

**Minutes of Combs Parish Council Meeting
Monday 14 March 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 8:35 PM); T Bamber (Clerk).

1. Apologies for Absence

There were no absences

2. Declarations of Interest/Lobbying

Cllr Ottewell in respect of item 10 (c)(iv));
Cllr Scarff in respect of item 9(a)(ii) – non- pecuniary

3. Public Forum

No members of the public were present

4. Minutes of Meeting held on Monday 14 February 2022

Minutes for Monday 14 February 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 councillors would have already read her report she kindly refrained from further comment and invited councillors to contact her with any questions.

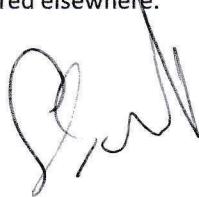
7. District Councillor's Report

The District Councillor had not arrived at this point but his contribution, on arrival after another parish council's meeting, at 8:35 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

a. Applications received for consideration:

- i. DC/22/00777 – Snowdrop Cottage, Park Road – amended application

The Council voted to object to this application as the changes proposed are out of keeping with the character of the property and the neighbourhood: all agreed with the comments made by the heritage officer and trust the planning office will take full account of those points.

- ii. DC/22/01019 Land North of Bildeston Road – erection of nine dwellings – submission of details

Councillors agreed to support this application

Action: Clerk to post Councillors' views on planning website

b. Decisions received from MSDC

- i. DC/22/00031 Land South of Little London – change of use to form one dwelling - Noted

10. Finance

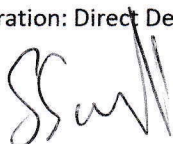
- a. **Accounts review to date** – The clerk reported the Current Account balance as of 2 March 2022 was £41,605.58 and the savings account balance was unchanged at £1,922.71. The clerk has initiated requests of the bank to add Cllr Betchley as a signatory and to permit the clerk to access statements online.

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): The amount of the direct debit is yet to be confirmed: the suppliers have apologised for the erroneous first invoice, which included two standing charges and have advised that correcting invoices will follow. In light of the direct debit guarantee the notion of payment, for the amount yet to be determined, was approved by all councillors (*Parish Councils Act 1957, S.3; Highways Act 1980 S.301*)
- ii. Clerk's Pay: the HMRC website provided the calculation showing that as employer the council should pay the clerk £4049.60 by way of net pay for the year and HMRC the sum of £1012.40 being the PAYE due. Approved by all councillors and cheque numbers 22282 and 22283 were written and signed. (*Local Government Act 1972, s 142*)
- iii. Oaks Meadow insurance renewal: £145.60. Approved by all councillors and cheque number 22284 was written and signed (*open Spaces Act 1906 ss9-10*)
- iv. Newsletter printing costs paid by Cllr Ottewell: £145.20. Approved by all councillors .Cheque number 22285 was written and signed (*Local Government Act 1972 s 111*)
- v. Data Protection Act Annual registration: Direct Debit Approved by all councillors (*Local Government Act 1972, s 142*).



- d. VAT recovery: The clerk reported that the total VAT expenditure for the last two years amounted to under £600 and that he proposed to complete the VAT reclaim form at the end of this financial year. This was agreed by all councillors.

11. Review of Internal Control Report

The updated internal control report had been circulated for review and councillors agreed that this be accepted and posted on the website.

12. Newsletter

Cllr Ottewell had produced an excellent newsletter and all councillors joined in thanking her for such a good job.

13. Litter Pick

The litter pick is planned for Sunday 3rd April, starting at 9:00am in the Tannery car park.

14. Jubilee Celebrations

The chairman reported that the church choir would be participating prior to the lighting of the beacon on 2nd June. Following a discussion it was agreed that there was no real need for a piper at the event.

15. PIIP Priorities

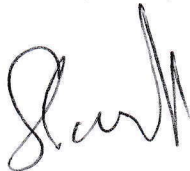
Cllr Walker explained the process for prioritising the various initiatives and he will circulate his list for consideration.

16. Correspondence/Any Other Business

- Cllr Kitson reported that the footpath plaques are in place and that 9 of the 10 damaged signposts have been acknowledged by the county council. He will be following this up.

17. Date and time of next meeting – Monday 11th April at 7.30pm in Battsford and District Cricket Club.

The Meeting closed at 8.40 pm

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J. Walker', is written below the text 'The Meeting closed at 8.40 pm'.



Appendix 1 – County Councillor’s Report

March 2022 Town and Parish Newsletter

Council focuses on children’s services, adult care and the environment, as budget confirmed

Suffolk County Council has approved its financial budget for 2022-23, alongside its first-ever full Net Zero carbon budget.

Both items were passed at the Full Council meeting on Thursday 17 February 2022, providing a focus on children’s services, adult care and the environment.

The council’s budget will rise by 4.5% (from £598.2m to £625.4m), with the additional money generated by a 1.99% increase in council tax, a further 1.00% from the Adult Care Precept, and an increase in grants received from the Government.

The Net Zero carbon budget will allow the council to measure its carbon emissions and monitor and evaluate the impact of decisions it makes. This will mean it can report each year on its progress, tracking its ambitions towards Net Zero.

Council’s commitment to further enhancing Suffolk’s natural environment

It was announced on February 1st that Suffolk County Council will be doing even more for the county’s natural environment.

Suffolk County Council will be doing even more for the county’s natural environment, as it confirms plans to enhance the biodiversity of at least 30% of its land and assets, by 2030.

This means it will be progressing its work around managing highway trees, planting more hedgerow, nature-based flood management solutions, roadside nature reserves, and much more.

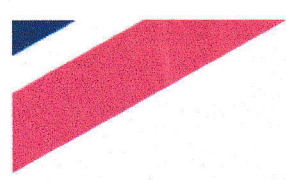
The council already planted 100,000 trees last year, and is on course to plant another 100,000 this year. It has also put in around 20 kilometres of mixed species hedgerow.

Residents urged to support Suffolk spectacular

Suffolk is set to stage a host of exciting Jubilee celebrations during 2022 – bringing the county’s communities together to mark this momentous milestone.

Her Majesty The Queen will become the first ever British Monarch to celebrate a Platinum Jubilee, on Sunday 6 February, after 70 years of service.





The unprecedented anniversary will be celebrated throughout the year, with a four-day UK bank holiday taking place from Thursday 2 to Sunday 5 June to enable people to commemorate the occasion.

Plans are already in place for a Festival of Suffolk – the county’s biggest ever community event. This year-long spectacular will incorporate much-loved existing events, such as the Suffolk Show, alongside dedicated Jubilee celebrations, including a race day and torch relay. Details on the latest line-up can be found at: www.festivalofsuffolk.org/.

Lord Lieutenant of Suffolk, Clare, Countess of Euston commented:

“I am delighted that Suffolk is providing a wealth of Jubilee events for everyone to enjoy.

“This will not only unite communities in joyful celebration but will also create a powerful legacy to increase the visibility of our county and improve local lives for many years to come.”

A highlight of the festival is the Big Jubilee Lunch, set to take place on Sunday 5 June. The initiative encourages people to come together and celebrate, either by hosting their own street party or simply enjoying a cup of tea with a neighbour.

To help facilitate this, Suffolk County Council has set up a dedicated webpage: www.suffolk.gov.uk/PlatinumJubileeEvent and will waive its fees for any road closures for events on this day, as well as providing free assistance with traffic management for all applications received before 11pm on Sunday 27 March.

The council is also supporting the Queen’s Green Canopy in Suffolk, which aims to plant over 775,000 new trees in 2022 – one for each resident in the county.

Almost a quarter of a million trees have been planted to date, with everyone urged to visit suffolk-lieutenancy.org.uk/queens-green-canopy/ and find out how they can ‘Plant a Tree for the Jubilee’ either directly or via one of the many organisations taking part in the scheme.


In addition to using the Jubilee as an opportunity to create a greener county, a focus on health and wellbeing will also form an important part of the celebrations, with plans for themed park runs across Suffolk and a County Community Games tournament currently in development.

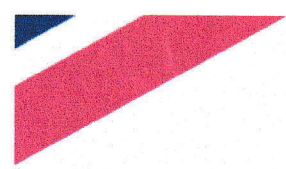
Suffolk cements commitment to keeping its communities safe

A new strategy was announced on February 7th outlining how Suffolk will address Violence Against Women and Girls has been published today.

The strategy has been prepared collaboratively by the Safer Stronger Communities Board (SSCB) – consisting of representatives from Suffolk County Council, district and borough councils, the police, Suffolk’s Police & Crime Commissioner, community safety partnerships, health and probation services, the Norfolk & Suffolk Criminal Justice Board and Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership.

All board members hold a shared ambition to tackle the incredibly important issue of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) which includes, but is not limited to, domestic abuse, sexual violence, stalking,





coercive and controlling behaviour, and revenge porn – all of which have a devastating impact on victim-survivors, families, and communities.

Good news for Suffolk Government gives the green light to negotiate a County Deal

Leader of Suffolk County Council, Councillor Matthew Hicks, on February 8th, explained why a new county deal is good for Suffolk, and why we don't need a new Mayor. He said:

In August last year, I wrote about the efforts of Suffolk's Public Sector Leaders in working to secure from the Government a devolution deal for Suffolk. Last week, at the same time as the publication of the Levelling Up White Paper, we heard the news that Suffolk was successfully chosen as one of nine areas across the country to have been given the opportunity of negotiating a new County Deal.

This is fantastic news for Suffolk, and I am delighted about it.

One of the questions I've heard a lot since the announcement is, what would a deal mean for Suffolk? To clarify we do not have a deal yet, and we have many more months of negotiations and discussions with Government ahead of us before we can look to finalise an actual deal.

Some of the areas we included in our initial discussion centred around the development and roll out of Oyster style travel cards to increase the attractiveness and effectiveness of public transport and longer-term funding for major transport infrastructure upgrades, not just one-off funding.

We also discussed with Government the opportunity of keeping all the apprenticeship levy funding raised in Suffolk in Suffolk, benefiting more people here. This could create the opportunity to work with the University, colleges, business and others to explore how this money could be better used.


Negotiating the devolution of the powers necessary to develop more innovative projects to help deliver further action on Climate Change and make good on our promises around net zero by 2030 are also possible. Whilst I was delighted to read the other day that in a recent study Suffolk County Council was ranked as the third-best county council nationally for our response to the climate crisis, our ambitions in this area could be taken further still via a County Deal.

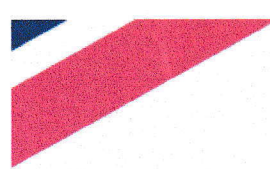
What I can promise you, however, is that during the negotiations I will be pushing the Government for the maximum amount of benefit for the people of Suffolk.

Finally, one of the areas related to this announcement which gained a lot of attention, especially from the media, was the potential for a directly elected Mayor of Suffolk, like the Metropolitan Mayors across the country in areas like the West Midlands. Let me say here and now, this is not something which Suffolk has asked for and importantly not something we need to secure a deal with Government.

Whilst of course we recognise the work of such Mayors like Andy Street and Ben Houchen, this additional level of oversight is not needed for our deal given the strong levels of co-operation and leadership already found here in Suffolk. Do not forget, this opportunity is the result of an ongoing dialogue to promote Suffolk to central Government strongly supported by our MPs and the partnership working with district and borough councils. Going forward this partnership working will continue alongside health partners, emergency services, the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Chamber of Commerce.

I have always been ambitious for Suffolk, and I believe the opportunities within a County Deal would help





unlock more potential in Suffolk and help us level up across the county; especially as we start to slowly escape the clutches of COVID. We will negotiate hard for a deal that will give us the tools we need to build back better, build back stronger and build back greener.

Plans for a large solar farm are seriously flawed and can't be supported, say Suffolk County Council

On February 18th, Suffolk County Council published its concerns over plans for a large solar farm in West Suffolk and East Cambridgeshire.

Cabinet papers released today state that plans for the 2,792-acre Sunnica solar farm project are unacceptable in their current form. The paper claims it is impossible for the Government to fully evaluate the significance and degree of the impact of the site because several key assessments are inadequate. A link to the papers can be found [on the committee minutes page](#).

Plans to build the Sunnica solar farm are currently with the Planning Inspectorate for examination. In time, the Planning Inspectorate will make a recommendation to the Secretary of State for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy who will, ultimately, be responsible for making the final decision. The recommendations made in this Cabinet paper, if agreed, will form part of Suffolk County Council's initial submission to the Planning Inspectorate.



Appendix 2 – District Councillor’s Report

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

Budget 2022/23	Mid Suffolk Council discussed the budget 2022/23 at the Council meeting held on 24 th February. Council tax is to remain at the same rate so annual Mid Suffolk proportion of the council tax bill for a Band D property be £171.59. Sheltered housing charges and garage rents also remain frozen at 2021/22 levels. The Administration agreed on the Opposition proposal to fund two electric bus services to enable residents to get to and from Stowmarket in a sustainable manner. The funding for this project will be from the Growth and Efficiency fund.
Housing Revenue Account	Mid Suffolk District Council tenants face an increase of 4.1% to their rents, to cover inflationary pressures and allow investment in improving the quality of council homes. This means average weekly social rent would increase by £3.45 from £84.42 to £87.84. For affordable housing, weekly rents would increase by £4.99 from £121.34 to £126.33.
Thurston Neighbourhood Plan Court Ruling	I welcome the decision to quash the approval of 210 new homes in Thurston, which were contrary to the village’s Neighbourhood Plan. The District committee decision 2 years ago was approval by 7 votes to 6, and I voted against. It is disappointing that the District has decided to appeal this Judicial Review ruling.
Peer Review	This is conducted at least every 5 years, organised by the Local Government Association, at the request of the 2 councils. It is not an inspection but a ‘critical friend’ looking for strengths and good practice and areas for improvement. Senior officers and councillors from elsewhere spend a week talking with staff, councillors and other community representatives and report in a few weeks’ time.
Endeavour House office accommodation	We are reducing office space in Endeavour House. Following COVID there is now more hybrid working and less space is needed so the space will be reconfigured at a cost of about £250,000 but should provide longer term net savings in the region of £675,000 over the next 5 years. This decision was made by Cabinets of both Councils.
Business Grants to help recovery after COVID.	There are just a few days left for businesses to apply for help, with applications closing on Friday 18 th March. https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/features/our-covid-19-response/businesses/ .
Thurston By-election	Following the departure of Cllr Wendy Turner there was a by-election for a new district councillor for the Thurston Ward. Green Party candidate Austin Davies gained more than double the number of votes for the Conservative candidate and was duly elected. MSDC remains balanced with 17 members in each of the two groups.
Planning applications	Concern continues regarding several of these. If applications go to planning committee, I will be there to ensure local views are heard. If there is opposition from the parish council, I will discuss with the planning officer. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tannery garden, Combs – withdrawn for review • Forest Road, Onehouse – in principle, no date yet • Union Road, Onehouse (Bloor) – amended detail following re-consultation provisional committee date April 6th • Pear Tree Place, Great Finborough – detail - no committee date yet • Prospect Cottages, Combs ‘move-on’ units – awaiting comment from SCC social services