

MIDDLETON CUM FORDLEY PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 10TH MAY 2022 AT 6:00 PM AT THE VILLAGE HALL

1. Attendance and Apologies

Attendees:

Cllr. Julian Cusack – Chair
Cllr. Roy Dowding - Vice-Chair
Cllr. Colin Whitbread
Cllr. Steve Thorpe
Cllr. Chris Reynolds
Cllr. Graham Lacey
Cllr. Lynda Whitbread

Apologies for absence:

Cllr. Lesley Taylor - written and accepted
District Cllr. Tony Cooper
District Cllr. Russ Rainger

In attendance:

Sharon Smith - Clerk/RFO
County Cllr. Richard Smith
District Cllr. Tom Daly
5 members of the public

2. Briefings from Guest Speakers

a) Coastal Accessible Transport Service - Lynn Butler, Office Manager, briefed the Council about the Connected Communities bus service which is available to rural parishes for walking, shopping and visiting. Walks can be non-circular and well-behaved dogs are welcome on board for no charge. The bus is demand led and can be booked online or by telephone. Charges are in line with public bus services but, unfortunately, bus passes cannot be used. Discounted fares are available for four or more passengers and return services are cheaper. The buses are wheelchair friendly and they help people to stay independent. An added benefit is they are staffed by regular drivers who get to know their passengers which provides an extra check on their welfare. The bus service covers an area from Orford to Walberswick. CATS also offer a door-to-door service whereby volunteers use their own cars to provide transport, mainly to medical appointments. More volunteers are needed to provide this valuable community service. Drivers are reimbursed 45p per mile and can choose where and how often they volunteer. CATS is funded by Suffolk County Council and donations from Town and Parish Councils. Their contract expires at the end of March 2023 and they hope the County Council will continue to support the service and enable them to expand by providing more buses. County Cllr. Richard Smith said he has worked with CATS for many years and they provide a good service. The contract will go out to tender and he hopes CATS will be successful.

b) County Broadband Provider - the Chairman explained that the speaker was unable to attend therefore the invitation was extended to the Council's June meeting. Cllr. Graham Lacey briefed the Council about the proposal to deliver superfast broadband to households by providing full fibre to premises. County Broadband propose to fund the cost of building the bespoke infrastructure but they need to ensure the new network is viable by having a minimum number of homes using it, therefore residents will need to pre-order the service before they start the build. At present, the existing fibre to cabinet network provides internet speeds between 25 and 50 mb and distance from the cabinet makes the connection slower. The copper wire is unreliable and ageing and will eventually need to be replaced by fibre optic cable. This will enable really fast speeds, both for uploads and downloads, and can add value to homes. The cheapest service offered by County Broadband will guarantee to increase the speed to 300 mb and up to 900 mb for the higher cost services. The monthly charge for 300 mb is £28 per month for the first six months rising to £48 per month thereafter. The Council agreed that it was not endorsing the service nor can it offer advice to residents. County Broadband are invited to publicise their product and to answer any questions.

ACTION: Cllr. Graham Lacey to invite County Broadband to attend the next meeting.

3. Annual Reports

a) Parish Council – the Chairman read out the report attached as Appendix A.

- b) Suffolk County Council – Cllr. Richard Smith summarised the report attached as Appendix B.
- c) East Suffolk Council – Cllr. Tom Daly summarised the report attached as Appendix C.
- d) Middleton Moor – the Chairman summarised the report attached as Appendix D.
- e) Middleton Recreation Ground Trust - the Chairman summarised the report attached as Appendix E.
- f) Middleton Community Council - the Chairman summarised the report attached as Appendix F.
- g) Middleton Village Hall - the Chairman summarised the report attached as Appendix G.
- h) Holy Trinity Church, Middleton - the Chairman read out the report attached as Appendix H.
- i) Middleton Women’s Institute - Cllr. Lynda Whitbread summarised the report attached as Appendix I.

The appendices are available on the village website at www.middletoncumfordley.org.uk.

4. Date and Time of Next Meeting

The date and time of the next Annual Parish Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday 9th May 2023 at 6:00 pm.

The meeting closed at 7:10 pm.

Appendix A - Parish Council Annual Report

Sizewell C

The potential impact of the Sizewell C project on the Parish has taken up much of our time in Parish Council meetings and at times the debates have been somewhat heated. This is only to be expected given the prospect of construction traffic travelling through Middleton Moor in the early years and the simultaneous construction of the Sizewell Link Road (SLR) through open countryside in the south of the Parish. A decision on approval of the Development Consent Order (DCO) is expected from the Secretary of State on May 25, 2022. If, as widely expected, the DCO is approved, the Parish Council plans to hold a public meeting in the Village Hall to debate the implications for our area. We will also continue to work with neighbouring Parish Councils to work out how best to respond.

Planning

The Parish Council is consulted on all planning applications for land and buildings in the Parish. Middleton cum Fordley is classified as a 'Small Village' in the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan which means that new housing will normally be restricted to 'Small groups of new housing and infill within Settlement Boundaries'. The only significant exception to this is the development by Hastoe Housing of affordable housing on what is now known as Roke Drive. This was supported by the Parish Council and we were pleased to welcome the new residents to the village. The Parish Council ensures that all planning applications are considered at a duly convened meeting held in public. In the last financial year, we considered planning applications in respect of 10 properties. In each case we either recorded our support or made no objection.

Finances

The Parish Council receives income mainly from Council Tax, the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and other occasional grants. CIL is levied on all new housing developments and can only be used for improvements to local infrastructure. During the year we also received a grant of £500 from East Suffolk Council to continue the operation of the Drop-in-Centre at the Village Hall. This has been suspended for the summer months but may resume from November onwards, subject to attendance. At the end of March 2022, the Parish Council had general reserves of approximately £3,900. This is approximately 50% of the annual Council Tax received by the Council, which is in line with our financial planning guidelines. In the current year we expect to receive £8,270 from Council Tax (up 2%) and we have a budget to spend about £8,000 including £2,000 allocated for special projects one of which is to improve access to the green space on Title Road known as the Burial Ground.

Elections

Parish Council elections will be held in May 2023 when all the current Councillors will stand down and, if they choose, stand for re-election. If you think you might be interested in standing, please do come and talk to us. We welcome new blood and training can be provided if necessary. Finally, I would like to say thank you to my fellow Councillors, our brilliant clerk Sharon Smith and all who have volunteered their time and expertise in service of the community over the last year.

Julian Cusack, Chair Middleton cum Fordley Parish Council
May 3rd, 2022

Appendix B - Suffolk County Council

The last year has been the second consecutive year severely affected by the Covid-19 virus, from which I suffered during November and December 2021.

In the main, County Council staff have been encouraged to work from home and to hold meetings via Microsoft Teams or Zoom. This edict has also applied to Councillors who have been discouraged from going into the County Council's headquarters, Endeavour House in Ipswich.

These restrictions are gradually being lifted and life is to some extent resuming some of its former character, with Councillors having unrestricted access to County buildings and staff being encouraged to come to the offices "two or three days a week". It seems to me, among other Councillors, that many staff are very reluctant to come back at all, as they have become used to the advantages of home working. I have criticised this reluctance, and wonder what is really happening to productivity levels. But politicians lack the power and authority to ask staff to work more often from the office as the decision lies with the Chief Executive, acting as 'Head of Paid Service'.

We have all become used to on-line meetings and, to be frank, sometimes they are useful, especially for short meetings which for participants avoids the need to travel. But I do not enjoy them because I prefer face-to-face contact, and especially looking Officers who are giving me advice straight in the eye. It may be shocking but Officers have been known not always to tell Councillors the whole truth! On-line meetings also lack a spontaneity, the ability to spark ideas off one another and to have conversations to one side of the meeting.

As Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Transport Strategy and Waste I do try to have my briefing sessions each month with Officers with all of us in the room at Endeavour House. This has been happening as much as it can, but has been somewhat scuppered by the large incidence of staff becoming infected by the Omicron variation of Covid. Even though their infection has usually resulted in mild symptoms, often little more than a nagging cough, they take a week or so before two consecutive negative test results can enable them to return to work. This is all frustrating, but totally necessary, of course.

The work of the County Council has continued despite everything. In February we approved a 3% increase in Council Tax at the budget-setting Council Meeting. The fact that the increase is considerably less than inflation is down to two main reasons – first, the County Council's careful financial monitoring and second, that we received more in grants from Central Government than we expected. In this financial year the County Council will spend £625 million. Yes, that is a large sum of money but three-quarters of it, that is £3 in every £4 that we spend, goes on our care services to a relatively small number of people in Suffolk such as those elderly people in care homes who cannot pay their own fees, individual care packages to help adults with disabilities and other mobility needs and to safeguard children against the ever-present risk of harm and abuse. None of this comes cheap, and I am pleased that when we are judged by external assessment bodies, we do score well. A baby 'P' or suchlike in Suffolk would necessitate spending on a huge scale to correct failings and I hope we never have to face such a dreadful scenario.

All other Council services have to be funded from the remaining 25%, and that is the main reason why available spending on our roads is so constrained. Almost all of us use our roads and we all know that they are not in the state that we would wish them to be. We do urgent maintenance, but the more routine tasks have to wait ever longer. That is one reason why we have borrowed £20 million which is now starting to be spent on two specific targeted areas – improving our pavements and tackling roadside and property flooding. This extra money will not solve all the problems, but it will make a considerable dent in the backlog of cases awaiting attention and action.

It is an honour for me to represent Blything Division – Saxmundham and the twelve parishes of Blythburgh, Bramfield, Darsham, Dunwich, Kelsale-cum-Carlton, Middleton, Theberton, Thorington, Walberswick, Wenhaston, Westleton and Yoxford. I try to attend as many Parish Council meetings as I can to give a report and to allow Parish Councillors and any parishioners present the opportunity to ask me questions. My contact details are widely disseminated and I always try to reply to emails as quickly as I can. I can't always promise to fix every person's problems, but I do try, and I feel I work well as part of a team with my Town and Parish Councils, and their Clerks, who are a first-rate body of people.

My elected mandate was renewed a year ago and I have three further years to serve as your County Councillor, until May 2025. I will continue to try to serve you well and to do the best for you all, both individually and collectively.

County Cllr. Richard Smith, MVO
May 2022

Appendix C - East Suffolk Council

East Suffolk Council is emerging from the impacts of the Covid 19 pandemic with a clear determination to ensure that its communities, residents, businesses and other stakeholders receive the services they want and need.

Central to this has been the delivery of clear outcomes based around the key priorities established in our Strategic Plan. There are five – Economy, Communities, Financial Sustainability, Digital and the Environment – each of which detail the areas which we believe matter most to us and to council tax-payers.

Economy Theme

A key element of our economic approach is creating greater certainty for investors in East Suffolk and there are few better examples than the construction of tidal flood walls in Lowestoft as part of a scheme to protect 1500 homes and 825 businesses.

The town's East Point Pavilion is also being repurposed into an exciting community and events space and 72 contemporary beach huts are also under construction.

Meanwhile, further down the coast – and as part of ongoing investment in Felixstowe's South Seafront - a new iconic café has now been delivered and the new beach village is set to be built. We hosted last stage of 2021 Woman's Tour too, showcasing Felixstowe to international audiences and supported the three-day 'Felixfest' festival.

In 2021/22, we secured funding to support economic growth which includes £24.9m for Lowestoft from the Towns Fund programme and £8.3m to help deliver Freeport East. We were also responsible for distributing over £135 million in Covid-related Business Grants across the last two years to support local businesses which have been impacted by the pandemic. Meanwhile, our East Suffolk Towns initiative is boosting local economies – including a digital towns project to install free public WiFi in East Suffolk town centres and seafronts.

In a further boost to local areas, we collected £6.2m from developers as Community Infrastructure Levy payments and, as part of the funding that has been distributed, a new community centre for Framlingham has received £700,000. We also dealt with 5443 planning applications in 2021/22 ensuring the best possible built environment.

Communities Theme

Our East Suffolk Community Partnerships are delivering funding for schemes that local people want and need, including tackling social isolation and loneliness, employment projects, an ambassador programme in schools and a successful self-neglect and hoarding project led by Access Community Trust.

Meanwhile, all 55 East Suffolk Councillors have utilised an annual Enabling Communities budget of £7,500 and more than 130 projects have been funded in East Suffolk.

Housing delivery is a crucial element of our wider responsibilities and we completed 223 affordable homes this year. We have also supported 331 disabled facilities grants, achieved 164 homelessness preventions and housed 607 applicants from the housing register.

We are also helping people make safe and healthy decisions by inspecting food premises and 98% are now rated 3-5 in the district. In addition, we are also increasing participation in leisure activities, with 787,617 taking place this year.

Financial Sustainability

Managing our finances is critically important and in difficult times we delivered a balanced budget - an overall spend of £129 million committed to delivering essential services across 57 different service areas.

We are also taking a dynamic and business-like approach to our operational services and we're creating a brand-new trading company called East Suffolk Services – a commitment to seek the best possible value for money for residents, businesses and all local stakeholders.

Digital Theme

Digital Transformation helps us deliver services in different ways while also reducing unnecessary contact and protecting resources. This year, 81.6% of all one-off payments were made to us digitally. We are pleased with how well we support people online and our average customer rating is 4.3 (out of 5) stars. Over 90,000 e-forms were submitted and there were over 2.5 million website visitors.

Our GIS public mapping project is live, providing greater access to information about the area and we've designed and delivered a new website for Lowestoft Beach Hut Hire. Additionally we've delivered a range of digital solutions, including a full rollout of MS Teams, Telephone enhancements and hybrid broadcast of council meetings.

Environment Theme

The environment is critically important, and we are working to achieve our Net Zero Carbon targets by 2030. Our carbon footprint of activities is down 18.9% and Solar PV systems across council assets have generated renewable energy avoiding approximately 38 tonnes of Co2 emissions.

We've also created 100 eco areas promoting biodiversity and supporting wildlife and 40.37% of waste goes to recycling, reuse and composting with the rest sent to energy plants. We are also delivering the Deben Fields scheme - 61 new properties, 42 of them affordable, using green technology to achieve 'Passivhaus' certification.

Meanwhile nine electric fleet vehicles are helping us avoid a further 10 tonnes of Co2 and we've reduced pesticide spraying by 145.

We're working closely with coastal communities to enable a climate resilient coast and (finally!) we also dealt with 883 noise complaints to help our residents enjoy our beautiful district in peace.

Cllr Tony Cooper
Cllr Russ Rainger
Cllr Tom Daly

Aldeburgh Leiston Ward - East Suffolk Council

Appendix D - Middleton Moor

In 2007 the group was formed by interested residents living on the moor with also a few residents from the village this was to work with SCDC Mr Davies and Mr Smith to carry out minor works on the moor.

Peter Frasier from Moor Farm had the grazing rights and took a hay crop and handed the rights to SCDC who also found this not viable the group asked Mr Giblin if he was interested and took on the work at no cost to SCDC or ourselves. Mr and Mrs Smith of Causeway Farm have for several years now taken on the hay cut and can be seen walking the land to remove any ragwort so not to contaminate the feed and to stop infestation.

In 2013 SCDC handed over the moor to the Middleton parish council with the agreement of the moor residents with the proviso that any funds coming to the moor should be ring fenced for use on the moor as decided at group meetings. The speed camera was purchased for use on the B1122 and loaned to the B1125 for occasional use. SCDC gave us the lawnmower which Mr Threadkell of The Anchorage has used, housed and maintained for many years, a big thank you to him for carrying out this work which has now kindly been taken on by Mr Cullen. Thank you to Mr Robinson for serving and repainting the mower this year.

We have also purchased some tools ie strimmer, saws etc for the use of moor residents and the summer wine group. And the group is very appreciative to have such wonderful volunteers to help carry out maintenance on the moor. This is all financed by a stewardship agreement with Natural England giving us an income of £800 a year.

Mr and Mrs Hemmings have kindly replaced the old wooden tubs on the well which were originally given by Mr Ruggles and planted by the Primary school children. Mr and Mrs Hemmings keep the flowers looking beautiful and maintain the notice board which we are extremely grateful for them kindly doing this.

The bench was given by SCDC and is well used by residents and visitors to the moor.

The group holds meetings as required to which the chair of the Parish council attends and/or one of the three Parish council representatives.

The cutting of the paths is carried out as and when required and Mr Bowden is contracted in over the winter months to cut around the ponds, verges and hedges where required managing the land under Natural Englands guidelines as is all works undertaken on the moor.

Jane Etheridge
Chair of Middleton Moor Management Group

Appendix E - Middleton Recreation Ground Trust

Successive generations of residents have always taken care of and valued the 'playing field' which is owned by the Recreation Ground Trust and operated by the Parish Council.

The latest financial statements for the Trust appear at the end of this report. I am pleased to report that over the last year there have been many more bookings of the pavilion for family parties as well as continued use by community groups. We have improved the flooring in the kitchen to make it easier to keep clean and will soon be upgrading the flooring in the toilets.

The infant swings have been replaced and the Parish Council has agreed to a monthly professional inspection of the play equipment.

There is a Working Group of the Parish Council which meets occasionally to discuss management and development. It last met in November 2020 and we plan to hold the next meeting soon.

Please contact me if you wish to book the pavilion.

Julian Cusack Chair, Recreation Ground Working Group
May 2nd, 2022

Appendix F - Middleton Community Council

Much more optimism this reporting year as events and face to face meetings were allowed with caution.

An outdoor Midsummer Quiz was held on the Playing Field attended by around forty people who brought their own refreshment and was ably hosted by Peter Vincent.

A pairs boules competition took place in July won by Colin and Lynda Whitbread.

The main events of the year were all planned for.

The Summer Fete took place on the Playing Field for the first time in twenty years. The location meant that there was ample parking, the equipment was already on site in the container and the excellent kitchen and toilet facilities were easily accessible.

The Field is huge but with the arena at the centre surrounded by tents, gazebos and stalls an intimate feel was created. The basketball area allowed the addition of an extra activity as did the playground equipment. The event was hugely successful and well attended and despite a sharp shower right at the beginning, all enjoyed live music by Silmor. There was a record take of over £2000!

The Autumn Fayre took place in October around the Bell Inn using the grounds and barn where Random Blues played. Again well attended and raising over £1000.

A wreath was laid by the Reynolds family on behalf of the Community Council at the Remembrance service.

A Santa boules competition was held on the Playing Field in early December.

The Christmas Community meal was replaced by a whole village event based around the Bell and the Village Green.

The lights on the tree were turned on at 4.30pm and everyone then processed to the pub where food was provided at cost by the Bell staff and Management, many thanks to them for their generosity and hospitality. Over 120 tickets were sold to a very appreciative public who came warmly dressed to enjoy this very safe community event with community singing of seasonal songs and a grand raffle.

This year saw the sad loss of Joyce Miller who, for many years, was the Chair of the Community Council and oversaw many of the above events. She was able to open the 50th Golden fete, opened the new kitchen at the village hall, attended coffee mornings and the Quilters session on a Wednesday morning, so was able to participate in village events well into her nineties.

Written on behalf of Middleton-cum Fordley Community Council, April 2022.

Appendix G - Middleton Village Hall

We welcomed Alan Giblin to the Committee at the May 2021 AGM.

Indoor events and meetings were able to resume with caution in May.

The Heritage Quilters have now returned for their weekly session.

During the past year there have been one to one Pilates sessions but all other users are waiting until they are allowed to have the numbers sufficient to financially support the activity. Two 'in person' sessions are now taking place with others still accessing on Zoom.

The Open Gardens event this year donated 5% of their funds to a village organisation. The Village Hall was awarded the sum to tackle encroaching weeds on the car park and will be used in the Spring when they appear.

Snowdrops have been planted on the bank at the rear of the hall and a request went out for donations of other suitable plants.

Thursday coffee mornings continued with regular attendees.

A display of Archive materials took place in July.

Following the successful renovations of the new kitchen and hall lighting, a further grant has enabled a new roof to be added to the list of improvements. Many thanks go to Councillor Graham Lacey who offered his professional expertise to assess and compare three quotes and then to draw up a plan of action to engage the preferred contractor. All has been completed to everyone's satisfaction.

Thanks go to the financial support given by the Government via East Suffolk Council in the form of a variety of grants and initiatives.

Many thanks go to all members of the Village Hall Management Group who have overseen the necessary Covid precautions and reopening procedures.

Particular thanks go to our Secretary, Barbara Barker, who has successfully applied for all of the grants.

Richard Turner, Chairman, on behalf of Middleton-cum-Fordley Village Hall Management Group April 2022.

Appendix H - Holy Trinity Church

Another year of disruption for Holy Trinity together with everyone else, but we were able to go forward with a very successful Open Gardens weekend eventually in August this time and our thanks to all who helped make it the success it was and to Irene for the many years she had organised the event for us having stepped down and handing over to the PCC and Christine Burgess now taking the lead.

The buttress work was satisfactorily completed and we are now back to regular services.

Our thanks to Middleton residents for their continued support of this beautiful church.

Rita & Margaret
Church Wardens

Appendix I - Middleton Women's Institute

With a few WIs closing in this area, Middleton-cum-Fordley WI has remained constant in membership numbers, is gaining new members and seeing the return of past members, which is very exciting.

We held our first face to face meeting at the Recreation Ground in June 2021 after Covid restrictions were eased. It was good to see everyone again other than using Zoom. We held our Garden party in July and sat outside in glorious sunshine, with invited guests from the village joining us at the Recreation Ground. In August we came together for the Summer Fete and then in October we were able to contribute to the Autumn Fair. All our members appreciated seeing others again and being able to experience the 'Middleton Magic.' Members again provided flowers, cakes, savouries, jams and pickles.

In September we were once again meeting in the Village Hall with speakers enlightening us on a wide range of topics. Sally Sibley spoke to us about 'The Women of Sutton Hoo,' local resident Julian Cusack spoke to us about 'Nature and Well-being' and another village resident Doug Bone spoke about his work in Antarctica and the glacier that has been named after him. In December we were able to hold our Christmas party, not our usual highly entertaining celebration due to some restrictions still in place but we enjoyed mulled wine, fabulous food and a festive quiz.

There have been changes within our WI committee this year. Four members of the committee retired in November after giving many years of meritorious service between them. We wholeheartedly appreciated the work covered by our ex members, especially our president Lucy. We are so glad they are still around to give us help and advice. Jenny, Clare and Lynne remained on the committee with Lynda taking on the role of president. Christine from the village also joined the committee. This year began with a talk by Deb Johnson from the Lighthouse Women's refuge centre in Ipswich on 'The Hidden Pandemic.' The WI gave a sizeable donation to this charity. Our talk in February was cancelled but in March we had a very timely fascinating discussion by Steve Everett on 'Adders'. We also raised a large sum of money to donate to the Ukrainian Refugee Appeal.

Beyond our WI we have 5 clubs that meet on a regular basis. 3 clubs, Film, Book and Lunch clubs have been meeting for a number of years but this year we have also introduced a Gardening Club and an Art Club. The Garden Club meets monthly and is in the process of setting up visits to local inspirational gardens. The Club also swaps seeds, seedlings and useful advice. The Art Club is organised by local artist Christine who is introducing the group to water colour painting. The WI hopes to hold an art exhibition in the autumn to celebrate the work of the Art Club. Middleton-cum-Fordley WI will continue to support others in the local community and be beyond whilst continuing to provide friendship, fun and enlightenment for members.