors, so they continue to lead the Council. In total 9 Green Councillors were elected, and joined with 4 Liberal Democrats and 2 Independent Councillors to form the official opposition group (Green, Liberal Democrat & Independent, GLI). Our role is to scrutinise what the administration is doing, hold them to account and also bring forward ideas and motions of our own. Opposition members also sit on various committees: I myself am a member of the Scrutiny committee and the Constitutional working group.

Budget Meeting: GLI Amendments Declined

Suffolk County Council voted in their budget for 2022-23 earlier this year. Our Group were concerned that the budget relied too heavily on transformation savings, and that the Conservative's did not increase the social care precept to the maximum amount allowed by Government.

The GLI Group highlighted the need to invest more in adult social care, as well as putting forward an innovative project to reduce the energy bills of those most vulnerable, considering the current energy and cost of living crisis. Both ideas were rejected by the Conservatives, but our Group will continue to champion more investment into our social care and green technology that can lower bills.

No Carbon Budget for Scrutiny

The Conservatives brought forward the first Carbon Budget for Suffolk, but it wasn't part of the main budget, so wasn't put through the Scrutiny process in the same way. The Carbon Budget is aimed to help us understand the level of emissions the Council are responsible for and helps to achieve the Council's ambition of being carbon-neutral by 2030. It is important the Carbon Budget is scrutinised, as there are many issues with data collection and performance measures that weren't addressed. Our Group raised concerns about this and has been assured that this will form part of the general budget process for next year.

Levelling Up: A Devolution Deal for Suffolk?

The Government published its White Paper on Levelling-Up, within which it has agreed that Suffolk will be one of nine initial 'County Deals' up for negotiation. A new deal will potentially give local leaders more powers to make decisions for their communities for the first time. Our Group welcomes the idea of bringing more power to the communities of Suffolk. However, we are concerned about a potential Mayoral position created in Suffolk and the effect this may have on marginalising districts in Suffolk.

Report into SEND Provision: Review & Recommendations

Suffolk County Council commissioned an independent review into Special Educational Needs and Disability provision. The report found severe failings in the delivery of Education, Health, and Care (EHC) plans for children, serious issues in communicating with parent/guardians, as well as an inefficient work environment within the service. The scrutiny committee have met since the report to listen to lead officers within the service and parents, debate necessary changes, and submit recommendations for improvement. This included extended training, newly appointed managerial posts, and new accountability structures to help deal with the issues outlined in the previous report.

Bus Back Better: Initiative from the Department for Transport (DfT)

The Bus Back Better scheme was launched this year, aimed at updating, expanding, and improving our bus services in Great Britain. The Cabinet at Suffolk County Council approved a Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) submitted to Government. All proposals of the BSIP that were passed by Cabinet can be viewed here:

[https://committeeminutes.suffolk.gov.uk/DocSetPage.aspx?MeetingTitle=\(12-10-2021\),%20The%20Cabinet](https://committeeminutes.suffolk.gov.uk/DocSetPage.aspx?MeetingTitle=(12-10-2021),%20The%20Cabinet)

Unfortunately, in the last couple of weeks the DfT has announced its funding allocations, and Suffolk has not received any extra funding. Officers are now working out how the limited existing funding can be best deployed.

Biodiversity Recommendations to Enhance

Suffolk County Council will be doing more for the county's natural environment, as it confirmed plans to enhance the biodiversity of at least 30% of its land by 2030. Our Group had a major influence in providing recommendations to SCC which are now a part of the Council's ambitions moving forward to enhance biodiversity. Examples include planting more hedgerows, improving highway trees, and developing nature-based flood management solutions. For more information, visit: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/council-news/show/councils-commitment-to-further-enhancing-suffolks-natural-environment>

Sizewell C: Where are we now?

A final decision on going ahead with this project is expected this summer> Our Group has asked searching questions regarding this project, arguing that the environmental and socio-economic impacts on local communities are far too great. The Government announced their strategy to retain investors, by shifting the costs of Sizewell C onto consumers, in the form of a taxpayer subsidy known as a 'Regulated Asset Base' funding strategy. We have questioned this strategy, and strongly recommended that the Government reconsiders before it puts the burden of cost onto our local communities, and instead looks into investing in cleaner, cheaper, and quicker forms of renewable energy available to Suffolk. Suffolk County Council have announced their general support for Sizewell C but have taken up 'important concerns' to the Secretary of State.

New Investment in Drainage and Footway Infrastructure

The Cabinet approved £10m to replace broken pipes and new installations, as well as an additional £10m to increase the maintenance of selected footways in Suffolk.

Lorry Route Map Review in Suffolk: Interactive Map to be Published

Suffolk County Council undertook a review of recommended lorry routes across the county; the first major review of the network since 2011. Suffolk County Council invited parish and town councils to submit their views, and to provide up to three routes where they believe HGV traffic has the highest impact on their communities. The review will be completed in Spring 2022 and the County Council will publish a new interactive Lorry Route map. For further information, please contact lorry.routes@suffolk.gov.uk

Local Electricity Bill: Suffolk GLI Motion Passed by Council

A motion submitted by our Group ask Suffolk County Council to support the Local Electricity Bill, which is a proposed Bill waiting to be debated in Parliament for its Second Reading, was passed unanimously by the Council. The Bill seeks to localise energy supply, making local electricity cheaper, more reliable, and community based. Details of the motion and Local Electricity Bill can be found here: <https://powerforpeople.org.uk/local-electricity-bill-briefing-for-councillors>

Friends of Finningham Annual Report

With the easing of COVID-19 restrictions the Friends of Finningham attempted to put in place a steady drum beat of social events to try and resume 'historical norms'. The first event planned was the inter-village cricket match between Finningham and Mendlesham due to take place on the Village Green on 3 July. Teams were prepped but the weather predicted a significant electrical storm and in consultation the Team Captains cancelled on the day. Fortunately or unfortunately (dependant on your perspective) the weather never materialised.

The next event was the Finningham Garage Sale which went ahead as planned and was well supported by the community by either as vendors, providing refreshments or hunting for that bargain!

The 'Annual Village Christmas Luncheon' was held at the White Horse pub in Stoke Ash after a 2 year hiatus. It was well attended considering the Covid context at the time with over 35 villagers getting together - long may it continue.

The Friends of Finningham (finally) managed to purchase a new storage shed which was erected next to the PC's (finally) freeing up space for the PC's equipment.

Finally it must be noted that all the activities, meals and events put on under the 'Friends of Finningham' banner is really a whole Community affair and not just the committee. In sum, the coffers are (relatively) full and hopefully can be 'emptied' soon....

Greg Atkins