

METFIELD ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 2024

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 15th April 2024 IN THE VILLAGE HALL AT 7.30pm.

PRESENT – Chair Mr P. Mortimer

District Councillor Lavinia Hadingham and 5 members of the public attended.

Apologies: Mr P Twiss (Millenium Wood) Mrs L McEvoy (Village Hall)

Clerk: Mrs L Duckett

1. **MINUTES** - The minutes of the 2023 Annual Parish Meeting were approved and signed.

2. **PARISH COUNCIL CHAIR'S REPORT** as presented by **MR P Mortimer**.

The year was reviewed in two halves:

Plus points-

Two new Councillors joined the Parish Council, Mr David Hall, and Mr John Gadsdon bring the Parish Council to full complement.

The cemetery expansion is now complete having taken advantage of the free hedging and trees provided by Mid Suffolk District Council, a donation from Mrs Christine Brennan for additional seating and a grant from Mid Suffolk District Council (MSDC) for additional grass cutting and erection of stock fencing. The trees were kept watered over the drier months by the Chair and Clerk, and the few which did not make it were replaced over the winter. An official opening will take place early summer.

After a chance meeting between the Chair and Suffolk County Council (SCC) Cabinet member for Education the issue with school transport has finally been resolved, resulting paid places now being made available on the bus to Fressingfield Primary School.

A village walkabout with the SCC Community Liaison engineer took place in September, identifying areas of concern, such as overgrown hedges, faded road markings and concerns over speeding. Some progress was made with hedges being cut back and the return of mobile speed cameras, but line painting has been pushed back following the poor weather resulting in an issue with excessive potholes. It was no surprise that thirty-nine speeding offences were recorded in the first hour of speed camera deployment. The Parish Council will continue to push for speed to be monitored regularly.

The flooding of the B1123 at Withersdale was brought to the attention of the SCC Cabinet officer responsible for flooding and remedial work has taken place in conjunction with the Environment Agency.

More negative aspects-

The Parish Council has had to raise the precept again this year from £6,250 to £7,000 per annum, due rising costs across the board. This equates to an increase of £3.42 per year for a Band D property.

Cllr Hadingham set up a local meeting with MSDC officers, but unfortunately the Chair was unable to attend. Concerns were sent to her in advance of the meeting, focusing on planning. The Parish Council spend a lot of time and effort reviewing planning applications but feel that local concerns are often disregarded – the message was passed on.

The Chair wished to extend the Parish Council's thanks to Richard and Lorraine Hewitt for the grass cutting service which has now ended. The Parish Council are in the process of recruiting a new provider.

Other points:

The liaison meetings with Wakelyns have now ended. However, if anyone has any ongoing concerns they can be passed on via Cllr Hadingham or the Parish Council.

Large fires seen at Withersdale Hall Farm have been reported to the Environment Agency. There is now an ongoing case with the site requiring clearance by mid-May. Fires have been banned, any suspicious activity or further fires should be reported via the Environment Agency hotline.

All individuals keeping domestic fowl in their gardens will now need to register with Defra by 1/10/24 – full details can be found on the Defra website.

The Chair thanked the Clerk, Cllr Hadingham and all the Parish Councillors for their support over the past year.

3. REPORT FROM DISTRICT COUNCILLOR LAVINIA HADINGHAM and COUNTY COUNCILLOR PETER GOULD

Councillor Hadingham was unable to provide a report for this meeting as she was waiting on MSDC to issue its annual version but was happy to answer any questions. Her full reports presented at the meetings over the year can be seen in the Parish Council's minutes. No questions were raised. The Annual report will be added to the minutes as soon as it becomes available.

There was no representation from SCC. The March newsletter was provided by Cllr Reid, deputising for Cllr Gould who is currently on sick leave. It can be found in the annex these minutes.

4. ANNUAL REPORTS FROM LOCAL ORGANISATIONS

Reports were provided by the following organisations:

Metfield Church

Metfield United Charities

Metfield Allotment and Leisure Gardeners

Millennium Wood

Metfield Village Hall

The reports can be seen in the annex of these minutes.

5. QUESTIONS

A parishioner asked if there was any possibility of introducing a 20mph speed limit through the village. This has been investigated but the stretch of road in question does not meet with the criteria

set by SCC. The Clerk will provide the criteria to the parishioner. The Parish Council will continue to pursue any traffic calming measures available.

The Chair announced that the new cemetery area will be officially opened in conjunction with the D-Day anniversary celebrations on 6th of June. All will be invited to attend, followed by a bring and share event at Nut Tree Farm, followed by the lighting of the beacon at 9.15pm

The meeting closed at 8.00 pm.

ANNEX – REPORTS AS SUPPLIED OR RECORDED

3.Suffolk County Council

Over the last 3 years since 2021, the county council’s priorities have been to:

- promote and support the health and wellbeing of all people in Suffolk
- strengthen the local economy
- protect and enhance the environment
- provide value for money for the Suffolk taxpayer.

Below are just some of the initiatives taken by SCC in the last year. More details may be found on the county council’s website www.suffolk.gov.uk.

April 2023	99% of pupils received a preferred primary school place in September on National Offer Day and just under 96% were offered a place at their first choice school.
May 2023	<p>Suffolk County Council has underlined its commitment to library services in Suffolk, as it approved plans to increase its funding to Suffolk Libraries by £720k per year, to enable the service to continue operating at its current level, until the end of the contract in July 2024.</p> <p>Suffolk County Council has set out its plan for improving air quality in Suffolk following results from a recent air quality survey, as its county-wide Air Quality Strategy is published.</p>
June 2023	<p>Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) has announced plans to create a new fire control centre here in Suffolk. Currently SFRS shares its control room with Cambridge and Peterborough, but a new IT control system has run into difficulties making a tried and tested system focussed on Suffolk a better alternative.</p> <p>More than 400 years of historical documents held at Suffolk Archives are to be digitised and made available online, thanks to an agreement between Suffolk County Council and Ancestry.</p>
July 2023	<p>National Grid has opened its consultation to anyone wishing to comment on its Norwich to Tilbury pylon proposal. Suffolk County Council is being consulted on the proposals as statutory consultee and have already raised concerns about the initial consultation undertaken last year.</p> <p>Suffolk County Council has received more than £1.4m million from the government to fund participation in a national pilot scheme to promote cycling and walking as part of a more active lifestyle.</p>
August 2023	<p>SFRS Training Centre at Wattisham Flying Station near Stowmarket has recently undergone a £1.3 million upgrade. The Training Centre is a state-of-the-art facility used by other Fire Services when not in Suffolk’s use.</p> <p>Suffolk County Council is disappointed to learn that the LionLink interconnector project from National Grid Ventures has identified an alternative landfall at Walberswick, with cable routing making its way to the north of Southwold.</p>
September 2023	Inflation, school transport for children with SEND, and looking after children in care are the main factors for SCC forecasting to spend £22.3m over its £688.1m budget for this year. Demand increases have also been experienced in Adult Care.

	<p>In a joint letter to National Grid, the leaders of Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk county councils address the extensive impact on landscapes and local communities that the National Grid Pylon scheme would bring.</p>
October 2023	<p>The new Highways contract, which is worth in the region of £800 million - £1 billion, will deliver highway projects and improvements across Suffolk for up to 20 years, including maintaining roads, pavements and rights of way, improving drainage, hedge trimming, construction of new road schemes, snow-clearing and gritting and much more.</p> <p>The Government has announced funding for upgrades to Ely and Haughley rail junctions. This will increase freight movements to and from Felixstowe by rail and ease congestion on our roads.</p> <p>Suffolk County Council is preparing its response to proposals for a significant off-shore electricity connection which could affect Saxmundham and Aldeburgh. It is encouraging local residents and businesses to do the same. Sea Link is a proposal for a new 2 gigawatt subsea high voltage direct current electricity connection developed by National Grid Electricity Transmission. It is approximately 140km in length and predominately offshore.</p>
November 2023	<p>At Suffolk County Council's Cabinet meeting in November, Cabinet approved an extra £10 million to repair and resurface local roads in villages and residential areas across Suffolk.</p> <p>The government has (on 31st October) confirmed funding for a transformative package of improvements as part of Suffolk County Council's A12 Major Road Network scheme. The improvements will be between 7 Hills roundabout and Melton roundabout.</p> <p>Suffolk County Council has welcomed the Government announcement - which is part of a Department for Transport plan to pump £609 million into highway maintenance in the East of England. £107,590,000 has been ringfenced for Suffolk over the next decade, including £3.4 million in this financial year.</p> <p>Suffolk County Council has been awarded an indicative overall rating of "Good" for the quality of its Adult Social Care services.</p> <p>Suffolk County Council has committed almost £1 million of funds to bring in additional flood investigation specialists following the response to Storm Babet in October.</p>
January 2024	<p>Sizewell C triggered its Development Consent Order, meaning that work can begin to build the new 3.2GW nuclear power station on the Suffolk coast.</p> <p>Suffolk County Council is announced its intention to create a new funding pot open to all arts and heritage organisations in the county.</p>
February 2024	<p>A 10-week public consultation on Suffolk County Council's proposed devolution deal with the Government will start on 18th March and run through until 26th May.</p> <p>A new Cabinet structure will strengthen SEND reform following a highly critical report from Ofsted/CQC.</p> <p>Suffolk Highways has welcomed the new pothole-repairing machine to help fix the growing number of potholes experienced nationally during the winter season, with a trial set to initially target defects in rural Suffolk.</p> <p>Suffolk County Council has confirmed its £750m financial budget for 2024-25 with a focus on protecting the vulnerable. 77p in each £1 raised goes to Adult Care and Children and Young People</p>

	<p>Regular weed treatment on SCC's highway network will continue using a variety of methods, with plans for glyphosate being considered when appropriate – the ambition still remains to reduce the use of glyphosate as far as possible.</p> <p>Suffolk County Council's Cabinet confirmed that 60 new members of staff will be recruited to drive forward important reform to the way special educational needs and disability (SEND) services are delivered in Suffolk.</p>
March 2024	<p>A new campaign urging Suffolk's drivers to switch off their engines when parked has launched (1 March 2024). The campaign against Idling particularly focuses on turning off engines outside schools to protect children's growing lungs from unnecessary pollution.</p> <p>The final section of the Gull Wing Bridge in Lowestoft has arrived bringing the completion of this significant infrastructure project one step closer. The bridge is due to be opened later this year.</p> <p>Suffolk County Council is to spend £3.6 million of Government funding over the next two years on strengthening and expanding Suffolk's bus network.</p> <p>The County Council has secured £7.3 million of funding to help develop electric vehicle (EV) charging across the county.</p>

4. Local Organisations.

Metfield Church – as presented by Mrs J Game, Warden

Metfield Church remains well cared for and has a good regular congregation. It is just holding its own over contributing to benefice parish share and urgent repairs to roof tiles and flint work. A rota of cleaners and flower arrangers ensures visitors can admire a quiet, bright, and appealing place.

We are careful with expenditure and manage to support a young person through Compassion UK, a charity, through our Christingle service.

Our "First Sunday of the month" gathering gains in popularity, with visits from people visiting the area and many other churches. They appreciate a greater understanding of this short time and relaxed atmosphere where we may sing, laugh, tell stories, poetry, discuss and talk ideas over and pray for our village. Everyone is most welcome.

We continue to have a food bank.

Cook at Church is still popular, with Caroline taking over from Alix, who is serving the Reydon area for her 3 years. We have 3 new volunteers for this.

We are always happy to have new readers to cover the bible lessons. Just let me know – you do not have to be a regular or a member, Metfield is open to you all.

During April and May, you may hear the bells more frequently as we have visiting bell ringing teams. One team cannot use their belfry at this time and others are touring, with one team coming from Cheshire. Morning peals, other than for church services, will be rung after 10am. There will also be a daytime competition which our ringers won last year. We now have Lizzy as our captain who is full of enthusiasm and encouraging young ringers to join.

There are other church "crawler" groups visiting at various times to look at our church and grounds. Myself and others will be present, trying to answer any questions they pose.

Mr P Godbold has now taken over the responsibility of raising and lowering flags on the church tower.

Metfield United Charities – as presented Mr N Rudge, Chair

The trustees are responsible for 2 Charities.

Metfield United Charities

Two thirds of our net income is given to the Church Wardens each year, the balance we distribute according to need within the village. The amounts we give are usually limited to a few hundred pounds and in the last twelve months the maximum figure we have given is £300 which was given to relatives as a contribution towards funeral expenses for residents of the village who unfortunately passed away.

Other payments that have been made in the last 12 months have been towards hospital travel expenses, medical expenses and heating fuel or similar.

We have continued to be conscious of rising food prices and the difficulties that some residents may be in, and we have contributed to the food bank in the Church by donating money to the village shop and with the assistance of Sue Mead, the food bank has been topped up as required. This is ongoing and we intend to review whether or not we continue with those payments at our meeting in May.

We are aware that the condition of some of the allotments has been a cause for concern and a working party was held clearing one allotment and the others where there have been concerns the tenants have been chased. Ken Pretty has taken the role of looking after them.

Income to the Charity comes from 2 small blocks of farmland, the allotments and Investments.

Last year the Eden family gave up renting the land off Skinners Lane and this was taken on by Eddie and Julie Krutysza, meaning that Julie had to step down as a Trustee. Her place has been taken by Paul Smith.

In this last year we made 15 Donations totalling £3650 and the Church wardens received £5,287.24

Townlands Educational Foundation

Last year we gave out five grants, these were for students attending university or higher education, School trips or assisting with school costs totalling £1,710.

Just a reminder that all enquires are treated in strict confidence, whilst we as trustees like to keep our ear to the ground as best we can, we can't always know who is ill or in need of assistance and we are only too well aware that some people 'don't like to ask for assistance but are very pleased if it is offered', so don't be afraid to come forward with suggestions of who we could assist.

Briefly, both Charities are administered by six trustees and a clerk. The trustees are: -

Myself

Hugo Price

Kenny Pretty

Les Holden

Bridget Morley

Paul Smith

With the assistance of our clerk Gill Mortimer

Our email address is metfieldunitedcharities@gmail.com

Nicholas Rudge 15/4/2024

MAALG– as provided by Catherine Hill

I'm afraid I cannot give you a full year's report as I only took the position of Chairperson in September 2023.

The members of MAALG are still maintaining the central drive and also the Community Orchard. We did some hedge cutting around the edge of the orchard last autumn. Peter Twiss is still cutting in the grass paths in the orchard. We are trying to find other members to take this job on as Peter is not well enough to do this anymore.

In October we held our Souper Sunday at the Community Hut. It was well supported by old and new members alike.

Currently our membership is around 30, we lose members but gain new members as well.

This year we moved our AGM to February. I understand that this was the month we had it before the pandemic. After the AGM we held the first of our garden meetings with a speaker which was very well received.

We plan to hold a few more garden-ish /sociable meetings throughout the year.

Millennium Wood – as provided by Mr P Twiss

With the winter of 2023/24 almost at an end here is an up-to-date report for the Wood.

I have struggled to keep up with the seasons as ill health has struck. However, through the year of 2023 help has been received from several local folk to enable growth to be controlled and cut back where necessary. Help has been gratefully accepted. Thanks primarily to Paul Godbold for the large task of cutting the surrounding hedge with mechanical assistance. It was a simple task to trim afterwards and tidy up. The woodland sign was a victim of the wind and has been removed and reconstructed by Bryan Wareham. Lynd Austin has arranged for the Metfield Coffee Morning to pay for the repair. After Jan Rusted put a message on Facebook several local people have already been and picked up fallen branches etc. Peter Cook has arranged to take down a branch fouling a Horse Chestnut tree. Grass cutting is yet to be undertaken this year. Inspections have shown the large amounts of rainfall over the winter have resulted in a very high ground water level throughout the wood. Some maintenance has yet to be done but when the weather improves will be appraised.

Metfield Village Hall – as provided by Mrs L McEvoy, Chair

Over the past few months, Metfield Village Hall has experienced a consistent flow of hirers, which is a testament to the value our hall brings to the community. Additionally, I am pleased to announce that we have welcomed three new committee members who are eager to contribute their ideas and energy to our endeavours.

Our bar continues to provide a warm and welcoming atmosphere, and we extend an open invitation to both customers and volunteers to join us in supporting this vital aspect of our community space. I am thrilled to report that our recent pantomime was a resounding success, thanks to the dedication and hard work of everyone involved. Your efforts made it an unforgettable experience for all who attended.

Looking ahead, we have some exciting plans for this year's fete. We will be utilising our beautiful church to showcase art and flowers, and we will also be encouraging each home to decorate its front in celebration of the end of the Olympics. Please stay tuned for further updates as we finalise our arrangements.

Finally, and with a different hat on Lynda, Chris and I want to express our gratitude for the ongoing success of the Metfield Cafe. It continues to grow from strength to strength each month, serving as a valuable asset to our community.

Metfield Stores Annual Report to the APM April 2024 - provided retrospectively.

Despite the considerable challenges of rising costs, especially in utilities, the shop continues to thrive and provide an invaluable service to the community, thanks primarily to the great efforts of Susan Mead, the manager, ably supported by a willing band of volunteers and guidance of a wise and experienced Board.

Due to prudential management and sensible purchasing and the generous oversight of our landlords, Harleston Information Plus, the shop continues to provide a wide range of produce as well as being a social hub for the community.

As ever we are dependent on the services and good will of a splendid band of volunteers in the shop, behind the scenes and on the Board but we are always seeking further assistance in these vital roles, especially with regard to volunteers of late.

We are encouraged by the many positive comments received in the shop but if we are to retain this essential facility we do need the village to back us by offering to volunteer and to utilise the shop.