



OCCOLD PARISH COUNCIL

Chairman: Stephen Hubner

Clerk: Tina Newby

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Minutes of the Annual Parish meeting held on Monday 11th May 2026 In The Village Hall, Occold

Councillors Present: Stephen Hubner (SH) (Chairman), Andrew Duggett (AD) (Vice Chairman), Kevin Chittock (KC), Roy StPier (RST)

Others in attendance: Tina Newby, District Councillor Elkin

- 1 Welcome by the Chair of Occold Parish Council
- 2 To receive apologies for absence: Apologies were received from Cllr Howarth, Cllr Hall and Cllr Weller.
- 3 To approve the Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 12 May 2025. Approved.
- 4 To receive annual reports from village organisations
- 5 To acknowledge the work carried out by Village Organisations and individuals
- 6 Annual Report from the Chair of the Parish Council
- 7 Any other relevant matters notified to the Chair
- 8 Annual Parish Meeting Monday 10 May 2027 at 19:30 This is to be confirmed as the format may change.
- 9 Closing remarks.



OCCOLD PARISH COUNCIL

Chairman Report

The last twelve months have seen a number of changes, and challenges, for the Parish Council, and the year ahead will be similar (albeit probably for different reasons).

Colin Cripps, longstanding chairman, and Heidi Stone, driving force behind the development of a Neighbourhood Plan, both resigned their roles as Councillors. Subsequently Janet Erhorn joined the Council, but one post remains vacant. The clerk to the Council also resigned. We managed for four months without a clerk but welcomed our new clerk into the role at the beginning of the year.

Operating the online bank account, and fully developing the new parish website (to be hosted by the Council), both faced delays during the transition to a new clerk but we now have these matters in hand. At present the old website and new one run side by side but we hope to complete the transfer during the next few months. The new website was in part a reaction to new government policies affecting parish councils, which also saw us draw up new governance policies and use new parish council email addresses for communication to and between Councillors.

The Council invested in solar panels to power the SID apparatus rather than requiring regular battery changes. Monthly reports are presented to the Council and these show consistently that although there are some vehicles travelling at wildly excessive speeds the majority of traffic recorded is travelling at significantly less than 30 mph; although the limit is 20 mph to have general speeds below 30 mph is a benefit to the village.

In a positive change, we finally procured, after many years of campaigning, construction of a traffic island to assist with safer crossing of the main road from the school to the playing fields. Also positively there were no reported instances of flooding in the village despite substantial winter rainfall, and the work undertaken by volunteers directed by the Flood Action Group seems to have made a notable difference.

We have made representations to the Planning Inspectorate during the non-statutory consultation process for the proposed EcoPower solar farm and expect the formal consultation to commence in the summer of 2026, running through to an Examination during 2027. We have also engaged with Essex and Suffolk Water on the proposed new pipelines and reservoir/s planned in the vicinity but await an update on these.



OCCOLD PARISH COUNCIL

The Council's financial position is robust, with funds held in reserve sufficient to enable the Council to cover costs of irregular expenditure (such as may be required to provide further comment on the two projects mentioned above).

There will be political changes ahead, with local government in Suffolk moving to become three unitary authorities and before that a change in constituency boundaries for County Council elections. This has meant that, after many years, Councillor Andrew Stringer will no longer be our County Councillor and we would like to thank him for his considerable engagement and encouragement in the past. We will retain, for now, contact with our District Councillor, Lucy Elkin, who is also very supportive of this parish and its community, and we thank her for her input.

Finally, thank you to all Councillors who have served Occold in the last twelve months; I hope that they will all continue to do so in the year ahead.

Stephen Hubner
Chair Occold Parish Council



OCCOLD PARISH COUNCIL

Redlingfield and Occold WI Report

We currently have 18 members and meet monthly in the village hall. Usually, we have a speaker and try to cover a range of topics and interest. We have learnt about the Master Mason from Occold who worked on the Church to having a go at Indian Classical Dance. We've delved into the world of modern forensic science and are shortly to learn about Thomas Cavendish, a Suffolk Buccaneer¹

Our annual outing takes place in June and this year we are booked on a Cruise of the River Deben followed by a pub lunch. Last year we managed a winter outing as well and went to the Thursford Spectacular.

We are part of the 'Soup and Roll' rota and often have a stall or supply of refreshments for village events. Our main fund-raising event is the Harvest Supper. This is a popular event and last year we sold around 50 tickets.

As a group we produce a display for the Annual Flower Festival. All members help in planning and assembling the display.

So although a small group we are active and welcome new members.



OCCOLD PARISH COUNCIL

The Parish Church of St. Michael and All Angels, Occold Annual Report given at the 2026 APCM)

Background

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) is a charity excepted from registration with the Charity Commission. The PCC is responsible for co-operating with the incumbent, the Revd. Dr Guy Sumpter, in promoting in the ecclesiastical parish of Occold the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical; it also has responsibility for the maintenance of the parish church, churchyard and churchyard extension.

Membership

Members of the PCC are either ex-officio or elected by the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM) in accordance with the Church Representation Rules of 2020. During the year the following served as members of the PCC.

Incumbent	Dr Guy Sumpter	<i>Chairman</i>
Churchwardens	Mr Stephen Hubner	<i>Vice-Chairman and Hon. Treasurer</i>
	Mrs Gill Richardson	
[Both elected at the Meeting of Parishioners 2025]		

Deanery Synod Representative & Deanery Organiser Mr Stephen Hubner

Safeguarding Officer Mr Stephen Hubner

Additional PCC Members

Mr Nick Cox	
Mrs Elly Rivett	<i>Minutes Secretary</i>
Mrs Daphne Cowan-White	
Mrs Sara Hampson	
Mr John Davis	

The Standing Committee

This is the only committee required by law, and has the power to transact the business of the PCC between its meetings, subject to any directions given by the Council. It consists of the incumbent and wardens.

The PCC has been able to meet regularly during the year and is grateful for the hospitality of Mrs Rivett, who has continued to host the meetings in her home, and always provided refreshments.

Church Attendance

Attendance levels have held up well over the past year, and it has been possible in large part to adhere to the traditional liturgical cycle of times and seasons, the Eucharist being celebrated twice monthly. Additional services such as Harvest Thanksgiving and the traditional Christmas Eve service of lessons and carols were also held in 2025, and our patronal festival was celebrated with a service of choral evensong led by the Rector, together with the organist and choir of Eye Parish Church. We are all most grateful that the organ has been played for Sunday services by Mr Nick Cox and Ms Judith Rivett.



OCCOLD PARISH COUNCIL

The Parish Ministry Team

Clergy

Almost all services are led by the Rector, and we are grateful to Mr Hubner, and also to Fr Paul Andrews who have provided service cover in the absence of the Rector.

General Comments

The parish is grateful to those who provide refreshments after services and thanks are due to all who work so hard to keep the churchyard and churchyard extension in good order, which is much appreciated by the local community and by visitors, as is the fact that the church is kept open. We are particularly grateful to Mr Cox for leading and directing a small team of churchyard maintenance volunteers who have succeeded in creating a sanctuary for all sorts of flora and fauna and in making the churchyards pleasant places to be. We also thank those who help with the -usually twice-yearly- churchyard maintenance sessions and the Hull family for providing the means of disposal of unwanted plant material.

Safeguarding

Our parish of St Michael and All Angels, Occold is committed to safeguarding children, young people, and adults from harm. We follow the House of Bishops' guidance and policies and have our own Safeguarding Officer. Our Diocese of St Edmundsbury & Ipswich's safeguarding pages contain vital links and information including contacts for the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer who advises our Safeguarding Officer. If you are concerned that a child or adult has been harmed or may be at risk of harm, please contact our Safeguarding Officer Mr Stephen Hubner on 07507357869 or the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer, Karen Galloway on 07785 621319, or email safeguarding@cofesuffolk.org. If you have immediate concerns about the safety of someone, please contact the police and your local authority's children or adult social care services. Further information can be found on the diocesan website Promoting a safer church - Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich.

St Michael's Flower Guild

The guild continues to provide beautiful flowers throughout the year (Advent and Lent excepted); the efforts and contributions of the guild are much appreciated by parishioners and visitors alike and we extend grateful thanks to all members.

Fundraising

In 2025 we held another successful flower festival and book sale, and we thank all who organised and supported these events. We are also grateful to all who support the community soup lunches held in the village hall, and also to the generous benefactor who paid for repairs to the pulpit.

Concluding Remarks

We are all extremely grateful to those who work hard behind the scenes to help keep our church clean and running. We have much to celebrate and be thankful for, but the financial situation remains extremely fragile; we barely have sufficient funds to pay the bills, and we are unable to pay our parish share in full.

On behalf of the PCC, The Reverend Doctor Guy Sumpter, Rector.



OCCOLD PARISH COUNCIL

ORAC/ Occold Village Hall

Has had a positive year, maintaining its place in the community. We continue to work positively with Occold Primary School who use the hall regularly throughout the year and hire the classroom space. We have developed a positive relationship with the Friends of Occold school by working together on a number of fund raising events. As a small committee this has been very helpful.

We are grateful to our regular hall hirers and have welcomed some new hirers and a number of private hirers throughout the year, providing our main income source.

The monthly Coffee club continues to be popular along with the Craft club and Soup lunches that support other village groups.

Our annual Christmas meal was well supported and we were happy to host the Dove players for their pantomime again this year. They have already booked for 2026/27.

Maintenance is an ongoing expense with regular safety checks and repairs being undertaken as necessary.

Utility costs are regularly reviewed & monitored. We have recently moved to a cheaper electricity tariff and are monitoring the oil costs following the crisis in the Middle East. Cleaning costs are an issue. Our regular cleaner was unable to continue so we decided to move to a company who took over the management of this. However it is proving to be expensive but finding someone to take on commercial cleaning is not easy.

We welcomed 2 new committee members at last year's AGM who have made a positive impact on our community presence. We now have an ORAC Facebook page.

Orac Committee



OCCOLD PARISH COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE CHARITY OF JOHN HENMAN REPORT FOR THE YEAR 1 JANUARY 2025 – 31 DECEMBER 2025

Stephen Hubner remained the Clerk/Treasurer. Mrs Lynette Bulley continued as chairperson of the trustees.

As the Annual Return to the Charity Commission is now a matter of factual record, Stephen Hubner prepared the paperwork and submitted the return form on line.

The Trust purposes require division of the income to award one quarter to each of the Church and the Parish Council and it was confirmed the individual distributions be made by way of payments to defray electricity or other fuel costs.

At the annual meeting, on 14 February 2026, and after calculating the annual income, it was noted that there would be distribution of one quarter of the income to Occold Parochial Church Council and one quarter to Occold Parish Council (£112.90 each). It was noted that beneficiaries must be resident in the parish. It was resolved that distribution be made to seven beneficiaries at this time.

Each beneficiary would be given cash to help to defer heating costs.

The accounts of the Charity for the year are set out on the separate attached sheet.

SJH
13 April 2026

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OCCOLD PARISH COUNCIL

Annual Accounts of the Charity of John Henman for the year ending 31 December 2025

Income

	£	£
Balance b/f		20.69
COIF dividend 2022		
February	111.92	
May	111.92	
August	111.92	
November	<u>115.82</u>	
		451.58
Total		472.27

Distributions

	£
Occold PC	112.90
Occold PCC	112.90
7 beneficiaries	175.00
Total	400.80
<u>Carry forward</u>	<u>71.47</u>

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OCCOLD PARISH COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE CHARITIES OF WILLIAM LEE AND MARY ANN LAST REPORT FOR THE YEAR 1 JANUARY – 31 DECEMBER 2025

Stephen Hubner remained the Clerk/Treasurer. Mrs Lynette Bulley continued as chairperson of the trustees.

As the Annual Return to the Charity Commission is now a matter of factual record, Stephen Hubner prepared the paperwork and submitted the return form on line.

The custom of distributing money or gifts of money's worth has been continued.

At the annual meeting, on 14 February 2026, it was reported that the income in the year 2025 totalled £478.25. When added to funds carried forward the total sum available was £747.24.

Gifts would be acquired for each of 20 beneficiaries.

Amazon vouchers to a value of £30.00 would be acquired for two students in tertiary education.

Amazon vouchers to a value of £15.00 would be acquired for 3 school children in recognition of their achievements in the year 2025.

Book tokens to a value of £10.00 would be acquired for the parents of three children born in Occold during 2025.

A sum of up to £300 would be set aside to support the village school develop an outdoor classroom/reading initiative, with details to be finalised by the clerk.

The accounts of the Charity for the year are also set out on the separate attached sheet.

SJH
13 April 2026

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OCCOLD PARISH COUNCIL

Annual Accounts of the Charity of William Lees and Mary Ann Last for the year ending 31 December 2024

Income

	£	£
Balance b/f		268.99
COIF dividend		
February	118.53	
May	118.53	
August	118.53	
November	<u>122.66</u>	
		478.25
Total		747.24

Distributions

	£
2 beneficiaries (Amazon tokens to value of £30)	60.00
3 beneficiaries (Amazon tokens to value of £15)	45.00
3 beneficiaries (book token to a value of £10)	30.00
20 beneficiaries (gifts)	245.62
Sum reserved for school project support	300.00
Total	680.62
<u>Carry forward</u>	<u>66.62</u>



OCCOLD PARISH COUNCIL

Mid Suffolk District Council – Eye Ward: Report to Annual Meeting and Parish Council Meeting, May 2026

New recycling scheme	The new Better Recycling regime is due to start in June 2026. This is the biggest change in recycling in many years. Mid Suffolk currently only recycles 42% of waste and is not in the top 150 Councils in the UK for recycling. The changes aim to increase recycling rates above the 60% range. The delivery of new bins is underway. Households will receive a new blue recycling bin, plus a food caddy and food recycling bin. The bins in the new system are: • Food waste • Green recycling bin – paper and card • Blue recycling bin – glass, plastics, tetrapaks i.e. non-paper recycling • Black bin – refuse bin The planned schedule will be as follows: <table><tr><th>Collection</th><th>Week 1</th><th>Week 2</th><th>Week 3</th></tr><tr><td>Food Waste</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>Refuse general rubbish</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>Paper and Card</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>Recycling glass, plastics, metal and cartons</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr></table>	Collection	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Food Waste				Refuse general rubbish				Paper and Card				Recycling glass, plastics, metal and cartons			
Collection	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3																		
Food Waste																					
Refuse general rubbish																					
Paper and Card																					
Recycling glass, plastics, metal and cartons																					
Planning and housing	The incoming government in 2024/25 announced increases in housing targets for Councils, as part of its plan to build more homes. As a result, Mid Suffolk’s housing target has increased from 535 per annum to 734 (an increase of 37%). This amounts to a requirement of over 14,600 new homes for the period from 2024 to 2044, although 5,475 of these are in the current identified supply. As a result of this increased demand, it is vital to create a development plan that meets government targets, to avoid the type of planning free-for-all which the District experienced 5 or 6 years ago. As part of this process the Council carried out a call for sites last year. The published map of all sites submitted during this exercise can be found here: https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/web/babergh/w/call-for-sites Please Note: This is not a list of preferred development locations. Publication promotes transparency and ensures communities have early visibility of what has been put forward by landowners. No planning status is granted by submission, and sites do not benefit from any presumption of development. These submissions will next be assessed against planning policy, constraints, evidence and deliverability criteria. Further information on the plan stages will follow this year, 2026/27.																				



OCCOLD PARISH COUNCIL

Council housing	Mid Suffolk's council housing stock requires significant investment to bring it up to standard. Around 15% of Mid Suffolk's Council Housing stock does not meet the Decent Homes standard. This Council administration is planning to invest £19m in our council housing stock this year alone. Mid Suffolk was successful in obtaining a £1.5m government grant to supplement the £2m already committed by the council to install energy saving measures in social housing. This work not only helps lower income households by delivering warm and energy efficient homes, but also lifts tenants out of fuel poverty by helping to save money on energy bills. Work is well underway to tackle the 100 council properties with the lowest energy performance certificate (EPC) ratings by adding a range of improvements, including cavity and loft insulation, new windows, PV panels and air source heat pumps. The Council has also built about 250 new Council houses in the past 3 years. Work is underway to add 16 affordable homes at Paddock House in Eye.
Temporary accommodation	Demand for temporary housing in Mid Suffolk rose by over 100% since 2020. There are currently over 60 households in temporary accommodation in Mid Suffolk. Mid Suffolk District Council proposes to acquire additional temporary accommodation in Mid Suffolk, with up to 30 new units. This is to provide a better standard of accommodation, as well as to save the Council money spent on temporary emergency accommodation.
Stowmarket Innovation Gateway – skills centre	Construction work on a state-of-the-art skills and innovation centre at Gateway 14 in Stowmarket has now been completed. New clients will be moving in from July 2026 and a set of training courses are about to be launched. The purpose of the centre is to help to address the skills and earnings gap in the district, and to encourage high tech companies to locate here.
Cosy Homes funds energy-efficient homes	The District Council's Cosy Homes initiative helps residents to improve the energy efficiency of their homes, saving on energy usage and reducing their carbon footprint. The result is homes that are warmer and more economical to heat. The Cosy Homes scheme has been extended to include solar panels as well as insulation measures. Works are carried out for free for residents meeting the eligibility criteria.
Solar for business scheme comes to Mid Suffolk	Businesses can reduce their carbon emissions and save money on energy bills by signing up to have solar panels installed on their premises, for free. Electricity generated by the panels is then sold to the business at a rate lower than their current tariff, helping to cut energy bills and improve their bottom line. Solar for Business has been running successfully in West Suffolk for nine years – helping more than a hundred companies to save a total of around £700,000 and 2,000 tonnes in CO₂ emissions per year. The initiative has now been extended, with businesses across Babergh and Mid Suffolk also able to sign up to the scheme.



OCCOLD PARISH COUNCIL

Nationally significant infrastructure projects – Pylons, Solar and Water	A number of very large-scale 'nationally significant infrastructure projects' (NSIPs) are proposed in our area. Due to their scale, decisions on these projects are taken at government-level, not by the local planning authority. Mid Suffolk District Council has contributed to the statutory planning process for these projects, and has helped communities to share their views: • National Grid proposes 159km of new overhead lines between Norwich to Tilbury, with the route cutting through the Suffolk countryside. National Grid's plan for more pylons in the Suffolk countryside should be halted, leading councillors from Mid Suffolk District Council told the public hearing (11 February). Mid Suffolk District Council has called for a delay to the project so other options can be considered and costed. They cite concerns about the impact on the environment, communities and businesses. • Mid Suffolk is contributing to the consultations for the EcoPower solar NSIP and the Suffolk Water Recycling, Transfer and Storage Project, both of which impact Eye Ward. • Mid Suffolk has established a regular drop-in to provide expert support to Parish Councils and residents' groups on these large-scale projects.
Biodiversity and nature recovery	Mid Suffolk District Council has allocated a budget of £1.8m to support nature recovery. This covers: • Grant funding for communities • Grant funding for river catchment and landscape-scale projects, that can also help to reduce flooding • Habitat creation, management and monitoring on new sites • Pond creation and restoration • Tree planting • Meadow management • Public engagement and awareness / Schools programme Land under Council management is being looked after in ways that enhance biodiversity. This includes creation of meadow areas in parks, whilst still keeping areas of grass mown short for recreation. In Eye Ward, work is being done to improve biodiversity at The Pennings, Oak Crescent play area and Victoria Mill.
New fund for sports in rural areas	A £1.5m fund for Sports provision outside of Stowmarket has been established. The aim is to develop sports infrastructure in a rural areas of Mid Suffolk, by upgrading or extending existing sites, as well as funding new sports provision or facilities.
Support for Highstreets	Mid Suffolk District Council launched a dedicated £1.5m fund to support a thriving Stowmarket high street and town centre area. Funding has been recently agreed for £615k towards the John Peel Centre and £125k for the Community Darts Venue in Stowmarket. Outside of Stowmarket, a new highstreets fund offers grants to highstreet businesses to improve accessibility, appearance, signage and lighting of shop fronts.



OCCOLD PARISH COUNCIL

	In Eye, Mid Suffolk has worked with a local business to find a suitable location for a new post office and retail store; the post office will begin operations on May 12th The Council has also provided start-up funding to the Eye Love project which highlights the town's highstreet and leisure offerings.
New REACT team tackles litter and other issues	The two-person "respond, enforce and clean team" – or REACT – has been set up to patrol litter hotspot areas in the Mid Suffolk District Council area. The budget for the team has been funded from the council-owned Gateway 14 development. According to the latest figures in Suffolk, there were a total of 4,099 incidents of fly tipping reported in 2023/24. In the area of Mid Suffolk District Council there were 399 reported incidents, with the majority of them being on highways. Having the REACT team means that incidents such as fly tipping can be dealt with more quickly, without taking time and resources from scheduled work. The REACT team has been active in our area, including path clearance in Eye.
Funding for the Food Museum, Stowmarket	The Food Museum is now able to start a £5.5 million project thanks to funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund and Mid Suffolk District Council. The ambitious scope covers conserving and developing three historic buildings - the barn, the factory and the house and linking them together to create a coherent visitor experience. A good museum significantly benefits the District by boosting tourism, enhancing the local economy, fostering community development, and contributing to cultural enrichment.
Mid Suffolk budget for 2026/27	In addition to the day-to-day provision of the current services and activities, the District Council approved a budget for 2026/27 budget with further funding for: • Major changes to food waste collection and better recycling • Enhancements to our current depot in readiness for Better recycling • Further support for recycling education • Cost of living support and Council Tax Support scheme • Support for towns and rural communities outside of Stowmarket • Support for sports and leisure facilities in the wider district • Sorting out various long standing property issues in the District • Communities Infrastructure projects • Leisure centre maintenance • Stowmarket sports facilities - SHELF Project • Support for Stowmarket regeneration • Support for the Cosy Homes scheme which has been expanded to offer solar panels • Funding for the Reach Retrofit Hub to be an advice centre for the district • Grant funding for nature recovery and community biodiversity groups • Support for new footpaths and cycle ways • Completing the build of the Stowmarket Innovation Gateway and developing the skills centre • Funding for disabled adaptations and the disability action plan • Expansion of temporary accommodation to avoid homeless residents being put into bed and breakfast accommodation and save on costs going to private providers • Support for planning such as the new grant for neighbourhood plans



OCCOLD PARISH COUNCIL

	Mid Suffolk District Council is increasing Council Tax by 2.99%. About 8% of the overall total Council Tax bill goes to Mid Suffolk District Council, with the remainder going to fund the work of the County Council and Police and Crime Commissioner. For context, for a Band D property the increase attributable to Mid Suffolk District Council is about £5.23 per year or 10p per week.
Grants for communities	The District Council continues to provide a wide range of grants to support community groups to carry out the projects they feel are important for their local area. There is more information on the on the grants available, here: https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/community-funding
Communicating with residents	A regular magazine released in September and February has been introduced to keep residents informed of what is going on in the district. Residents who prefer face-to-face contact with the Council can visit Eye Library on Friday mornings to speak with someone from the Council's team – no appointment is needed. Citizens Advice is also on site at the same time, to assist residents with a wide range of issues including debt, benefits and the cost of living.
Local government reform	Two years ago the government asked councils in 'two tier' areas (areas with both District and County councils) to put forward plans to replace these with single 'unitary' councils. For Suffolk, the government has selected the proposal put forward by the District and Borough Councils. This will see the creation of three unitary councils: • West Suffolk • Central and Eastern Suffolk • Ipswich and Southern Suffolk Here, we will be in the Central and Eastern Council. More details and a map can be found here: https://threecouncilsforSuffolk.org/proposed-council-boundaries/ It is anticipated that the existing District and County Councils will continue operations until 1st April 2028, when the new unitary Councils will take over. There will be elections to the 'shadow' version of the new Councils in May 2027; Councillors elected at this time will work with Council staff to shape the new unitary Councils and get everything ready for them to start operations on 1st April 2028.
Thank you	I would like to thank the Parish Council and all local community groups for their hard work over the past year.

Cllr Lucy Elkin lucy.elkin@midsuffolk.gov.uk or 07928 512590

For updates: www.facebook.com/CllrLucy

Mid Suffolk District Council services: see www.midsuffolk.gov.uk or phone **0300 123 4000**