

**Minutes of Combs Parish Council Meeting**  
**Monday 13 January 2020 at 7.30pm, Battisford Village Hall, Straight Road, Battisford**

(DRAFT UNTIL SIGNED)

**Present:** S Scarff (Chairman); D Thorpe (Councillor); J Crooks (Councillor); V Whitehead (Councillor); T Chaplin (Councillor); I Walker (Councillor); J Matthissen (District Councillor); T Bamber (Clerk).

**Attending:** six members of the public

**1. Apologies for absence**

K Oakes (County Councillor); C Todhunter (Vice Chairman) (with council's prior agreement)

**2. Declarations of interest**

In respect of items 10 a (i) and 10 a (ii): Cllr S Scarff, having a pecuniary interest; Cllr D Thorpe (ex work colleague).

In respect of item 10 a (iii): Cllr V Whitehead (neighbour)

In respect of item 11 c (ii): Cllr T Chaplin

**3. Public Forum**

The members of the public present were all interested in item 10 a (i) so this item was held over.

**4. Minutes of meeting held on Monday 9 December 2019**

Minutes for 9 December 2019 were reviewed and were signed as a true and accurate copy of the meeting by the Chairman.

**5. Matters arising from the minutes**

No matters arising that are not dealt with elsewhere. Cllr Thorpe observed that the Christmas tree recycling scheme appeared to have been very well supported.

**6. County Councillor's Report**

Cllr Oakes had previously apologised for her absence. While there was nothing to report she had mentioned that her budget might be able to help with the purchase of a second Speed Indicator Device. Councillors agreed that this offer should be taken up if possible.

**Action:** Clerk to write to Cllr Oakes to confirm interest in the purchase of a second SID

**7. District Councillor's Report**

Cllr Matthissen took councillors through his report (attached as appendix). He also mentioned that his budget may be able to help supplement any shortfall in purchasing the aforementioned second SID and councillors agreed this offer should be taken up if possible.

**8. Parish Council Chairman's Report**

No matters not raised elsewhere.

## 9. Clerk's Report

No matters not raised elsewhere.

## 10. Planning

### a. Applications received for consideration

In accordance with Standing orders, Cllr Scarff left the meeting for the next two items and Cllr Whitehead took on the role of Chair.

#### i. DC/19/05572 – Land adjacent to 2 Oak Thatch, Park Road –*outline application for 2 new dwellings*

Cllr Whitehead invited comments from the public. Two residents referred to objections they had lodged and the opportunity was taken to ask questions of the District Councillor as to standard procedure for planning officers. Following discussion by councillors it was **agreed**, with one abstention, that the council object to the application on the grounds that the proposed development lay outside the settlement boundary. In addition, councillors wished to comment, should the planning office approve the application:

- i. Outline plans indicate the proposed dwellings are to have four or more bedrooms each and, should the District Council choose to approve the application, they would enquire if consideration could be given to the most suitable sizes for any new houses in the village.
- ii. Should the application be approved, could it please be made a condition that contractors' vehicles be prevented from parking on the road in the vicinity?

#### ii. DC/19/05573 – Land adjacent to Model Farm House, Park Road –*outline application for 2 new dwellings*

Councillors considered the application and the objections that had been lodged by some residents. It was noted that one objector had stated: *"..it should be pointed out that the owner of the proposed development is the Chairman of the PC so any support from the PC should be ignored as at best this is a conflict of interest at worst it could amount to misconduct in a public office"*. Cllr Walker voiced the views of all the Council, saying he was saddened that one individual has had to include in their public comments what can only be perceived to be a lack of belief and trust in this council's professionalism, integrity and its robust approach to its standards and code of conduct.

He added that the parish council's work ethics are to a high standard so to ask the planning department of our local council to ignore any support to this application, if there were to be any, displays a preconceived lack of trust in the parish councillors' morals and principles.

To full agreement he expressed the hope that future village discussions/comments do not sink to this level.

It was noted that the objector had not attended this meeting, nor, so far as anyone was aware, any other council meeting where he may have had an opportunity to become familiar with those he would presume to criticise.

Following discussion councillors **agreed** unanimously to support the application. In addition, councillors wished to comment:

- i. The Parish Council understands it is intended that the pond and some trees are to remain. They would like to suggest that this be a condition of any approval, and that perhaps the lime trees could be made the subject of a tree preservation order..
- ii. Could it please be made a condition that contractors' vehicles be prevented from parking on the road in the vicinity?

- At this point the Chairman returned to resume chairing the meeting
- iii. DC/20/00020 – Peppits, 3 Tile Row, Moats Tye – erection of two and single storey rear extension.  
Following discussion, councillors **agreed** unanimously to support the application.

b. Decisions received from MSDC

- i. DC/19/05325 14 Model Farm, Park Road – replacement of roof tiles –*Listed Building Consent granted*. Noted

## 11. Finance

- a. **Accounts review to date** – Current Account balance as of 26 December 2019 was £14,210.42 and the savings account balance as of 2 January 2020 was £1,914.07.

The Budget analysis and financial summary were reviewed and accepted.

b. **Payments received**

- i. (none)

c. **Payments to hand**

- i. EON October energy bill - £73.93 (Direct debit) Approved by all councillors (*Parish Councils Act 1957, S.3; Highways Act 1980 S.301*)
- ii. Battisford Village Hall Management Committee – Hall hire/broadband/Barclif - £ 390.00. Cheque number 22221 was written, and signed by Cllrs Thorpe and Scarff (*Local Government Act 1972, s 133*). It was **agreed** that the clerk should inform the committee that use of the broadband would no longer be required after the end of 2020.
- iii. T Chaplin – newsletter printing - £90.00 ). Payment was agreed by all councillors. Cheque number 22222 was written, and signed by Cllrs Thorpe and Scarff (*Local Government Act 1972, s 142*).

d. **Budget and Precept for 2020/2021**

Following the approval last month of the budget and precept for 2020/2021, the clerk produced the relevant form and this was duly signed by the Chairman, two councillors and the clerk.

e. **Instruction of Internal auditor**

It was **agreed** to instruct Suffolk Association of Local Councils to conduct the legally required internal audit for the year 2019/2020, as has been the case in the past few years.

**Action: Clerk to write to SALC to confirm instruction.**

## 12. Oaks Meadow Project

Cllr Matthissen informed the Parish Council that there was to be a meeting regarding the project, at Blackberry Barn at 10 AM on 20 February, involving Mid Suffolk District Council Planning dept. Cllrs Whitehead and Scarff confirmed they would be attending.

## 13. CIL receipts

No further action at this point

#### **14. Street Lights**

Cllr Thorpe shared a quotation from Folley Electrical Services for the repair of the street light on Tannery road. They have given a price of £1,080.04 plus VAT. The clerk will forward this to the insurers.

It was noted that the BT pole to which the lamp had been attached was leaning towards the road and debris around its base suggested that it had been in contact with several vehicles of late. The clerk will bring this to the attention of BT.

***Action: clerk to contact insurers and BT***

Cllr Thorpe also reported that the defective lamp by Queens Close may cost more than £4,000 to repair/replace. However there is a possibility that the problem is one for UK Power Network to address and this is being investigated.

#### **15. Parish Newsletter**

The deadline for the Spring newsletter is the end of February. Details of the Spring Clean Litterpick, proposed for 15<sup>th</sup> March, will be included. Cllr Chaplin has been asked to provide a report for the BARCLIF news and the clerk will work with the chairman on this.

#### **16. CAB request for support**

Stowmarket Citizens' Advice Bureau had written requesting financial support. Councillors noted the significant amount of help that had been provided to local people and AGREED to a donation of £100. Cheque number 22223 was written, and signed by Cllrs Thorpe and Scarff (*Local Government Act 1972, s 137*).

#### **17. Grants & Fundraising**

Councillors noted with gratitude the offers from the County and District Councillors to support the acquisition of another Speed Indicating Device.

#### **18. Diseased Tree, Webbs Close**

The Clerk has still heard nothing more from Landlink Ltd., the owners of the land around Webbs Close. As they have apparently chosen not to become involved in the issue, councillors instructed the clerk to obtain a quote for cutting the tree from local firms.

***Action: clerk to seek quotations for cutting the diseased tree.***

#### **19. Overgrown Hedges**

Letters have been handed to some hedge owners and councillors were pleased to note that action was being taken immediately in some cases. Some residents have accepted that industrial cutters are needed on their hedges and Councillors will look into assisting in this. The clerk was provided with details of further houses in the village that should be given a similar letter.

***Action: Clerk to deliver the letters.***

#### **20. Combs Cemetery**

Cllr Thorpe and the clerk will visit the cemetery at the end of January to clear away Christmas wreaths etc..

## **21. St Mary's Churchyard**

Table tomb: as noted last month permission has been granted to dismantle the tomb as proposed. Cllrs Scarff and Thorpe will attend to this once the ground is firmer.

## **22. Meeting Dates 2020/2021:**

The clerk reminded councillors that they had agreed last month, in light of Easter Monday coinciding with the standard date for meetings, to have a meeting on 20 April and to skip a May meeting unless it became essential. The clerk has since become reacquainted with the Local Government Act 1972, which requires that the Parish Council hold an annual meeting in May. It was **AGREED** to hold the AGM, as well as the Annual Parish Meeting, on 11 May 2020.

## **23. Any other business – potentially for inclusion on the next agenda**

- Battisford Parish Council have written suggesting the two councils pool the speed data from their SIDs. It was **AGREED** that the clerk implement this.
- Battisford preschool had left a note in the village hall asking for a donation towards the cost of iPads for the preschool children. After a discussion in which councillors expressed support for the preschool group generally, it was **AGREED** unanimously that they decline this request.
- Several areas in the village are in need of attention from the Highways department: ditches in Jacks Lane damaged by cars, resulting in them being blocked; the mouth of Verneuil Avenue/Poplar Hill – outside the village but of relevance – a large and growing pothole; footpath in the Slough (on the way to the Church hall) – vegetation on the path itself preventing access by pedestrians unless they walk on the road). The clerk is to contact Highways with a copy to Cllr Oakes.
- A councillor had noted the difficulty wheelchair users have in negotiating the kerb on the junction of Jack's Lane and Park Road. This is to be discussed at the next meeting.

## **24. Date and time of next meeting – Monday 10 February 2020 at 7.30pm**

The Meeting closed at 9.25pm

## Appendix 1

### District Councillor Report from John Matthissen for January 2020

<b>District Council Budget and Council Tax</b>	<p>The draft budget will be considered by Cabinet on 13 January and Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 16 January; it is expected to be approved at full Council meeting on 27 February. Government have agreed that Shire Districts may increase council tax by £5 or 2% whichever is the greater. There are no new proposals for Central Government grants to District Councils. Any new grant to replace Rate Support Grant (now nil) and New Homes Bonus (phased out soon) is likely to be based upon achieving higher house building targets.</p> <p>Baseline business rates will increase by 2%. Government propose a full business rates revaluation in 2021 with a fundamental still in the future.</p> <p>£500,000 is being allocated for measures to mitigate climate change.</p> <p>The net revenue budget is proposed to be £10M and the Capital Programme £12M, the latter includes a proposed further investment of £8.7M in commercial properties.</p> <p>It is proposed that there will be a Council Tax increase of 1.66%, this equates for a Band D property to £2.76 pa, 5p per week. (NB This is only for the District, there are precepts for SCC and Police to be added.)</p>
<b>Housing Revenue Account Budget</b>	<p>After four years of government-enforced reductions, the council is also proposing putting up council house rents by 2.7% - 1% above Consumer Prices Index. This will result in an average increase of £2.19 per week increase for tenants. Sheltered housing tenants also face an extra £2 a week for services and 62p more for utility bills.</p>
<b>Council Tax Payments</b>	<p>MSDC Cabinet on 6 January approved an initiative to introduce new fines for Council Tax fraud. Cabinet adopted a new protocol produced by Citizens Advice and Local Government Association for the collection of council tax arrears. This seeks to assist those falling behind with their payments in a less confrontational way.</p>
<b>Locality grants</b>	<p>The deadline for applications for locality grant funding is now the end of January. Councillors need to process the applications in February.</p>
<b>Needham Lake visitor centre</b>	<p>Plans for a £600,000 visitor centre/cafe at Needham Lake have been approved. Planning permission was granted on 11<sup>th</sup> December and 127 Trading company are the preferred tenants. Works should begin in spring 2020, and this will be a welcome addition to East Anglia's most visited free attraction.</p>
<b>Neighbourhood Plans</b>	<p>Two more neighbourhood plans – Eye and Fressingfield, are due to be adopted at the Cabinet meeting on 13th January.</p>

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