

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting

Held at Metfield Village Hall on 13 April 2026 at 7.30 pm

Present: Councillor P Mortimer (Chair) and 11 members of the public.

- 1 **Apologies for Absence:** Parish Councillors Blake Lee-Harwood, Cecilia Price (attended remotely), Mrs Lorraine McEvoy.
- 2 **To sign as an accurate record the minutes of the previous meeting:** RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 14 April 2025 be signed as a correct record.

3 Community Resilience

Ms Dawn Wnukoski, Suffolk County Council, spoke on the need for communities to look at potential risks and to have a plan to mitigate harm. The County Council have produced a guidance document and template plan which aims to bring people together to cope until the emergency services arrive. A resilience plan should be led by a core group of volunteers who know local risks. The village hall, for example, could be used as a designated rest centre. She has left with the Council a Household Emergency Plan checklist for use at home, together with a fridge magnet/document about emergency preparedness. Should creation of a plan be envisaged, training on how to identify risks is available and could be undertaken with nearby parishes.

Reports:

4 From the Chair of Metfield Parish Council

We started the year off on 8th May commemorating the 80th anniversary of VE day ending the Second World War. A wreath was laid and names of the servicemen from the village and Americans were read and remembered.

The village sign was repainted and rebuilt with financial help from a Pride in Your Place grant funded by the Government and administered by Mid Suffolk District Council.

In January we were able to install a third speed indicator device. The cost, including a mounting post, was funded by Locality money supported by County Councillor Henry Lloyd.

In September we said goodbye to our Clerk, Lindsey Duckett after many years' service and welcomed Steve Blackburn to the role.

A new seat has been generously provided at the bus shelter by the Wareham family in memory of their parents, Brian and Sylvia. The current seat is being refurbished and will be placed in the children's playground.

Increasing costs have meant that we reluctantly had to raise the precept by £500 to £8,250 although this increase only amounts to approx. 3 pence per week for residents. One of these additional costs was the need to transfer our website and emails to a ".gov.uk" domain. This will add costs in the near future but we have again been supported by the District Council in covering the initial costs and for two additional years.

Arrangements for grass cutting at the cemetery and playground have changed with Suffolk Garden Services and Hugo Pryce kindly offering to cut the grass in the playground.

With regard to planning matters, the fire at Cherry Tree Farm led to an application for replacement buildings which, after some discussion at the Parish Council, we were happy to support as the replacement was like for like.

In the Playground, a professional report has identified faults in parts of the wooden structure. These and the swings will be returned to use in the near future.

I should like to thank our County Councillor, Henry Lloyd, for all the support and financial help he has given us this last two years and wish him all the best in the future. I would also like to thank our District Councillor, Lavinia Hadingham, for her

Chair _____ Date _____

continuing support, including her support for locality funding.

Thanks also to the litter pickers and everybody who keeps the village neat and tidy; unfortunately, our offer to cut the hedge at Captain's Farm was rejected.

Lastly I would like to thank our Clerk, Steve Blackburn, and all of the Council for their support over this last year.

5 From District Councillor Lavinia Hadingham

Over the past year, Mid Suffolk District Council has continued to invest in our communities, protect our rural character, and support the people and places that make our district so special.

For those of us representing the more rural villages like my ward which includes Fressingfield, Metfield, Mendham, Weybread, Wingfield and Syleham, the work looks a little different from the larger towns. It is not defined by one single large project, but by steady, practical improvements that touch everyday life across our villages.

This year, one of the most direct ways we have supported our communities has been through locality funding. By carefully allocating these grants, we have been able to support a wide range of local priorities — from improvements to village halls and community buildings, to play areas and youth facilities, to support for local groups, events and wellbeing initiatives. These are the places where people come together, and ensuring they remain viable and welcoming has been a key focus.

We have also supported projects that improve safety and quality of life, including measures such as speed awareness initiatives and local infrastructure improvements. These may be small in scale, but they make a real difference to residents on a daily basis.

Alongside this, the Council has continued to invest in environmental priorities. Across Mid Suffolk, funding has been directed towards biodiversity, nature recovery, and sustainability. In our rural north, this is particularly important — protecting our landscapes, supporting wildlife, and ensuring that future generations can enjoy the countryside we value so highly.

Planning has remained a central and sometimes challenging part of our work. Over the past year, we have continued to carefully consider applications affecting our villages, balancing the need for housing with the importance of preserving the character and identity of our rural communities. These decisions are not always easy, but they are critical in shaping the future of our area.

In Eye, as our local hub, we have seen continued support for businesses, community projects, and local infrastructure. Funding opportunities and small-scale improvements have helped sustain the town's role as a centre for services, employment and community life for the surrounding villages.

More broadly, Mid Suffolk District Council has maintained its commitment to investing in housing, supporting communities, and delivering services despite increasing financial pressures. This has required careful decision-making and a focus on long-term sustainability.

As your representative, my role has been to ensure that our villages are heard — to support local projects, to work with parish councils and community groups, and to represent your views in planning and policy decisions. Much of this work happens behind the scenes, but it is always grounded in the needs and priorities of our communities.

In summary, this past year has been about steady progress: supporting our villages, protecting our environment, and making thoughtful decisions about the future as we move towards the Unitary Council. I'm sure you will have heard there is going to be 3 Councils that make up Suffolk. At present, I am in 2 minds whether to stand in next year's elections for the new Central and Eastern Suffolk Council, if that is indeed what it's going to be called. My Ward/Division would be much larger including Homersfield, Flixton, All Saints and St Nicolas, St James, St Cross, St Margaret, St Micheal and St Peter (South Elmham), which more than doubles the area I currently represent, but I want to reassure you that until then, I will continue my commitment to the people and places I serve.

6 From County Councillor Henry Lloyd

Cllr Lloyd felt that the County had had a good year with more potholes repaired and, locally, the road to Fressingfield resurfaced and three speed indicator devices installed. Libraries had been brought in-house, and this was felt to be a success with the availability of space for companionship and some banking facilities. A balanced budget has been agreed, there is no fat to cut with increased pressure due notably to the cost of social care and SEND obligations. Mayoral elections have been deferred to May 2028, and work is ongoing to create the three new authorities to match the arrangement for Norfolk which was too big to have just one authority. The County has one of the lowest rates of Council Tax precept but he warned that the disaggregation of services has not been funded by central government and may cause disruption in future.

7 From Metfield Stores (Mr Paul Smith)

Metfield Stores has endured a challenging year as it has battled against the frequent road closures; the competition from new supermarkets and increasing grocery deliveries; as well as the pressures of rising costs and the economic uncertainties in the world.

However great credit must go, as ever, to the sterling work done by Sue (ably assisted by her husband, Mike) and the willing team of volunteers who have worked tirelessly to keep this essential social asset open and viable. We are also blessed to have a committed Board who have managed a difficult situation with energy and ingenuity developing the shop website, progressing the business development plan and seeking various ways to enhance funding and finance new facilities for the shop. We have also been grateful for the support of several local organisations to assist in the purchase of new freezers et al. including the Community café, Adnam's brewery and District council grants.

We are committed to do all we can to ensure that this valuable village asset remains viable and continues to serve the village and surrounding community but we are dependent on a regular and loyal customer base as well as passing trade. Hence we are campaigning to encourage locals to use the shop as we celebrate 20 years since its inauguration and hope to be here for another 20 at least!

A celebration of the stores 20 years will take place on 9 May.

8 From The Millennium Family Woodland (Mr Peter Twiss and Mrs Janet Rusted)

Due to my age and ability my involvement is somewhat reduced to keep the wood tidy to keep visitors able to move around and view to trees and shrubs. Several local folk have assisted quite voluntarily in doing small tidying up jobs. I am grateful to Hugo Pryce and Cecilia to cut the hedges which is a major undertaking. I am still undertaking cutting the grass whenever it is suitable weather. There is a high water table within the wood which prevents cutting at times. Spring flowers have reappeared everywhere to brighten the scene. Bluebells await until later. Orchids appear more commonplace everywhere possibly a throwback from the adjacent Winks Meadow which is very popular in the season for orchids.

9 From Metfield Village Hall Committee (Mrs Lorraine McEvoy)

I regret that I am unable to attend today's meeting in person, but on behalf of the Metfield Village Hall Committee I wanted to share some positive updates and reaffirm our continued commitment to the hall and its important role within our village. The committee remains fully committed to supporting and developing the hall, and we are pleased to report that it continues to be a busy and successful community space. One of our most popular regular events is our acoustic night, which continues to be very well attended and greatly enjoyed. This ongoing success is thanks in no small part to the dedication and enthusiasm of Wayne Brown, whose hard work has helped make these evenings such a valued part of village life. We have also recently held a successful jumble, fete and produce show, which brought together many members of the community and was enjoyed by all involved. In addition, we were delighted to work in partnership with our church on a wonderful exhibition, which proved to be a real success and a lovely example of community collaboration. These events are a reminder of how important the village hall remains as a social, cultural and creative hub for Metfield, and the committee is excited to continue building on this positive momentum in the months ahead. Thank you, as always, for your continued support of the village hall and the wider community. We look forward to working together to ensure Metfield remains a vibrant and thriving village. Warm regards, The Metfield Village Hall Committee

10 From Metfield Community Café (Mrs Lorraine McEvoy)

I regret that I am unable to attend today's meeting in person, but I wanted to take the opportunity to share an update on Metfield Community Café. The café is now in its fourth year and continues to go from strength to strength. Since we began, we are proud to have donated over £7,000 to local charities, something that reflects the generosity and spirit of our wonderful village community. Each month, we are supported by a committed and hardworking group of volunteers, alongside an equally loyal and enthusiastic group of café goers who continue to make the café such a welcoming and valued space. It truly has become a jewel in our village, if I may say so myself as one of the three founders. I would also like to gently note that I am somewhat surprised the Parish Council has never invited us to provide a short update or blurb for your Annual General Meeting, particularly given the positive contribution the café has made to village life. As this is not a Village Hall event but rather something started independently by three people committed to bringing the community together, it would be lovely if this could be considered in future years.

11 From Metfield United Charities (Mr Nicholas Rudge)

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 continue as we have done for the last 2 years. In this last year overall, we made 11 Grants compared with only 6 in 24/25. Totalling £2500. The Church wardens received £3,866.28. The Charities income is derived from rents from just over 34 acres of agricultural land and Allotments along with Investments. We have decided that we should register our land ownership with the Land Registry and this is ongoing. At the end of September we took on the community Orchard and the community Allotment plots following the winding up of MAALG. Our Clerk had a real battle with our insurers regarding the severe dangers of fruit picking.

We also took the decision to Join the National Allotment Society and some of us attended a webinar of the running and management of allotments. Following which we are planning to update all our Tenancy agreements to the Allotment society format.

Townlands Educational Foundation

Last year we gave out 9 (7 last year) grants our most for several years these were for students attending university or higher education, School trips or assisting with school costs totalling £3,550. Our highest amount for several years. The maximum individual sum was £500. The Charities income is derived solely from Investments.

We have also now have the ability to make online payments from both Charities.

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: - Nicholas Rudge, Hugo Pryce, 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 13/4/26 Chair of Trustees.

12 From St John the Baptist PCC (Mrs J Game)

During the last year myself and the PCC have had a busy time we were aware that in the autumn our incumbent reverend Susan Loxton was retiring so pretty early on plans were being laid to see this through.

Meanwhile I have noticed in the latter part of April aircraft activity and particularly helicopters using our tower and nearby meadows as a reference for high manoeuvres, practising for VE Day. I frequently ducked.

VE Day was commemorated in the village on May 8th by a splendid turn out on the green led by Reverend Peter. Peter Mortimer and Jill and three adults and three children lit lanterns and placed them at the memorial in a very moving ceremony. A further occasion on May 10th took the form of a village picnic in the Meadow enjoyed by all on a lovely day.

Money was raised for Montgomery Heights in Zimbabwe by Tom and Mike Martin at a coffee café, sharpening various garden tools which I think will be repeated next month. I personally opened the USA memorial in the church each month and turn a page and read their names out.

Hillary and Gail have attended talks and acted on ways of securing the bronze award and are well on the way for our silver award for eco Church at this time. I also attended with support the swearing in of church wardens at Eye church.

Some of us supported Reverend Tony Rich's ordination and also Maria Price, who is our curate at the cathedral. We are hoping that more evensong services will occur in the benefice as those we have held at Fressingfield have been enjoyable sung services which are well supported. Another wedding in June was delightful and the church appreciated such a happy congregation. The Harvest service in September was another happy day with windows decorated warmly and now the offerings donated go into our food bank or to Waveney food bank. About 30 returned to the church at 12:30pm to enjoy a bring and share lunch and chatter and laughter in the reception space we have.

Prayers for the interregnum had also taken place weekly and more throughout the benefits and many meetings with all PCC's and the Archdeacon and also two days working together this is ongoing.

We held a thank you evening reception for all who help in any way to keep our church welcoming, repaired and cared for. Cathy has found reliable help for repairs to the kitchen area wall and ceiling and the parvis stair area. We are currently raising funds to cover these expenses as we no longer can get the VAT back.

Lizzie, our bell captain keeps an eye on the behaviour of the bells and if you have noticed that they have not been ringing as regularly that is because No 3 bell and support has had to be repaired. Hopefully this will take place this week.

Eventually we had a large reception and farewell party after evensong at Fressingfield for Reverend Susan who was blown away by the number of people from all over the diocese and elsewhere and astonished at the farewell gifts she received.

We continue to fundraise to pay our way and we are very grateful for a regular donation from Metfield Charity. It is hard work to raise funds hence the Spring Fayre on the 25th of April which I hope the village and area will support and, later in the year, a possible arts and crafts weekend. Meanwhile St. John's is your church, use it, it is a good place to sit and mull over problems or just sit outside. Future plans are a survey of the churchyard with the children of Cokley church, one or two outside services in the Meadow will be advertised.

13 Questions

A resident asked about proposals to build a reservoir in the Metfield area or nearby to serve Sizewell C and Eye. One proposed site lies between Rumburgh Village Hall and Metfield and may cover 200 acres with the loss of further land to spoil and 're-wilding'. Proposals are driven by a severe water storage for non-domestic use and are at an early stage but include proposals to clean waste water. Concern was also expressed about increased traffic.

The meeting closed at 8.40pm.

Date of Next Annual Parish Meeting: Provisionally Monday 12th April 2027.