

# The Parish of FINNINGHAM

*Draft Minutes for the ANNUAL PARISH MEETING held on  
Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> May 2024  
in St. Bartholomew's Church, Finningham, starting at 7:00pm*

Host: Mr A Kilbee, Chairman of Finningham Parish Council

**In attendance:** Cllr A. Kilbee, 5 members of the Parish Council (Cllr C. Winter, Cllr P. Saunders, Cllr Davies, Cllr Charter, Cllr Trew)  
Jane Challis (Parish Clerk), Mr Aiken (Footpath Warden), Mrs B. Ryan-Self (Rural Coffee Caravan), and 3 members of the public.

1. **Welcome & introduction by the Chairman of Finningham Parish Council**  
Cllr Kilbee welcomed everyone to the meeting.
2. **To receive and confirm the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> May 2023 – a copy can be found here: <https://finninghamparishcouncil.gov.uk/agenda-and-minutes/>**  
The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> May 2023 were confirmed.
3. **Annual Report from the Chairman of Finningham Parish Council**  
Cllr Kilbee read his report which can be found as an addendum at the end of the minutes.
4. **Annual Report from the District Councillor**  
Cllr Mellen's report can be found as an addendum at the end of the minutes.
5. **Annual Report from the County Councillor**  
Cllr Mellen's report can be found as an addendum at the end of the minutes.
6. **Footpath Warden's Annual Report**  
Mr Aiken read his report, which can be found as an addendum at the end of the minutes.  
  
**7:09pm Cllr Davies and Cllr Charter arrived.**
7. **Guest speaker from the Rural Coffee Caravan**  
Mrs Ryan-Self introduced herself, and explained the role of the Rural Coffee Caravan to create social spaces in rural locations. The charity is funded by grants and donations and helps rurally isolated people in Suffolk access services and information to improve their lives, health and wellbeing. Mrs Ryan-Self went on to share some of the recent news and work undertaken by the charity, and explained how their community engagement officers work within the local communities. Further information can be found on the website:  
<https://ruralcoffeecaravan.org.uk/>  
Cllr Kilbee thanked Mrs Ryan-Self for her very informative presentation.  
  
7:22pm Mrs Ryan-Self left the meeting, and 2 members of the public arrived.
8. **To receive reports from other organisations within the village**  
A Member of the public read out a report on behalf of Friends of Finningham, which can be found as an addendum at the end of the minutes.

7:28pm Cllr Trew arrived.

**9. National Grid Norwich to Tilbury Public Consultation**

Cllr Saunders provided an update on the proposals and advised that a public meeting is due to be held in Wortham Village Hall on the 28<sup>th</sup> May 2024, which will be attended by representatives from the District and County Councils to share information and answer any questions to help with responses to the consultation.

<https://www.nationalgrid.com/electricity-transmission/network-and-infrastructure/infrastructure-projects/norwich-to-tilbury>

**10. Parishioners' Forum**

No questions or comments from members of the public.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending, and declared the meeting closed at 7:40pm.

Mid Suffolk District Council – Bacton Ward

**Mid Suffolk District Councillors' Annual Report (2023/24)  
For Annual Parish Meetings in May 2024**

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- **New administration**

The result of the May 2023 elections was that the 24 elected Green Party councillors became the official administration at Mid Suffolk. Having been leader of the opposition prior to the election, I was elected to lead the council for the next four years. I outlined our initial priorities to lead and work with other bodies to address the challenges faced by our communities: cost of living, affordable homes, local services, public transport and climate change.

Over the next few months A Plan for Mid Suffolk, covering the next few years was agreed which placed environmental and social responsibilities at the heart of everything the Council does.

- **Budget**

For 2023/24 the General Fund budget was for approximately £15.5 million with an expected £2.3 million surplus which will go into reserves. Funds have also had to be provided from the Housing Revenue Account for the backlog of repairs that has built up. For 2024/25, net expenditure on services is budgeted at £18.5 million with a 2% increase in council tax. Council home rents increased by 7% and sheltered housing service charges also increased. This has been done to ensure the Council can afford the repairs and maintenance that are needed. All these increases are due to inflation, costs of energy and other cost increases.

The Council has reserves of over £28 million as at the end of the financial year plus an expected dividend from the Gateway 14 business park. Plans for this are on a variety of work including new foot/cycle paths, land for biodiversity and green spaces, regeneration of Stowmarket town centre, improved sports provision in the district and enabling community-led housing.

Approval was also given to increasing council tax on empty homes in 2024/25 and implementing increased council tax on second homes in 2025/26.

- **Thriving towns and villages**

A group of Councillors has been working on issues around sustainable transport. A new rural transport grants scheme with a pot of £600,000 was set up to help provide passenger transport options across the district.

Approval was gained for the financing of a Green Skills and Innovation Centre on Gateway 14 (G14). This will in part act as a centre of excellence for local businesses and a training site for adults needing new skills. Also on G14, retailer The Range has moved into the largest building on site, and a deal with a sustainable roof products supplier has been agreed.

In Stowmarket, the first part of the sports project was approved and work will commence this year for new pitches, an athletics track and other improvements at Chilton Fields and next to the high school.

In conjunction with Suffolk County Council, Mid Suffolk provided much support to residents and businesses affected by the floods of Storm Babet and Storm Ciaran. The councils of Mid Suffolk and Babergh were jointly awarded *Council of the Year* for their collaboration with different partners, working to improve services and focus on communities.

- **Environmental sustainability**

The Council launched the *Cosy Homes* scheme, a £2 million project to insulate homes for free. Separately a grant of nearly £1 million was received for retrofitting council homes. A new *Pride in your Place* grant was established to provide every parish with additional funds to improve the environment for their community.

The Council continues to encourage local groups to improve areas for wildlife and a call for sites from landowners was made so that more trees can be planted across the district. The annual Tree for Life scheme was again a success and tree, hedging and wildflower packs for communities across the district.

The Council published its Carbon Reduction Management Plan with a focus for this year on improving sheltered housing and further work on the leisure centres.

- **Planning and Housing**

In November 2023, Part 1 of the Joint Local Plan (JLP) for Mid Suffolk and Babergh was approved and adopted. The JLP sets out a planning framework to guide development in the districts over the period to 2037. JLP Part 1 provides a set of strategic and local development management policies against which planning applications and appeals will be assessed. There are 10 strategic policies (such as on affordable housing, climate change and tourism) and 32 local policies (such as on biodiversity, historic environment and sustainable construction).

The Council is continuing to work on Part 2 as well as publishing Supplementary Planning Documents to support the JLP. The first three, currently at draft stage, are on Housing, Biodiversity and Intensive Livestock and Poultry.

Over £1.5 million was provided to parish and town councils in the form of the Community Infrastructure Levy during the year.

- **Supporting the community**

We support local events and community groups where we can and particularly link local groups with external fundraising via the Mid Suffolk community team. Almost £550,000 was allocated by Mid Suffolk District Council Direct to communities across the district from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).

I supported the following projects in Bacton ward from my Locality Budget 2023-24:

- Friends of Bacton Primary School towards the purchase of new buddy benches and litter bins
- Bacton Fayre
- Cotton Village Hall towards the purchase of a new kitchen equipment
- Bacton Bowls Club, towards the purchase of a new electric mower
- Wyverstone village hall for the kitchen extension
- Westhorpe Parish Council for purchase of a solar panel for their SID device

Mid Suffolk District Council information is available via [www.midsuffolk.gov.uk](http://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk) or by phone **0300 123 4000**

The end of term report for the previous council term can be found here:  
<https://bmsdchosting.net/End-of-Term-Report/Mid-Suffolk-District-Council-2019-2022/>

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

Andrew Mellen  
 Mid Suffolk District Councillor – Bacton Ward  
 Leader of the Council and cabinet member for performance and resilience  
 Email: [andrew.mellen@midsuffolk.gov.uk](mailto:andrew.mellen@midsuffolk.gov.uk)

## ANNUAL FINNINGHAM FOOTPATH WARDEN REPORT 2023 2024

WE HAD A GOOD FIRST HALF OF THE YEAR WITH THE TEMPERATURE BEING ABOVE AVERAGE AND THE PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY IN THE VILLAGE BEING ALL NEGOTIABLE APART FROM THE USUAL DELAY BY THE SCC MOWING TEAM IN CUTTING OUR DESIGNATED AREAS OF FOOTPATHS ETC.

OCTOBER ONWARDS, AND WE HAD A REAL CHANGE IN THE WEATHER, WITH LOTS OF FLOODED TOWNS AND VILLAGES AROUND US, SO IN SOME CASES WE DID HAVE SOME OF OUR PATHWAYS FLOODED, OR SO MUDDY THAT WALKING ON FOOT WAS DIFFICULT, BUT GENERALLY

THESE PATHS ARE NOTORIOUS FOR BEING DIFFICULT DURING WET WINTER MONTHS, AND WE JUST HAVE TO WAIT FOR THEM TO DRY OUT.

THIS LAST YEAR HAS SEEN VERY LITTLE WORK CARRIED OUT BY THE SCC MAINTENANCE TEAM, ALBEIT THAT WHAT I HAVE REPORTED TO THEM HAVE BEEN MOSTLY MINOR ISSUES SUCH AS THE 'FINGERS' OF SOME SIGNAGE BEING VANDALISED AND A FEW SIGNPOSTS FALLEN, WHICH I HAVE RE-SITED, BUT SOMEWHAT SHORTER IN THE GROUND!

I CAN JUST SAY THAT AS A FOOTPATH WARDEN, I HEAR NOTHING FROM THE SCC PROW TEAM! I AM PERHAPS WRONG IN ASSUMING THAT THEY ARE HAPPY FOR US TO KEEP AN EYE ON THE PATHWAYS, AND TRY WHERE POSSIBLE TO SAVE THEM HAVING TO SEND OUT AN INSPECTOR, FOLLOWED BY THEIR MAINTENANCE TEAM TO RECTIFY ANY ISSUES!

A NEW 'UP TO DATE' MAP WOULD BE NICE?

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**District Councillor Annual Report 2022/23**

Cllr Andrew Mellen, Bacton Ward (Bacton, Cotton, Finningham, Westhorpe and Wyverstone).

Budget Proposals for 2023/4	The district council’s finances are split into two parts: The general fund, which is in very good shape, and the ring-fenced Housing Revenue Account (HRA) – which is not. The council debated the 2023/24 budgets for both parts on the 23 <sup>rd</sup> Feb. We agreed a council tax freeze for residents. There was also a reduction of up to 100% for residents with the lowest income and a simplification of the existing Council Tax reduction scheme for residents on Universal Credit. There has been an overspend of £893k on last year’s budget but we are still able to put around £3m into reserves.
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	<p>Despite the difficulties of the most vulnerable, there was a proposed increase in council house rents by 7% to meet the rising costs of the Housing Revenue Account. This is less than the rate of inflation.</p> <p>The Council also agreed to set aside £2 million from reserves to help residents with insulation for homes. This measure was proposed by me as a budget amendment and got unanimous support from all councillors.</p>
Housing issues	MSDC referred themselves to the Regulator of Social Housing because there were found to be some issues relating to health and safety compliance. The RSH reported their findings and will continue to monitor the Council's housing until the issues are resolved. An action plan has been agreed to ensure that our housing becomes compliant in a timely manner.
Gateway 14	Construction of Suffolk's largest shed - a state-of-the-art distribution unit for retailer The Range is officially underway at Gateway 14, after a ground-breaking ceremony at the end of January. Gateway 14 Ltd will provide a new base for manufacturing, logistics and R&D businesses with a particular focus on innovation and sustainability, as well as providing space for smaller and start-up businesses. There is a lot of interest as the site is part of Freeport East, as businesses located there do not pay VAT, National Insurance or Business Rates.
Houses for Homes	Babergh and Mid Suffolk are aiming to reduce the number of long-term empty properties, and bring them back into use. There are currently an estimated 600 empty homes across the two districts. Houses for homes is a re-branding of the service in the hope that people will engage better with the Councils to bring these homes into use. If you know of any empty properties please let me know and the team will investigate.
SHELF project	MSDC Cabinet approved the next phase of the business case for the Stowmarket wellbeing and leisure hub. Since the initial plans were drafted last year the project now intends to include a new sports pavilion, a multi-use games area, four indoor sports courts and a multi-agency wellbeing hub.
Solar Carport scheme	Mid Suffolk opened a solar carport, battery storage and EV charging facility, at the Mid Suffolk Leisure Centre, the project cost £760,000.00 and will help cut the energy bills for the centre, as well as provide much needed charging infrastructure.
Electric Bus Scheme	Mid Suffolk agreed in the previous years budget to pilot a demand responsive electric bus scheme similar to the "Katch" scheme in East Suffolk, the scheme had been put on hold by the administration, but we plan to bring it back.
Planning	<p>This year has seen the Joint Local Plan take another step forward, but we are still have a long way to go before a complete set of up to date policies are in place for Mid Suffolk.</p> <p>Many larger communities have adopted or are working towards having a Neighbourhood Plan – these are developed with the community and provide a greater protection against speculative development</p>
Election results	As you may have seen, the elections held on May 4 <sup>th</sup> gave a decisive result, with the Green Party taking 24 seats, Conservatives 6 and the LibDems 4. This means

	that the new administration at Mid Suffolk District Council will be run by a Green majority, the first in the northern hemisphere
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## **Annual Parish Report – 2022/23**

**Councillor: Andy Mellen**

**Division: Thedwastre North**

**Councillor contact details:**

**Mobile: 07790 992619**

**Representing the parishes of: Badwell Ash; Elmswell; Finningham; Great Ashfield; Hunston; Langham; Norton; Stowlangtoft; Tostock; Westhorpe, Wyverstone and Woolpit.**

**April 2023**

I have now been representing these villages as your County Councillor for almost two years. I aim to attend all Parish Council meetings, even if only briefly (there are often two or three parishes meeting on the same evening). I always try to find an answer to residents' queries, and continue to follow up on

long-standing issues of concern. Most of my e-mails are related to Highways: potholes, flooding, signage, speed and safety. Whilst making progress in some areas, it is a continuing source of frustration to me and to residents as it often takes far too long to resolve problems. We do now have a new Community Liaison Engineer, Andy Moore, who is vastly experienced in the SCC Highways systems and can often find ways to get work done. There continues to be 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. Later this year will see a change in our highways contractor, Kier will be replaced by Milestone Infrastructure. We are hoping that this new contractor will mean an improvement in service delivery.

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

### **SCC Council members**

Since the 2021 elections the Conservatives have a large majority on the County Council: 55 of the total 75 Councillors, so they continue to lead the Council. After a by-election in Beccles the Greens retained the seat, so we continue to have 9 Green Councillors who work together 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 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 2023-24 earlier this year. Our Group put forward several amendments but these were defeated. SCC's portion of your council tax was raised by 1.99% plus a further 2% social care precept.

### **A14 re-surfacing works**

The current works on the A14 between Woolpit and Stowmarket to break up and replace the concrete road surface are clearly going to cause a lot of disruption as traffic seeks to find a short-cut through nearby villages. Although the main work is being carried out by National Highways, SCC are liaising with them to ensure that signage is in the right place to direct traffic away from bottlenecks etc.

### **Scrutiny of the Carbon "Budget"**

The administration brought forward a report which was scrutinised in January – although called a Carbon Budget for Suffolk, it was mostly a backward-looking report. The main headline from this is that the council has a long way to go to reduce its own emissions, and by 2030 (when we should be at Net Zero) there will still be a significant gap between where we should be, and what we are likely to achieve.

### **Devolution: The County Deal**

[Council leaders have signed an initial agreement with the government for a devolution deal for Suffolk. This will mean more powers and funding, but the most significant change is the creation of the position of a directly elected leader for the county council – this may happen as early as May 2024.](#)

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## **FINNINGHAM FOOTPATH WARDEN**



## **ANNUAL REPORT 2022 –2023**

We have had a reasonably good year for quality of access over our public rights of way, and only two points come to mind.

The first was the somewhat delayed action by SCC PROW grass cutting team, which left us with some footpaths difficult to negotiate, and no notification from them as to the dates the cutting was to take place on our designated paths. We can only hope for a better service this year.

The second was the installation of four extra dog bins in our parish, provided and upkept by the parish council, giving us now thirteen bins in total. This has certainly helped those using our rights of way with dogs, and hopefully keeping our public rights of way a pleasure to use!

Doug Aiken, May 2023