

Draft until signed

**Minutes of Combs 123rd Annual Parish Meeting
Monday 9th May 2016 at 7.00pm, Battisford Village Hall, Straight Road, Battisford**

Present: S Scarff (Chairman), D Stephens-Row (Vice-Chairman), T Whitehead (Councillor), J Crooks (Councillor), S Reynard (Councillor), D Thorpe (Councillor)

Attending: S Meech (Clerk), Cllr J Truelove (County Councillor), Cllr D Whybrow (District Councillor)

1. Introductions

2. Apologies for absence

None received

3. Minutes of the 122nd Annual Parish Meeting held on 18th May 2015

The minutes were considered and adopted at the parish council meeting of 8th June 2015

4. Chairman's Report

See Appendix 1

5. Report from Suffolk County Councillor

See Appendix 2

6. Report from Mid Suffolk District Councillor

See Appendix 3

7. Councillor Reports

See Appendix 4 for Combs Cemetery and St Mary's Churchyard report

Cllr Thorpe reported that he responds to any issues through Suffolk County Councils website and any footpaths issues have been rectified and that most footpaths are in good order. The current situation with the street lights is to consider estimate and quotation for upgrading bulbs to LED.

Cllr Whitehead reports on the financial situation of Combs Parish Council and explains that our reserve amounts are quite high and that the council will have to consider spending this year to bring the reserve in the account down.

Cllr Crooks advises that there have been 19 planning applications, 3 refusals and 1 withdrawn application for Combs Parish Council.

8. Parishioner questions, comments and suggestions

There are no public in attendance at the meeting

Meeting closed at 7.35pm

Report from Rev Childs received after meeting attached as Appendix 5

Appendix 1

AGM

Chairman Report

Monday 9th May 2016

We started off this year with a new council following an uncontested election.

Having lost some of our councillors that have served the parish for many years we have been able to bring in new councillors and it was an honour for myself to be elected as chairman of the parish council.

I made it clear from the start that I was not able to run the parish council on my own and that I would seek the support from all councillors to participate in running the various items that the parish council is concerned with. I was very pleased that the councillors have taken up this challenge and have each taken on a role in organising a particular aspect of the council. I would particularly like thank all the councillors for all their hard work that they have put in over the last year. Much of this I am sure the majority of the village population would not even know goes on until there is a complaint to be made.

I will not commenting on any of the particular items as those responsible for these will be making their own reports for the AGM.

We started our year with a number of items, that have been rumbling on for a considerable number of years, all of which needed to be resolved, particularly the cemetery. I must thank Councillor Reynard and Councillor Stephen-Rowe for all their hard work that they have put in to resolving this delicate situation. Another issue came to the head with Prospect Place which the planning issues have been running for many years. Only for us to find out that the property which has now been converted has been let to Stepping Stones, for supported housing within a safe environment. This caused some considerable concerns for near neighbours of which we held an open meeting for the local residents and a representative from Stepping Stones came to clarify various issues raised.

Unfortunately Councillor Eade resigned and I would like thank him for his work during his time on the Parish Council. This has left us with a vacancy which has yet to be filled.

We decided this year to have a representation at the Combs fete so that members of the public could raise any issues that they had with the village and for us to be more visible.

On the whole this worked well and I would hope that we would do the same again this year.

We commented significantly on the proposals on the development off Fariers Road and made notes of many concerns relating to the planning application. Some of these concerns have been heeded.

It was with great shock and disappointment that Combs Parish Church was a target of having the lead stolen from the North and South Aisles. An estimated fund of £100,000 will be needed to be raised to replace the roof and repair the damage caused.

Our latest acquisition, with the thanks of County Councillor Truelove for making funds available has been to acquire our first defibrillator for the village. This will be positioned to the West of the village. We are hopeful that we can provide another one for the East of the village

Again I would especially like to thank all the councillors for their hard work and especially our clerk for all her hard work in keeping the council affairs in order.

I would also like to thank our County Councillor Truelove and our District Council Whybrow for their attendance at our meetings and for their assistance.

Stuart Scarff

Combs Parish Chairman

Appendix 2

ANNUAL REPORT 2016 BOSMERE DIVISION County Councillor Julia Truelove

BUDGET SETTING

The revenue Budget 2016-2017 and the Capital Program for 2016-2019 are now in place. The level of savings being targeted over the next two years totals £73 million. Major issues which have to be addressed include the implementation of the single state pension from 2016, the cost of the new demand in adult care services due to the increasing complexity of care needs, and the new 'National Living Wage'.

Suffolk County Council's 2% increase in council tax is specifically to fund increased social care costs. The freeze on general council tax rates has been maintained.

DEVOLUTION PROPOSALS

Suffolk C.C. is part of devolution proposals covering Suffolk and Norfolk, then extended into Cambridgeshire and Cambridge city. The joint plan was subsequently rejected by Cambridgeshire and Cambridge. Another deadline in June has now been set for agreement to be reached.

Areas to be addressed include transport and infrastructure, flooding, utilities, digital, planning and development.

NEW MODEL OF POLICING LAUNCHED

From April 1st, key changes have taken place, among them staff reductions:

- Inspectors 4, Sergeants 6, Constables 16, Police staff 17, PCSOs 68
- Reorganisation of policing areas from 15 to 9
- Reduction in police bases from 33 to 18
- Roles and work of the operational teams to function within Safer Neighbourhood Teams

Amongst the benefits envisaged are those resulting from closer working with partners, a flexible workforce, and a focus on increased prevention. Planning is under way for further joint facilities in Stowmarket. The future role of Neighbourhood Watch teams has not been determined.

COUNTY COUNCIL DEBATES

Recent motions debated include those relating to the proposed cuts in the Fire Service, and the consequences of changes in Community Bus Transport. The proposed closure of the two remaining park and ride facilities has also been questioned. However, a consultation process is now under way with Ipswich Buses, so they might be saved.

ROAD CLOSURES

Road closures across the Division have caused much prolonged concern for road users over many months. Starting with Broadband works and swiftly followed by much needed improvements in Barking by Anglia Water have created overlong difficulties for drivers and public transport users. I have asked for more effective communication by S.C.C. with utilities and the public in order that projects are timed with better regard to the needs of all road users.

EDUCATION ISSUES

For the first time in several years, G.C.S.E., A level academic and vocational qualifications though still low, are above the national average, an increase of 2.08% from last year. The rise in the overall league tables out of 151 local authorities is from 125 up to 106.

LOCALITY BUDGET GRANT

Through my locality budget, I have been very pleased to award £2,000 to most of the Parish Councils in the Division for a defibrillator ‘package’. Parish Councils have unanimously given their support and the practical help needed to achieve this measure. As there are still some Parish Councils who have yet to consider the provision, I have reserved locality budget funding to fulfil the need.

CONCLUSION

Finally, I wish to thank the Parish Council for their work on behalf of the community and for their help towards resolving issues in which I have become involved. An especial ‘thank you’, to Sarah Meech, Battisford Parish Clerk.

Appendix 3

MID SUFFOLK – Highlights and Achievements for 2015/16

Financial/Organisational

- Devolution - Following weeks of negotiation between Government and local councils and LEPs a deal worth over £1bn for East Anglia was announced in the budget on the 16th March by George Osborne MP, Chancellor of the Exchequer. As part of the deal East Anglia would receive:
 - £900m (£30m a year for the next 30 years) to invest in infrastructure
 - £175m to invest in housing
- The Deal, which sets out a fundamentally different relationship between Government and local public services, was negotiated by Leaders from councils across Suffolk, Norfolk, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough and the New Anglia and Greater Cambridgeshire and Greater Peterborough Local Enterprise Partnerships. However it is important to note, it's not a 'done deal' it requires ratification by each of the local councils and the LEP boards. The Deal requires the creation of a Combined Authority and directly elected Mayor and it is proposed that the first mayoral elections would be in May 2017 alongside county council elections.
- 2016/17 Council budgets see small Council Tax rises.
- Elections.
- The Council's Joint Strategic Plan is being refreshed following the election in May last year as the two new administrations wanted to review and update the strategies of the two Councils, in light of key local, regional and national factors that have changed since the Joint Strategic Plan (JSP) was developed in 2013/14. It will set out how the Councils aim to provide services to deliver positive, sustainable change in our individual and business communities over the next five years. A focused management review has been undertaken to ensure that we make the best use of our resources and direct them to the activities and interventions needed to secure delivery of our new Strategic Plan.
- Capital Investment Strategy – In July, both Council's approved a plan to invest the Councils' cash and capital resources to generate revenue income, achieve an increase in capital value in the longer term and stimulate local economic growth.

Housing

- New Homes - We have planning consent to build circa. 38 new council homes supported by Homes and Communities Agency grant funding. These are the first houses to be built in a generation and will be completed by the end of 2016/17.
- A revised tenancy agreement was approved for Mid Suffolk's Council tenants
- Decent Homes Standard - A targeted campaign has been launched to encourage landlords and homeowners to take up grants and loans to bring their homes up to the Decent Home Standard, that were made available under the Housing Renewal Policy approved by both councils in February 2015.

- Empty Homes - The private sector housing team's work to return empty homes to occupation has now expanded to include empty commercial buildings.
- New Housing Allocations Policy adopted.
- Trusted Partner Pilot - Babergh and Mid Suffolk have been chosen by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to participate in a Trusted Partner pilot scheme to identify tenants who may struggle to pay their rent, following the introduction of Universal Credit. The pilot will allow us to make appropriate recommendations for a payment of housing costs direct to the landlord, (known as an Alternative Payment Arrangement (APA)). The pilot will last between six and nine months and started in January 2016.
Help to Buy - Council tenants who want to buy their own homes are being urged to apply for £20k grants to help them onto the property ladder. Both councils were successful in applying for funding from the Government's £84m Right-To-Buy social Mobility Fund which was launched last year.
- Right to Buy - We are using our Right to Buy receipts to acquire 4 properties with a further 6 in the pipeline. A total of £1,580,495 of RTB receipts committed.
- Houses in Multiple Occupation - The Private Sector Housing Team has begun a programme of identifying and inspecting Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) across the two councils. A HMO is a property that is shared by three or more tenants who are not members of the same family.
- Sheltered Housing Review - It has been some five years since this service was last reviewed. People are living longer and we need to make sure that the service we offer meets the needs of residents now and in the future, whilst also providing value for money. As part of the review, we consulted residents to get their views on the service, what they like, what they don't like, what we could do better etc. We conducted 25 separate tenant involvement events with our Sheltered Residents at 22 different locations across the two districts.

Growth/Business

- CIL - In January both councils voted to adopt CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) charging in the districts. Charging will start on 11th April meaning that any planning permission granted on or after this date may be liable to pay CIL. The Infrastructure Team will be providing further information over the coming months and at Parish Liaison meetings with further details on what CIL charging means for communities and how you can take advantage of the opportunities it presents.
- Neighbourhood Plan - 15 parishes across Babergh and Mid Suffolk have expressed interest in developing neighbourhood plans.
- Tourism Strategy - Suffolk Economic Portfolio Holders have agreed the Suffolk Tourism Strategy. The Strategy aims to support a county wide brand (Visit Suffolk) and support creating Destination Management Organisations.
- Business Awards - 3 Mid Suffolk and 1 Babergh business received awards at the EADT Business Awards on Thursday evening 9 July.
- MyGo Stowmarket was launched in December to engage and support young people to improve their skills and training opportunities.

- Schools Project - Mid Suffolk has provided funding for a Schools Project, which is aimed at adding value to the existing career programmes and work experience opportunities in our schools. The project will engage with year 8 (age 12) and provide support and evaluation through to work experience in year 10 (age 15).
- Food Enterprise Zones - Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils have each been awarded a grant to set up two new Food Enterprise Zones – one in Wherstead called the Orwell Food Enterprise Zone and the other at the Mill Lane Business Park in Stowmarket called the Gipping Food Enterprise Zone.
- Enterprise Zones - Last November the chancellor announced that Babergh and Mid Suffolk, together with the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership secured two of the Government's prestigious Enterprise Zones. One in Sroughton, and another one in Stowmarket.
- Joint Local Plan - We are seeking to develop a Joint Local Plan for Babergh and Mid Suffolk (both Councils currently have separate policies) and have briefed Councillors on our intended approach. We have started a detailed conversation with Councillors (the cluster meetings) on how the district wide housing targets may resonate at a local level. This includes a conversation about the impact of growth on infrastructure, facilities and the service improvement opportunities that arise. There will be an ongoing dialogue with Councillors as the plan progresses.

Planning - The Development Management team has changed and now forms three officer teams to serve specific areas within both Babergh and Mid Suffolk. The teams will over time establish improved local connections with the areas they cover with the support of their dedicated officers. A new fourth start up team has also been formed to ensure much faster registering and validation of applications and enquiries. This is the first step of a number of planned improvements for Development Management in the next year to ensure clear routes of communication for consultees, members, parish councils, residents and developers.

Communities

- The Women's Cycling Tour passed through the district on the 17th June.
- Crucial Crew was delivered with a number of partners at MEAL during 15 to 23 June. 32 Schools, 896 children took part in a number of scenarios to improve personal safety and promote responsible and safe behaviour.
- Joint Community Achievement Awards. We will be delivering a single event for both Mid Suffolk and Babergh Councils this year. This is due to be held on 21st April 2016 at Wherstead Park and will celebrate the achievements of 29 unsung heroes who have worked tirelessly to make a difference within our communities.
- Capital Grants are provided to the community to support village halls, community centres, sports clubs, community shops and events. In 2015/16 £141,224 was allocated across Mid Suffolk. Against a total project cost of £1,178,811, our support of 12% grant allocation levered in a further 88% funding for our communities.
- Health and Housing Pilot - A key aspect of our contribution to improving health and wellbeing within our district is our collaborative approach with partners. With funding from Public Health, we are in the process of designing an innovative and unique new health and

wellbeing offer to a sample of tenants in Hadleigh and Needham Market. The pilot project will provide different levels of support and a range of community-based health and wellbeing interventions that we expect will address the council's rent and council tax arrears, improve self-reported wellbeing and in addition, to contribute to reduced demand on local health and care services.

Environment & Environmental Health

- Improved Joint Working across the whole waste system in Suffolk with a joint project being developed across all Suffolk local authorities through the Suffolk Waste Partnership (SWP).
- New waste contracts - Babergh and Mid Suffolk councils undertook two successful tendering processes with the Suffolk Waste Partnership. One for the servicing of all of the recycling bring sites across the County, which was awarded to Indigo Waste Services Ltd (IWS), and one for all garden waste, awarded to Material Change based in Creeting St Mary.
- The Open for Business project (OfB) will improve the experience of businesses working with the Councils' regulatory services by changing organisational culture; putting business customers' experiences at the heart of our ways of working and; ensuring businesses understand what their responsibilities are. A business account manager pilot has established a single point of contact to a business enquiry.
- Open for Business - Better Business Event. A successful business engagement event was held. The business facing services of the councils along with representatives of the New Anglia Growth Hub and chambers of commerce were available for businesses based in the Mid Suffolk area to talk to. This was intended to be the first of these events with a view to perhaps making future ones more sector-specific.
- Photovoltaic Panels (PV) have been installed across almost 2000 properties in Mid Suffolk and Babergh.
- Energy Efficiency - £6m helping businesses in Norfolk and Suffolk to become more energy efficient.

Healthier Catering Award - The Suffolk Healthier Catering Award 'Eat Out Eat Well (EOEW)' was launched. Catering businesses can apply for three levels of award, gold, silver and bronze. The gold award will generally require a member of the catering business staff to have a formal qualification in nutrition; training that the Food and Safety team at BMSDC are now offering. The motivation behind initiating this award in Suffolk is twofold. With obesity a significant problem, there was a mandate from the Health and Wellbeing Board with the public health driver clear. The award also gives catering food businesses an opportunity to differentiate themselves and potentially create a recognised additional ethical selling point whether to employees in the case of staff canteens or to the public if a café or restaurant.

Appendix 4

Report on Combs Cemetery and St Mary's Churchyard for Annual Parish Meeting 09/05/16

The year 2015 -2016 has been an interesting one for the Parish Council in regard to the cemetery. Following a period of 'over-decoration' of some graves the Parish Council agreed to take steps to revert the appearance of the cemetery back to how it was intended when it was set up. We wrote to grave owners asking if they would remove items that contravened the regulations and we met with some of them at the cemetery. We would like to thank everybody who met our request and removed these items. We subsequently re-turfed the areas around the graves and have had positive feedback on how the cemetery now looks. We have also recently removed stones from the cremation area and re-turfed.

Sadly we had an episode of graffiti being sprayed on the car park road surface and signs at the cemetery. The Parish Council has since requested the police to monitor the car park on their rounds in an effort to reduce this kind of unsocial activity.

There is always more work to be done and the Parish Council has implemented a more rigorous maintenance schedule of grass cutting and regular inspections this year, aswell as regular tidying.

The Parish Council is also responsible for the maintenance of the churchyard at St Mary's Church. We have identified some areas to be tidied up particularly along the boundaries and we are working with Stowmarket Town Council on a maintenance programme to keep the whole churchyard looking tidy and natural.

Councillor David Stephens-Row and Councillor Sue Reynard
Combs Parish Council

Appendix 5

Combs Parish Council Annual Report May 2016

I am sorry that I cannot be with you. I am reporting similarly at Gt Finborough who got in first.

I have more to do with you than most of the Parish Councils in my patch and am extremely grateful for the generosity of approach and time given to the maintenance of the Churchyard which is not always easy. It is the first thing many people see and I am glad it is so well maintained.

Thank you all for the practical and physical support you have given to the church following the theft of lead in August. It might be physically and psychologically out of sight because of its position but it does want to play an active part in the continuing development of the community of Combs and not just in asking for money. I believe very strongly in community

Apart from the roof, the building itself is in remarkably good shape and by the end of the year I am hopeful that all the remedial work necessitated by the theft of the lead and that identified as urgent by the 5 yearly architects inspection will be done. We are not complacent and the raising of funds is not easy but a number of people work very hard to do so and apply for Grants to keep it in good condition for the parish to use.

The very necessary Fund Raising for has resulted in a number of events in Combs which provide for social interaction and the development of community. I realise not everyone wants to support the work of the church but most recognise the importance of the building and its heritage. All are most welcome whatever their beliefs.

Areas for development are the restoration of the bells which I would love to hear ringing in celebration of 100 years since the end of the First World War as a tribute to the fallen. Car Parking remains an issue as it has for the last 50 years. We now have a plan and just need the energy to see it through.

This year we have restarted the choir which now has 12 members, the Sunday School similarly has been restarted and usually attracts 7 children whilst our innovative Worship and Messy Church on the first Sunday regularly sees an attendance of over 60. The congregation has seen significant growth and the life of the parish is on the up.

Thank you for all you do and if I or our curate Rachel can help in any way you know where the Rectory is. With good wishes

Chris