

**Minutes of Combs Parish Council Meeting
Monday 14 February 2022 at 7.30pm, Battsford Cricket Club**

(DRAFT UNTIL SIGNED)

Present: S Scarff (Chairman); I Walker (Vice Chairman); S Ottewell (councillor); T Kitson (councillor); T Betchley (councillor); K Oakes (County Councillor); J Matthissen (District Councillor) (arrived 8:13 PM); T Bamber (Clerk).

6 members of the public

1. Apologies for Absence

V Whitehead (Councillor) (by prior agreement); T Chaplin (Councillor) (by prior agreement);

2. Declarations of Interest/Lobbying

Cllr Betchley in respect of Oaks Meadow (update in item 16);

Cllr Walker observed that the Council had received representations from several residents, encouraging the council to endorse their objection to the planning application referred to in item 9 (a)(iii). While it was accepted that this did not constitute any form of pressure upon councillors, it was agreed that it would be prudent to record this.

3. Public Forum

The members of the public present were all there in respect of item 9 (a) (iii)

4. Minutes of Meeting held on Monday 10 January 2022

Minutes for Monday 10 January 2022 were reviewed and it was agreed that they were to be signed as a true and accurate copy of the meeting by the Chairman.

5. Matters arising from the Minutes

There were no matters arising that are not dealt with elsewhere.

6. County Councillor's Report

The County Councillor had sent her report and it is attached as appendix 1. Recognising that the planning applications would take some time she kindly refrained from further comment and invited councillors to contact her with any questions.

7. District Councillor's Report

The District Councillor had not arrived at this point but his contribution, on arrival after another parish council's meeting, at 8:13 pm, is recorded here for agenda consistency.

The district councillor had provided his report earlier and summarised this for councillors. This is attached as appendix 2.

8. Parish Council Chairman's Report

Nothing to report that is not covered elsewhere.



9. Planning

The chairman brought item 9 (a)(iii) forward in the interests of the residents who were attending to hear the discussions on this –

(a) (iii) DC/21/06594 Prospect Cottages, Park Road – construction of five 'move on' pods

All residents present objected to the application and upon being so invited by the chairman, nominated two people to speak on their behalf.

The comments were a summary of the objections that had already been lodged on the planning portal and these had all been studied by councillors.

In addition to the objections submitted regarding the application, residents were concerned that, as they understood it, the district councillor may be unable to support their objections because he sits on the planning committee. Upon his arrival, Cllr Matthissen explained that, if and only if the matter were to go to a full committee meeting, he would be prevented from voting. However, his role on the committee would not prevent him from commenting on the application or from asking questions.

Cllr Matthissen confirmed that he would be raising questions about the involvement, or lack of same, from adult community services, and also whether it should be subject to regulations regarding houses of multiple occupancy.

Questions were also raised by residents regarding some trees that had been on the site. It had been common knowledge that preservation orders had been put upon them and yet the trees were no longer there. Cllr Matthissen explained that the removal of the trees had been possible because of administrative incompetence, and even though the land owner would have known the order had been made, there could be no recriminations because the preservation orders were not accurately recorded.

Cllr Walker thanked the residents for taking the trouble to respond and to attend the meeting. He then went on to summarise the key issues, all of which were raised by residents and in accord with his own views:

There appears to be little or no criteria or justification for this new development, in fact this "draft" application appeared to be quite flimsy, and disingenuous in part, and solely riding on the coat tails of ill thought out pre application advice, which councillors would ask the planning officer to regard cautiously.

While local residents had put forward many reasons for objection, he and the other councillors recognised the burden on planning officers and so, while agreeing with much of what had been said already in opposition to this, he had chosen to limit his comments to items which cannot be engineered out and which should, in his view, be taken seriously by the planning authorities when considering any application.

Visual and setting impact: contrary to the contention of the applicant, erection of these pods would be a change that is not only unsightly but out of keeping with the existing structures in terms of design and style. It would also be out of keeping and dominant in this setting which would result in significant harm to the character and visual amenity of the site and the countryside.

Amenities: the proposal would result in loss of a substantial portion of recreational space for the existing residents. The associated impact of this would affect their wellbeing by funnelling them into a greatly reduced area that would now no longer be conducive as a stepping stone for a return into mainstream life.

Long term: concern exists over the permanency and suitability of these pods were the site ever to revert into private dwelling.

Justification: there would seem to be a speculative nature to the application, not driven by evidenced need.

Over development: this is a relatively small site and the proposed further development would result in there being little remaining space left. As mentioned above this affects the residents but the cumulative impact on neighbouring properties and residents is far from insignificant.



All councillors agreed with this helpful summary and it was AGREED that the clerk should lodge the comments and objection on the planning portal.

Action: clerk to post comments

a. Other applications received for consideration:

- i. DC/21/0031 – Land South of Little London – change of use

The Council voted to support this application.

- ii. DC/21/01609 (appeal APP/W3520/W/21/3281395) Moats Tye Livery: erection of one dwelling

Councillors noted that they had not objected to the earlier application, and still have no objection.

However, in light of the considerable amount of planning activity in the area, they believe it not unreasonable to reflect comments previously made by the planning office, namely that this development, like others in the area, would be car dependent.

Action: Clerk to post Councillors' views on planning website

b. Decisions received from MSDC

- i. DC/21/06581 Corner Cottage, Jacks Lane – Erection of a summerhouse *granted*. Noted
ii. DC/21/06243 & 06247 Land at Moats Tye – Erection of two dwellings – *granted*. Noted

10. Finance

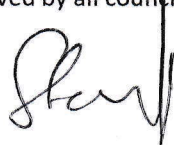
- a. **Accounts review to date** – Bank statements had not arrived so the Current Account balance as of 31 January 2022 was calculated to be £38,066 and the savings account balance was unchanged at £1,922.71. The clerk hopes to find a better way to bank that does not result in such delays.

The Budget analysis and financial summary were reviewed and accepted. The clerk confirmed that the Section 137 expenditure was unchanged at £250 so far this year.

- b. **Payments received**
(none)

c. **Payments to hand**

- i. Npower for streetlights (direct debit): £104.94. This is higher than usual and being investigated by the clerk with a view to seeking a refund in the event Npower are wrong but in the meantime the direct debit was approved by all councillors (*Parish Councils Act 1957, S.3; Highways Act 1980 S.301*)



11. Review of:

a. Data breach policy

Councillors agreed that the current version on the website was appropriate. The clerk will note its reapproval.

b. Accessibility Statement;

The clerk explained that this had been mentioned in the last audit. There are no known problems regarding website accessibility within the village and so he had drawn up a draft statement that sought to address the issue while recognising the need to avoid this becoming unduly burdensome, given the size of the village.

c. Internal Control Report

Cllr Walker had kindly reviewed and updated the report. He suggested that in the interests of transparency another councillor (not a cheque signatory) should perhaps also review it. Cllr Kitson offered to do this and the clerk will send it to him for second approval prior to lodging the report on the website.

12. Litter Pick

It was agreed that the litter pick be held this year on Sunday 3rd April, meeting at 9:00AM at the Tannery car park.

Cllr Ottewell will publicise this in the newsletter, while the chairman will put up notices around the village and ask Mr Crooks if he would be happy to participate as he usually does.

The clerk will write to the Tannery asking for permission to use the car park as a meeting place.

Action: clerk to contact:

- Tannery for use of car park and
- MSDC for refuse sacks and agreement to collect rubbish on the Monday after the litter pick.

13. Signpost Plaques

Cllr Kitson has received plaques with QR codes for the footpaths and will be inviting councillors to assist with pinning these to signposts near to them.

14. Jubilee Celebrations

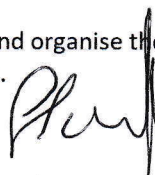
The chairman confirmed that the beacon will be lit on Thursday 2nd June. The church choir plans to sing a specially composed song, Cllr Betchley will be seeking the involvement of a piper and councillors were invited to consider if any further activity might be possible to mark the event. The Beacon is to be lit at 21:45.

The chairman has been informed that the church will be available for hospitality afterwards.

15. Councillor Numbers

The chairman reported that both cllrs Whitehead and Chaplin had chosen to resign, due to outside pressures. All councillors were sad to see them go and agreed that their departure would be hard to make up for.

The clerk will put in motion the necessary reporting and organise the publicity to highlight the vacancies. Councillors will give some thought to their possible replacements.



At this point the meeting had been going for the maximum two hours, but councillors agreed that it was appropriate to continue beyond this time.

16. Correspondence/Any Other Business

- The clerk had been informed of damage to the cemetery gate. The car that hit it had driven off without reporting it but fortunately there had been three witnesses who had noted the registration number. The clerk has reported the matter to the police and to the council's insurers. The chairman will seek repair estimates.
- Cllr Betchley reported that the insurance for Oaks Meadow was due for renewal and that the committee were wondering if the parish council might be willing to meet this cost (about £100) as they had done last year. Councillors agreed they were supportive of the idea, but this would have to be a formal agenda item in order to proceed. The clerk will put it on the March agenda.
- Cllr Ottewell confirmed that the newsletter should be ready for distribution by next week.
- The chairman asked if councillors would be willing to move the date of the May meeting (APM and AGM) from Monday 9th to Tuesday 10th May. It was agreed that they would let the clerk know if this would cause problems and the clerk would then take the matter up.
- The clerk drew attention to the suggestion in the last audit that councillors may wish to consider adopting a privacy statement for the web site. As there are no aspects of the council's web site that requires residents' data to be input it was considered that such a statement was unnecessary. However this point will be monitored to ensure circumstances do not later arise that make its introduction worthwhile.

17. Date and time of next meeting – Monday 14th March at 7.30pm in Battsford and District Cricket Club.

The Meeting closed at 9.48 pm

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J. Smith', written over the text 'The Meeting closed at 9.48 pm'.

Appendix 1 – County Councillor’s Report

February 2022 Town and Parish Newsletter

For more information on all stories visit:

[Suffolk County Council | Conservative Group \(suffolkconservatives.org.uk\)](http://suffolkconservatives.org.uk)



Council prepares budgets for its finances and the environment

Column by Councillor Richard Rout, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Environment

For the first time in its history, Suffolk County Council will be presented with TWO budgets at its Full Council meeting in February.

One of these budgets is the Financial Budget, which has been a regular feature of Full Council meetings ahead of the new financial year. This is where I present how we propose to generate and spend money to provide the best possible services for everyone in Suffolk.

But this year, for the first time, a detailed Carbon Budget will also be presented. This is an important step, as it will allow the Council to monitor its progress against our ambitious target of being a Net Zero organisation by 2030.

I'll explain more about the Carbon Budget shortly, but first I want to address our Financial Budget – what the last year has been like, what pressures the council is under, and how you will play a key role to enable the council to provide and invest in the services that many residents need to access.

It has been a very difficult budget to consider, especially with Covid continuing to make life challenging on every level, both professionally and personally. This is true of the council's finances too - we also continue to face rising costs. In addition, the demands on our services have hugely increased, particularly for our adult care and children's services.

The pandemic continues to have a big impact on our aim to help everyone stay active, healthy and lead independent lives – as well as supporting those with more complex needs, by providing social care, through our amazing team of care workers.

Covid has brought challenges to the services we provide to children and families, from childcare to supporting young children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). I'd like to thank our teams that have worked tirelessly to ensure children and families have been supported during this time.


I'm pleased to say that I've worked with my colleagues to propose a budget which will not see any reductions in our services, and invests further where it is most needed.

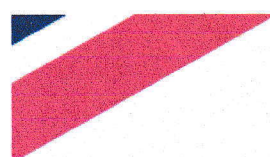
For example, we propose to increase our family services budget by £1.1m from next year, to specifically address the recommendations made by the recent independent SEND review – this is in addition to our previous commitment of £45m to develop SEND provision.

In the public consultation we ran at the end of 2021, you told us that highways and the environment were your top priorities, after children's services and adult care.

We plan to invest in these areas, for example an additional £1m over the next four years, to be spent on things like road signs and responsible verge cutting. Over the next 3 years, we have also committed to £10m to specifically deliver an increasing number of drainage schemes, and £10m to improve footpath quality and access. There will also be a £12.8m investment to decarbonise the buildings that we own.

To maintain the services we provide, and to invest further, we will be asking you for an extra 1.99% in Council Tax and an additional 1% in Adult Social Care Precept. We did have the option of asking for another 1% on top of these increases, but decided against this as we believe that the lower amount will be sufficient to provide a balanced budget, with no need to reduce any of our services.





If you live in a Band B property – the most common type of property in Suffolk – this works out an additional £0.62 per week, compared to your bill last year.

In our public consultation, there were more people who agreed that council tax would need to go up, compared to those that didn't. This was especially true for funding adult care. By paying this extra each week, we are all helping the council to provide its key services, and supporting those who need it most.

As I mentioned, in February we will also be presenting Suffolk County Council's first ever Carbon Budget. We want to be a Net Zero organisation by 2030 -his means reducing our impact on climate change where we can. We do this by reducing our carbon emissions as much as possible, for example making our buildings more efficient, procuring goods and services from suppliers who have a similar Net Zero ambition, moving our vehicles over to electric, and investing in our environment.

A Net Zero Carbon Budget for the council enables us to evaluate the impact of decisions we take. It provides a baseline for measurement every year, against which we can track our progress.

These are two budgets which I'm extremely proud to be involved with. I think both will have a positive impact on Suffolk – both in terms of looking after our residents, but also protecting the environment and county in which we are privileged to live.

Suffolk County Council waives fees for Platinum Jubilee events

It was announced on January 18th that to mark the celebration of Her Majesty the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, Suffolk County Council will be waiving street party road closure fees.

On Sunday 6 February 2022, Her Majesty the Queen will celebrate her Platinum Jubilee, marking 70 years of service. To celebrate this milestone, events will be taking place across the Country, particularly over the four-day Bank Holiday weekend, between 2 and 5 June 2022. This bank holiday gives communities and people throughout the UK the opportunity to come together and celebrate with their neighbours.

For all events on Sunday 5 June 2022, which is being referred to nationally as the 'Big Jubilee Lunch', Suffolk County Council will not be charging fees normally associated with road closures.

The following website has been set up for those who are looking to organise a street party as a group of residents, or as a local authority, for an event in a large public space, such as a park:

<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/PlatinumJubileeEvent>.


As part of the main criteria for a road to be closed, the road must be residential with no through traffic (i.e. a cul-de-sac or traffic not able to access another road from the event road, etc.) and only resident traffic will be affected.

To be allocated traffic management to assist with an event, all applications must be received before 11pm on Sunday 27 March 2022. Traffic management will consist of 5 traffic cones, 1 road closure sign and an advance warning sign, which may be delivered to the chosen drop off point, up to Thursday 2 June 2022.

If any applications are received after 11pm on Sunday 27 March 2022, these may still be processed. However, Suffolk County Council cannot cover the costs of traffic management for the event, nor will Suffolk County Council be able to provide any form of traffic management equipment. This is due to possible supply chain constraints and other operational demands.

For full details, including street party event criteria, information on insurance and licences, please ensure you visit this link <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/PlatinumJubileeEvent>





If you have any queries, please contact Suffolk County Councils Customer Services team on 0345 606 6171 or email customer.services@suffolk.gov.uk

Find more information on how to get involved in celebrating Her Majesty's historic reign, at platinumjubilee.gov.uk.

Warm Homes Suffolk Fund to heat up cold homes this winter

It was announced on January 27th that residents can cut energy costs and reduce their carbon.

Suffolk residents who are struggling to keep their homes warm, can contact a new project which offers funding and free advice at www.warmhomessuffolk.org.

Suffolk's councils have joined together to establish Warm Homes Suffolk, which launches today. The team will be on hand to offer expert advice on reducing energy bills, energy usage and identify benefits that residents may be entitled to, to help keep their homes warm.

The work of Warm Homes Suffolk will also help the county towards its target of Net Zero by 2030, as the project aims to better insulate homes and provide more efficient heating, meaning less carbon is released into the atmosphere.

A successful bid was made to the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS) for £2.7 million pounds of funding to run Warm Homes Suffolk - The Warm Feeling Fund. This is part of the Government's (Local Authority Delivery phase two) LAD2 Scheme, designed to improve the energy efficiency of Britain's homes.

The bid was led by Suffolk County Council, on behalf of all councils in the county.

Councillor Andy Drummond, Chair of the Suffolk Environment Cabinet Members group, said:

"With an imminent spike in energy costs for all households, Suffolk's authorities have joined together to offer valuable support and advice to residents. We want to assure people that help is out there, so that you don't have to live in a cold house, or become unwell, by worrying about your energy bills.


"If you, or anyone you know is having difficulty heating their home, or is concerned about their energy bills, please get in touch with Warm Homes Suffolk."

For eligible residents, the scheme can offer a range of home upgrades, including cavity, loft and external insulation, installation of solar photovoltaic systems and switching central heating to more efficient low carbon heat pumps.

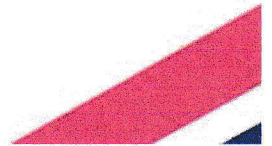
The scheme is available to homeowners, those renting and landlords. There are some conditions to meet before being able to access funding, which is aimed at residents who are:

- earning under £30,000 per annum
- currently receiving benefits (or think you may be eligible)
- living in homes with a low energy rating

If you are a landlord with tenants and property that meet the above criteria, then you could receive a subsidy of up to two-thirds for work which improves the energy efficiency of your property, up to the value of £5,000.



More details and further information about eligibility can be found in the on the Warm Home Suffolk website www.warmhomesuffolk.org, or by calling **03456 037 686**. Lines are open Monday to Friday between 9am and 4pm.



Appendix 2 – District Councillor’s Report

District Councillor’s Report: Onehouse Ward Parish Council January 2022

MSDC Annual Monitoring Report 2020/21	<p>This report gives details of housing completions and outstanding permissions and other data related to housing development in Mid Suffolk.</p> <p>672 new dwellings were built in the district in 2020/21 - 131% of the current annual target (513 dwellings) set by the national standard methodology. 29% of these were affordable homes.</p> <p>There are 7,444 outstanding planning permissions (as at 01/04/21) which are either not started or under construction.</p> <p>£1,017,746.36 CIL payments were made to town and parish councils.</p> <p>29% of all residential completions were delivered on previously developed land, against a target of 50%.</p>
Joint Local Plan	<p>We are still waiting for confirmation of timings for the new process for the Joint Local Plan. At present, the Inspector has stated that, with regards to housing, the Council should revert to the current plans which include the Core Strategy (2008), the Core Strategy Focused Review (2012), the Stowmarket Area Action Plan (2013) and various Neighbourhood Plans, with any decision taking into account the most recent National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2021).</p>
Mid Suffolk District Council Budget and Council Tax	<p>The draft 2022/23 budget was considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in January and is due to be considered at full Council in February.</p> <p>The proposed budget is expected to be nearly £9 million. The District’s part of council tax is expected to stay the same, however the amount raised will increase by £285,000 (to £6.96 million) due to increases in households paying the tax. Currently the draft budget forecasts a surplus of £3.35 million which will go into reserves. Overall Council Tax will rise significantly however, as SCC and Police Commissioner are proposing rises.</p>
Business Grants to help recovery after COVID.	<p>Businesses in Mid Suffolk who have been severely impacted by Omicron can now apply for a one-off grant payment through one of two Covid-19 support grants:</p> <p>The Omicron Hospitality and Leisure Grant (OHLG) is open to businesses with a rateable value in hospitality, leisure and accommodation premises who offer in-person services.</p> <p>The Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) is a discretionary grant open to hospitality, leisure and accommodation businesses who are excluded from the OHLG scheme, as well as personal care businesses and some wholesale businesses who supply the hospitality, leisure and accommodation sectors. Details on the MSDC website https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/features/our-covid-19-response/businesses/.</p>
Accommodation review	<p>The MSDC Cabinet has decided to reduce the office space in Ipswich, but declined to consider moving back to our district.</p>
No to Governance Review	<p>Although Babergh DC are reviewing governance including consideration of a return to a committee instead of cabinet model, the chair’s casting vote was used to defeat a proposal that MSDC conduct a review alongside Babergh.</p>
MSDC Waste and Recycling Site, Stowmarket	<p>The household waste and recycling site in Stowmarket is to be closed for re-surfacing works for 2 weeks commencing on 28th Feb. During that time waste can be taken to either Ipswich or Bury St Edmunds waste and recycling sites.</p>

John Matthissen

councillor@matthissen.net

01449 258894

07976 308128