

Occold Parish Council

Annual Report 2023



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Contacting the Council

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Website - <http://occold.onesuffolk.net/organisations/parish-council/>

Staff

Mrs Libby Alexander – Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer (*Part time*)

Councillors

Name	Address	Email address	Phone
Colin Cripps - Chair	Address in the Parish of Occold	Colin.cripps@sky.com	01379 672945
Kevin Chittock – Vice Chair	Address in the Parish of Occold	kevinjchittock@gmail.com	01379 678464
Stephen Hubner	Address in the Parish of Occold	stephenhubner@gmail.com	01379 678360
Andrew Duggett	Address in the Parish of Occold	andrew.duggett@gmail.com	07976 486362
Tim Weller	Address in the Parish of Occold	tim_weller@btinternet.com	01379 678995
Heidi Stone	Address in the Parish of Occold	heidi@h-stone.co.uk	
Angela Hall	Address in the Parish of Occold	angela.hall53@gmail.com	

District Councillor

Lucy Elkin

lucy.elkin@midsuffolk.gov.uk

Tel: 07928 512 590

County Councillor

Andrew Stringer

Andrew.stringer@suffolk.gov.uk

Tel: 07545 423842

Introduction

Occold Parish Council is an elected body (a corporate body) and a legal entity in its own right, of qualified residents of the Parish granted powers by parliament (Local Government Act 1972 Part 1 Section 2) to represent the interests and opinions of the communities they serve and to speak on their behalf with authority and integrity.

It has the power to raise money through an annual precept which is then collected by the principal Council through the Council Tax. It must act within the law and can only spend, raise or use money if it has a statutory power to do so.

There are few duties but a wide range of powers. The Council must hold at least 3 meetings a year and an Annual Parish Meeting in May and there is another duty to provide allotment gardens if the demand is unsatisfied.

In addition, the Council has a wide range of powers which it may use to provide such things as a public clock or a bus shelter.

In June 2020, the Council passed a resolution that it was eligible to use the General Power of Competence as it met the criteria for eligibility relating to the electoral mandate and relevant training of the Clerk.

The criteria are that at least two thirds of the members of the Council must hold office as a result of being declared elected – at that time the Council had 7 elected Councillors - and that the Clerk must hold the Certificate in local Council Administration (CiLCA).

Owing to a change of Clerk in December 2022, who does not yet have the CiLCA qualification, the Council is no longer eligible to use the General Power of Competence. Once the new Clerk gains the CiLCA qualification the Council will be able to pass a resolution again.

Occold has vacancies for 9 Councillors and currently has 7. All Councillors carry out their duties voluntarily but can be reimbursed for expenses incurred.

Councillors do much more than just attend meetings where projects are discussed and progressed and policies, procedures and practices are constantly reviewed – their work involves taking part in parish activities; dealing with varying resident issues and representing Occold Parish Council on outside bodies.

Electors over the age of 18 years may become local Councillors as long as they are a British Citizen or a Citizen of the Commonwealth or European Union.

They must reside in the Parish or within 3 miles of it or have had their principal place of work or have occupied as owner or tenant any land or premises within the Parish. They are either elected at the four yearly elections or can be co-opted after a casual vacancy occurs.

Councillors represent the views and concerns of residents. They must attend meetings when summoned by the Clerk. They must take part in meetings and consider all the relevant facts on matters which require a decision and should report back.

Individual Councillors do not have powers to make decisions. They are required to comply with a National Model code of conduct, in line with the Nolan Principles [8] which includes the completion of a 'register of interests'.

At a meeting of the Council a member must declare a 'disclosable interest' and must not participate in any vote on the matter declared. A Councillor cannot be appointed to a paid office whilst a Councillor or for 12 months after he ceases to be one.

Occold Parish Council continually works towards improving community well-being and providing better services at a local level.

Through an extensive range of discretionary powers, we provide and maintain a variety of important and visible local services including bus shelter cleaning, street lighting, benches and litter bins.

The Clerk is employed by the Parish Council as an independent and objective servant to carry out its administration and take action on its decisions. The Clerk is also the Responsible Financial Officer.

The Clerk prepares policies and procedures and gathers information to help the Council make decisions. They have no inherent powers to make decisions unless it is allowed for in Standing Orders.

The Clerk is known as the 'Proper Officer' meaning the person appointed by the Council to do its work. The role is crucial to the continuity and efficiency of the Council. They are not elected and hold a statutory role to give guidance to Councillors and the Chair on decisions made by the Council even if the guidance is unpopular and includes advice and guidance on Governance, ethical and procedural matters.

The Clerk is not answerable to any individual Councillor and must remain objective. Currently the Parish Council does not have an office and Council services are administered from the Clerk's home address.

Appointments to see the Clerk can be made by contacting her directly.

Councillor Areas of Responsibility

Planning	Planning Applications. Planning Information.	ALL
Highways	Roads and Footways. Hedges and Trees. Street lighting. Street cleaning/litter. Road signs. SID	ALL Andrew Duggett
Projects and development	Project Management. Village Hall Liaison. Football Club liaison. Transport issues. Neighbourhood Plan	ALL Heidi Stone
Conservation and Community	Youth Provision/Development. Community development. Street planting. By-ways/conservation.	ALL
Environmental	Trees/landscapes/surveys. Lorry Watch	ALL
Assets Management	Planned/Reactive Maintenance, 5 year plans, Lease agreements. Defibrillator	ALL Tim Weller
Finance/Budgets	Pay Roll. Risk assessments. Insurance. Financial Regulations/Governance/ bank signatories.	Colin Cripps Kevin Chittock
Personnel	Vacancies/Interviews. Annual appraisals. HR matters. Job descriptions.	Kevin Chittock Andrew Duggett Heidi Stone

Report of Council Activity 2022-23

Parish Councillors

The Council have been very lucky to have a full complement of Councillors for most of this year.

Following the resignation of Cllr Jill Crouch in May 2022, we were pleased to welcome Cllr Angela Hall to the Council in July 2022. Since joining Cllr Hall has been instrumental in working on updating and producing new leaflets for the Occold circular walk.

Later in the year we lost Cllr David Griffiths due to work commitments. We thank him for his contributions to the Council during his 18 months in post.

In May 2023 the 4 yearly Parish Council elections took place. Cllr Michelle Grange took the decision not to stand as a Councillor following the elections due to personal circumstances. We thank her for her time and commitment she has given to the Council. Cllrs Colin Cripps, Kevin Chittock, Andrew Duggett, Stephen Hubner, Tim Weller, Heidi Stone and Angela Hall were all elected to the Council.

There are currently two vacancies for Councillors on the Council. For anyone interested in these roles, there is further information on the village website or details can be obtained by contacting the Parish Clerk

Parish Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer

In October the Clerk, Mrs Joy Hart, gave us notice of her intention to resign with effect from 31 December. Following a period of advertising we recruited Mrs Libby Alexander as our new Clerk. We were fortunate that Joy and Libby were able to overlap with each other through December in order to make the handover as smooth as possible.

We would like to record our sincere thanks to Joy during her time as Clerk, for all her hard work and support to the Council.

Highways

June 2019 saw the Council's first enquiry with Suffolk County Council relating to a safer crossing area for the school. Progress has remained extremely slow but we anticipate some progress being made on the project in the near future with further details being presented by the County Councillor at the May Parish Council Meeting.

The Parish Council has resolved to contribute £2,000 of CIL funding towards this project and this amount remains earmarked.

Suffolk County Council agreed to replace the faded HGV restriction signs in the village. The Council has now joined the Lorry Watch scheme after reports were received of HGV's ignoring the weight

restriction through the village and the signs were replaced. Cllrs Kevin Chittock and Tim Weller have undergone training and signed up as volunteers as part of the scheme.

The Clerk regularly reports issues with signage/street lights and public footpaths to Suffolk CC when she is made aware of them. Residents are encouraged to report issues themselves at <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/highway-maintenance/report-a-highways-issue/>

Neighbourhood Plan

Following a leaflet drop, a number of residents came forward interested in pursuing the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan. The Council therefore decided to revisit the project. Led by Cllr Stone and Cllr Griffiths, the services and costs of involving an independent Consultant, who specialises in Neighbourhood Plans, to manage the project were investigated. This is the approach that has been taken and will support the Council in applying for relevant grants through the Government's Neighbourhood Plan Programme. Currently Cllr Stone is working on forming a Neighbourhood Plan Working Group to start moving the project forward.

Speeding

Speeding continues to be an issue in the village. The Council invested in a second Speed Indicator Device (SID) in September 2022 which allows a device to be in place at either end of the village – one by the school and one by the Church. Cllr Andrew Duggett continues to lead this project. The data from both devices show that there is still a speeding problem in the 20mph area, however as we build data month by month there is a suggestion that the SID located by the Church is moderately reducing speeds.

Occold hosted the Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) camera for a week in January and a week in March as part of the trial being rolled out by Suffolk County Council. This enables the SID to display the registration number of the offending speeding vehicle. We have just received data back from this and Cllr Duggett will report on its findings at the May Parish Council Meeting.

Circular Walk

Following requests from residents to reprint the Occold Circular Walk Brochure, Cllr Hall offered to take on the project of revisiting public footpaths in the village before reprinting took place. As part of this review and in discussion with Suffolk County Council there is an option currently being considered to include the Occold Circular Walk in the 'Discover Suffolk' guide which would attract part funding of new leaflets from Suffolk County Council.

Village Maintenance

No village maintenance was required.

Planning

The Council works closely with the District Councillor to oppose controversial and excessive applications which have an adverse effect on the Village. Unfortunately, the Planning Authority at Mid Suffolk ultimately make the decisions on whether planning applications are subsequently approved.

Community Infrastructure Levies (CIL)

We did not receive any CIL income in 2022-23. However, at the end of the last financial year we still had £11,501.59 CIL money available. This has enabled us to purchase the additional Speed Indicator Device at a cost of £3,345 (plus £22.89 for padlocks to secure the device) and donate £1,000 to ORAC for completion of driveway repairs.

With the £2,000 earmarked to the school safety project the Council currently has £5,133 for future projects.

Finances

Expenditure/Income for the year ended 31st March 2023 was as follows: -

Expenditure		Year End	
Democracy (in Training & Website)	50	Opening Balance	20642
Section 137 Donations	650	Plus Receipts	9637
Overheads	1118	Minus Expenditure	<u>14149</u>
Admin	4564		£16130
Village Maintenance	2612		
CIL	4368	Bank Balance c/f	£16130
VAT	<u>787</u>		
Total	<u>£14149</u>		
Income			
Precept	8800		
Other Income	<u>837</u>		
Total	<u>£9637</u>		

The Budget for 2022/23 was agreed at £9885. The precept was set at £8800, no change from the previous year.

Finally, I would like to thank all our Councillors – Kevin Chittock, Stephen Hubner, Andrew Duggett, Tim Weller, Heidi Stone and Angela Hall for your support of me and the giving up of your precious time for the residents of Occold.

Also, a big thank you to the volunteers of all the organisations in the Village that make this a great place to live.

I look forward to working with you in the coming year

Colin Cripps, May 2023

Schedule of Meetings

Parish Council Meetings 2023-24

All Parish Council Meetings are held at the Village Hall on the first Monday of the month with the exception of Bank Holidays. All monthly meetings commence at 8.00 p.m.

Additional Council Meetings may be called to consider responses to Planning Applications or to deal with other Business when the deadline is fixed and falls before the next Regular Meeting.

The AGENDA for each Parish Council Meeting is posted on the Parish Council Notice Board on The Street opposite The Beeches, and on the Parish website not less than three working days before the Meeting.

The ANNUAL PARISH MEETING is open to All Registered Electors within Occold Parish and is held in May each year. The agenda for this will be posted not less than seven working days before the meeting. This meeting is an opportunity for all parishioners to express their views.

Date	Specific Business at Meeting
5 June 2023	Submit completed Annual Return
3 July 2023	Ensure all relevant council business is included in the July meeting to enable Councillors to take the summer break.
August 2023	The Council will only meet in August if there are urgent matters to consider
4 September 2023	Renew insurance. Note Audit result and display it
2 October 2023	Commence Budget preparation for ensuing year
6 November 2023	Budget prep
4 December 2023	Review Budget Variances. Award Recurring Grants
8 January 2024	Finalise Budget and set Precept for ensuing year.
5 February 2024	Chase any o/s debts before year end. Award recurring grants /Review of
4 March 2024	donations
8 April 2024	Last meeting to review: Standing Orders; Financial Regulations; Internal Controls; Freedom of Information Act -Publication Schedule; Register of Assets; Risk Assessment - Assets; and Risk Assessment - Financial. Election year – advise councillors
13 May 2024	Review Budget Variances. Make arrangements for Final Accounts, appoint Internal Auditor and review scope of their work. Confirm date and arrangements for Annual Parish Meeting. Check and prepare for elections.
13 May 2024	ANNUAL MEETING – Appoint Chairman, Vice Chairman, RFO, Members of Committees and Representatives to other Bodies. Make arrangements to publish Annual Accounts and submit same to audit
Monday 13 May 2024	ANNUAL PARISH MEETING for all Occold Registered Electors

Housing and population data profile

Occold



(Last Updated: October 2019)

This Parish Profile has been produced by Mid Suffolk District Council primarily to help inform local discussion on housing need. Most of the data comes from the 2011 Census (accessible via the ONS website). Other data sources have also been used as appropriate, and will be updated periodically.

How many people live locally?	Children Under 16	Working Age Adults (16 to 64)	People Aged 65 +	Dependency Ratio
519	88 (16.9%)	331 (63.8%)	100 (19.3%)	0.57
50.3% Males 49.7% Females	Mid Sflk Avg = 18.4% England Avg = 18.9%	Mid Sflk Avg = 61.5% England Avg = 64.7%	Mid Sflk Avg = 20.1% England Avg = 16.3%	Mid Sflk Avg = 0.63 England Avg = 0.55

[Source: ONS 2011 Census: KS101EW & KS102EW] [Dependency Ratio = Ratio of Non-working Age to Working Age Population]

Single Pensioner Households	Single H/holds < 65 years old	Lone Parent Families with Dependent Children
21	23	8
10.1% of all Households Mid Suffolk Avg = 12.9% England Avg = 12.4%	11.0% of all Households Mid Suffolk Avg = 12.4% England Avg = 17.9%	12.1% of all families with dependent children Mid Suffolk Avg = 17.7% England avg = 24.5%

General Health (All Usual Residents)

Very Good	Good	Fair	Bad	Very Bad
51.8%	32.0%	13.7%	1.7%	0.8%
Mid Sflk Avg = 47.9% England Avg = 47.2%	Mid Sflk Avg = 35.3% England Avg = 35.2%	Mid Sflk Avg = 12.8% England Avg = 12.8%	Mid Sflk Avg = 3.1% England Avg = 3.6%	Mid Sflk Avg = 0.8% England Avg = 1.0%

[Source: ONS 2011 Census: QS302EW]

Total # Occupied Households	Owned (Outright or with Mortgage)	Shared Ownership	Socially Rented	Privately Rented
208	170 (81.7%)	0 (0%)	15 (7.2%)	20 (9.6%)
	Mid Sflk Avg = 75.1% England Avg = 63.3%	Mid Sflk Avg = 0.8% England Avg = 0.8%	Mid Sflk Avg = 11.3% England Avg = 17.7%	Mid Sflk Avg = 11.2% England Avg = 16.8%

[Source: ONS 2011 Census: QS405EW]

- At the time of the 2011 Census some 13 dwellings (5.9% of all dwellings in Occold) appeared to be unoccupied. (Mid Suffolk Avg = 3.8%) [QS418EW]

Number of Bedrooms (Occupied Households)				
None	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed +
0 (0%)	11 (5.3%)	42 (20.2%)	77 (37.0%)	78 (37.5%)
Mid Sflk Avg = 0.1% England Avg = 0.2%	Mid Sflk Avg = 6.0% England Avg = 11.8%	Mid Sflk Avg = 25.0% England Avg = 27.9%	Mid Sflk Avg = 40.4% England Avg = 41.2%	Mid Sflk Avg = 28.5% England Avg = 18.9%

[Source: ONS 2011 Census: QS411EW]

Total # Occupied Households	Total # with Under-Occupied bedrooms	Total # with Over-Occupied bedrooms
208	169 (81.3%)	4 (1.9%)
	Mid Sflk Avg = 80.8% / England Avg = 68.7%	Mid Sflk Avg = 1.6% / England Avg = 4.6%

[Source: ONS 2011 Census: QS412EW]

NET NEW RESIDENTIAL COMPLETIONS (Last 5 Years: April to March)				
2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
2	3	1	0	0

[Source: Babergh & Mid Suffolk Joint Annual Monitoring Report]

Avg Price & No (in brackets) of Properties Sold in IP23 Postcode Area (Aug 2018)				
Detached	Semi-Det'	Terraced	Flat	All
£386,000 (9)	£386,000 (1)	£375,000 (1)	£0 (0)	£385,681 (11)

[Source: Right Move website: Market Trends]

MID SUFFOLK

In Mid Suffolk, in 2017 ...the average wage was £25,070. The average house price was £255,000. Therefore, the wage to house price ratio = x 10.17

[Source: ONS website: Median wages, median house prices and ratio calculation]

Other Information

- **County Councillor - Cllr Andrew Stringer** (Upper Gipping Division)
- **District Councillor - Cllr Lucy Elkin** (Eye Ward)
- Occold is identified as a **Secondary Village** in Policy CS1 of the Mid Suffolk Core Strategy DPD (Adopted Sept 2008)
- Local Services in Occold are limited but include ... a Primary School, Parish Church, Village Hall and a Pub / Restaurant
- 68% of all households in Occold with at least one usual resident are reliant on oil-fired heating [QS415EW]
- There are no Housing Associations (Registered Providers) currently known to be active in Occold
- The **2014 Suffolk Housing Survey** shows that, across Mid Suffolk district:
 - 12% of all existing households contain someone looking for their own property over the next 3 years (mainly single adults without children). The types of properties they are interested in are flats / apartments, and smaller terraced or semi-detached houses. Although this is not their first preference, many accept that the private rented sector is their most realistic option.
 - 25% of households think their current property will not be suitable for their needs in 10 years' time.
 - 2 & 3 bed properties are most sought after by existing households wishing to move.
 - Suitable housing options for more elderly people are less available within the current housing stock. 6% of all households have elderly relatives who may need to move to Suffolk within the next 3 years.