

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT RELATING TO 2024 METHERINGHAM FAYRE AND FEAST

In early November 2024 the Parish Council received a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request from a requester requiring information on administration and payments relating to Metheringham Fayre and Feast. The FOIA request was very far ranging and asking for information that was not either held electronically or in a written form which the Temporary Clerk (TC) would have been unable to provide. The requester was also asking for information regarding specific traders payment details, but because of data protection regulations the TC was unable to provide such information. For ease of reference and to explain and understand the procedure, a redacted copy is appended below.

The TC reponded with only information he was legally obliged to provide and advised the requester that much information relating to the request was available in the accessible minutes of the Events Committee. In response, the requester stated they required information and reasons why the Parish Council had not complied in accordance with the event's terms and conditions. The TC advised that the normal trading terms of the Parish Council was payment 30 days from receipt of an invoice.

With reference to an email dated Tuesday 24 September 2024, Councillor Worthington did not comply with the adopted Financial Regulations by agreeing different payment terms and did so without authority.

In reply the requester stated that the event participants terms and conditions were agreed with a member of the Events Committee and provided a copy of an email to that effect. They also requested dates when three particular payments were made to an event participant who was understood to be associated with the requester. The TC forwarded redacted copies of the Parish Council's bank statements with the three relevant payments itemised and also advised the requester that since a member of the Events Committee had agreed to terms and conditions the Parish Council should have verified.

Since providing the above, the TC has emailed the requester on two seperate occasions asking whether they required any additional information, but no reply was received. Consequently, the Parish Council consider the FOIA request has been answered satisfactorily and the matter now closed.

The Internal Auditor has questioned the Events Committee structure with regard to the inclusion of non-members of the Parish Council together with carrying out financial transactions, entering into booking agreements and costings in relation to event entertainment. I recommend that the Events Committee is restructured as either a working group or as indicated by the Internal Auditor, all responsibility removed for making any financial undertakings in accordance with relevant Acts of Parliament. Furthermore, no agreements are made to settle full and final payments to a participant seven days prior to the event taking place and suggested that only a maximum 50% deposit is paid of any accepted quotation.

Regarding communications, all arrangements of the kind mentioned should be made by the Clerk or Acting Clerk from only their email account.

Appendix:

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT

I am writing to submit a Freedom of Information request covering the organisation and delivery of Metheringham Fayre & Feast 2024. The information I require is as follows:

*Records of all discussions pertaining to the selection, confirmation and procurement of entertainment and ancillary services (including but not limited to sound equipment hire, lorry trailer hire, provision of medical cover, *****, *****, + *****, *****, *****, *****, *****, *****, *****, *****) for the Metheringham Fayre & Feast 2024.*

Copies of all communications regarding the agreement of fees for the entertainments and services described above.

Records of the submission dates for all invoices for provision of the entertainments and services above and copies of communications relevant to the submission and payment of said invoices, including discussions of where invoice payment terms were not met or where payment had to be hastened.

Details of which members of the Metheringham Parish Council (MPC) are authorised and empowered to undertake payment transactions using MPC funds.

Bank statements showing when the invoices for the provision of entertainments and services discussed above were settled and which authorised MPC Councillor made the transaction in each case.

Copies of any communication received regarding the quality of the entertainments and services described above received as at the date of receipt of this request - ie 4th November 2024.

*Records of all discussions regarding the identification and procurement of a *****, *****, provider and an explanation as to why such a provider was not engaged for Metheringham Fayre & Feast 2024.*

What has MPC done to identify where Metheringham Fayre & Feast 2024 could have been better organised and what lessons have been learned to prevent recurring issues in the organisation of future events?

Michael Credland BEM
14 February 2025

