

**Minutes of Combs Parish Council Meeting
Monday 11 January 2021 at 7.30pm, via Zoom remote meetings**

(DRAFT UNTIL SIGNED)

Present: S Scarff (Chairman); V Whitehead (Councillor); I Walker (Councillor); S Ottewell (councillor); T Betchley (councillor); T Kitson (councillor); J Matthissen (District Councillor)(joined at 8:15)T Bamber (Clerk).

1. Apologies for absence

T Chaplin (Councillor); K Oakes (County Councillor);

2. Declarations of interest/ lobbying

Cllr S Scarff in respect of 9(a) (i) and 15 (non-pecuniary interest).

3. Public Forum

There were no members of public present.

4. Minutes of meeting held on Monday 14 December 2020

Minutes for 14 December 2020 were reviewed and it was agreed that they were to be signed as a true and accurate copy of the meeting by the Chairman.

Action: Clerk to arrange signature

5. Matters arising from the minutes

There were no matters not covered below

6. County Councillor's Report

Cllr Oakes had conveyed her apologies for absence. Due to illness, she has not been able to provide a report. Councillors expressed the wish that she feels better soon.

7. District Councillor's Report

District Cllr. Matthissen had not yet arrived as he had other parish councils' meeting to attend first, but his report (attached here as appendix 1) had been circulated and noted by councillors.

8. Parish Council Chairman's Report

The chairman had nothing to report that was not covered elsewhere.

9. Planning

a. Applications received for consideration:

i. DC/20/05746 – Oaks Meadow, Bildeston Road – *eco toilet, access and pond*.

The council had discussed the application when outlined last month and had instructed the clerk to submit and pay for the application on behalf of the council. Following a discussion it was AGREED, in the interests of clarity, to note the fact that, while the parish council supported the notion of the Oaks Meadow project, this did not mean it was committed to support every issue that may arise during its development. It was also agreed that no further comment was required on this specific application.



- ii. DC/20/05327 – Snowdrop Cottage, Park Road – *application for further change of conditions*

Following discussion the council voted to object to this application, with the following comments:

The council notes this further attempt to bring the design more in line with the initial application that was rejected. The main substance of the objections made by the parish council previously still stand.

In particular:

- Contrary to the description given, the effective increase in size could not reasonably be described as 'limited'
- The increase in height and the changed angle of the roof would result in a reduction of natural light on the neighbouring grade II listed property.
- The council are happy that the proposed porch (which had not appeared until the second application) has been removed. Speculation as to the reason for its earlier inclusion does nothing to dispel the concerns that this application is rather cynical.

Action: Clerk to post Councillors' views on planning website

- b. Decisions received from MSDC
- i. DC/20/04631 – *Land East of the Gardeners Arms – erection of two houses – refused*. Noted

10. Finance

- a. **Accounts review to date** – Current Account balance as of 26 December 2020 was £31,737.13 and the savings account balance as of 30 December 2020 was £1,920.79.

The budget analysis and financial summary were reviewed and accepted.

- b. **Payments received**
- i. None received

- c. **Payments to hand**

- i. EON Electricity for streetlights (direct debit) -£ 73.93). Approved by all councillors (*Parish Councils Act 1957, S.3; Highways Act 1980 S.301*)

Action: Clerk to arrange signatures and send

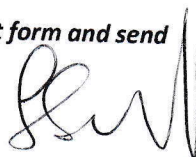
- d. **Internal Auditor** : It was AGREED that the clerk be instructed to appoint Suffolk Association of Local Councils as internal auditor for the year ending April 2021

Action: Clerk to contact SALC

- e. **Budget and precept:**

This had been discussed at the previous meeting (item 10(g)). The clerk has now received details from Mid Suffolk District Council of the council tax base, and this is very similar to the provisional figures on which the proposed budget and precept were postulated last month. Accordingly, it was AGREED that the budget be set as proposed (expenditure £16,192) and that the precept be set, as last year, at £9,000.

Action: Clerk to arrange signature of precept request form and send



11. Newsletter

Cllr Chaplin, despite her absence, had sent out some comments with regard to the next newsletter. Firstly, it was to be determined if, given the current lockdown, it was appropriate to have a newsletter delivered through each door. As the newsletter could not be considered essential it was agreed that there should be no deliveries for the time being, and that a brief summary be put on the notice boards and on the village website.

Action: Clerk to talk to Cllr Chaplin and post summaries.

12. SID Data

Cllr Walker noted that data could be downloaded from the SID devices and analysed. While there was no wish on the part of the Council to become involved in formally policing the village, it was agreed that a record of traffic through the village may well be of value in the event of any future planning issues. Cllr Kitson offered to help with this and the clerk will, in the first instance, send him the manual with a view to the two of them understanding how to download the data onto the council's laptop.

Action: Clerk to liaise with Cllr Kitson

13. Infrastructure Plan

The initial reason this item had been requested by Cllr Walker was in order to suggest, in the consultation that was taking place on the matter, that there could be a greater proportion of CIL funds allocated to those councils who had an infrastructure plan in place. However the time for that consultation has now passed. Nevertheless, Cllr Walker suggested that if the parish council had such a plan in place it may aid any future request for help from the District Council's CIL funds.

The work involved in drawing up an infrastructure plan would not be as great as that for a neighbourhood plan but was still no little task. Following indications of interest, Cllr Walker said he would pass samples of other parishes' plans to the clerk for circulation and consideration.

Action: Cllr Walker to send samples of infrastructure plans to clerk.

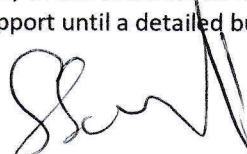
14. Cycle Paths

The Chairman reported he had no update yet.

15. Oaks Meadow

Cllr Whitehead provided an update on the project

- a) **Planning application:** The application has been lodged. The decision should be made within eight weeks.
- b) **Insurance:** details of the insurance have yet to be received. In response to a request for clarification it was agreed that the council would consider any subsequent renewal of the insurance as a separate request for support: there was no intention that the agreement to contribute to this year's cost was the start of an ongoing commitment..
- c) **CIL Application for Compost Toilet:** the general consensus was that no request could be considered formally until more details were available. While all councillors agreed that the project would be a great asset for the village, this was not a reason to spend residents' money lavishly. It was observed that it would be helpful to see evidence of successful fundraising by the charity to demonstrate its feasibility. It was agreed that the council could not consider any further financial support until a detailed business plan had been seen.

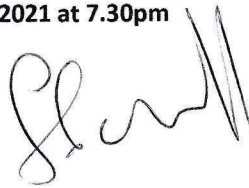


16. Correspondence/Any Other Business

- The council had received a request for donation from SARS. It was noted that a similar request had been received and considered last year and, as was the case then, it was agreed that, while it is a worthwhile cause, it is not one that is appropriate for the council's limited funds. During a subsequent discussion, it was agreed that, as a guide, no repeat requests for funds be considered within six months. The clerk keeps a register of charitable requests and it was agreed that this should be incorporated into the council's financial workbook.
- The condition of the village noticeboards is to be raised as an agenda item in February
- It was agreed that the chairman, Cllr Betchley and the clerk arrange to meet at the cemetery to discuss various proposals for the future. It was noted that the clerk should keep David Thorpe informed of any plans as he has agreed to continue to help despite having left the council.

17. Date and time of next meeting – Monday 8 February 2021 at 7.30pm

The Meeting closed at 9.46 pm

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J. Smith', is written over the text 'The Meeting closed at 9.46 pm'.

Appendix 1 – District Councillor's Report

District Councillor Report for Onehouse Ward – January 2021

Covid 19	Mid Suffolk is continuing to administer payments of grants to businesses forced to close or suffering a significant loss of income during the current lockdown period. The current assessment of additional costs since the start of the initial lockdown is £800k and income reduction currently stands at £1.3 million. Support from Central Government has so far totalled £2.2million. When shortfall in collection of council tax and business rates is also taken into account, the overall shortfall up to the end of December 2020 due to Covid 19 is estimated to be around £81k. This is likely to rise during the third lockdown period.
2021/2022 Budget	Council Members have received an initial briefing on the draft budget for 2021/22. Once again, the Council is planning for a surplus at the end of next year following a likely underspend during the current year. It is proposed that Council Tax be increased by 1.66%, which is equivalent to 23p per month for a Band D property. We continue to have concerns that inadequate staffing results in failure to deliver capital projects on time and shortcomings in other work such as planning enforcement. The budget will be debated by Council on 23 February.
CIFCO Ltd	Despite Government announcing that such borrowing would cease, MSDC with Babergh has bought a business centre in Basingstoke – cost not yet known.
Council House rents	MSDC propose to increase rents by 1.5%, equivalent to an average increase of £1.25 per week. There will be no increase in garage rents. Sheltered housing service charges are set to increase by £1 per week.
John Peel Centre	MSDC has agreed to lease the former NatWest bank building to the Centre at a peppercorn rent, which will provide a community space and entrance on the Market Place.
Refuse Vehicle Fuel	The Council's vehicle fleet will be transferred from fossil fuel diesel to Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) diesel, which is produced mainly from waste cooking oil. It is estimated that the councils' fleet of vehicles currently emits nearly 900 tonnes of carbon dioxide. This could be cut by 90%.
Joint Local Plan	The period to challenge the latest Draft version ended 24/12/20 and objections will go, together with the Submission Draft, to a Government Planning Inspector in the coming months.

Councillor John Matthissen

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