

Minutes of Combs Parish Council Meeting
Monday 11th July 2022 at 7.30pm, Battsford Cricket Club

Present: T Kitson (Vice Chairman); S Ottewell (councillor); S Scarff (councillor); T Betchley (councillor); K Oakes (County Councillor); T Bamber (Clerk), and one member of the public.

1. Apologies for Absence

J Matthissen (District Councillor) had sent his apologies for absence due to covid. The absence was accepted by councillors.

2. Declarations of Interest/Lobbying

Cllr Betchley – non-pecuniary interest in respect of Oaks Meadow (item 13)

3. Public Forum

The member of the public was here to view learn more about the work of the council with a view to possibly standing as a councillor.

4. Minutes of Meeting held on Monday 20 June 2022

Minutes for Monday 20 June 2022 were reviewed and it was agreed that they be signed as a true and accurate copy of the meeting by the acting chairman.

5. Matters arising from the Minutes

The clerk reported that he had written to residents regarding Scotches Corner and that the residents were happy to take up the suggestion of keeping a diary of disruptions.

Cllr Scarff reported that the Combs and Battsford Fete was a very popular and enjoyable event with great support from both villages

6. County Councillor's Report

The County Councillor had sent her report and it is attached as appendix 1. The chairman thanked her for her report and also congratulated her on her maiden speech to the county council.

7. District Councillor's Report

The District Councillor was absent due to covid but his report had been circulated previously. This is attached as appendix 2.

8. Parish Council Chairman's Report

Nothing to report that is not covered elsewhere

9. Planning

Cllr Scarff expressed concern that work was well under way for the new houses by the Tannery, but that the commercial development, which was a condition of the planning permission, showed no sign of being started. The clerk will enquire with the district councillor.

Action: clerk to contact Cllr Matthissen



- a. There were no applications received for consideration:
- b. Decisions received from MSDC
 - i. **DC/22/02419** – White House Farm, Moats Tye – erection of one dwelling DC/21/06308 Land at the Tannery – Discharge of conditions – Refused. Cllr Scarff observed that this reflected the planning office's current stance: as the housing plan meets expected requirements for the next nine years, applications for new houses outside settlement boundaries will not be accepted.
Noted

10. Finance

- a. **Accounts review to date** – The clerk reported the Current Account balance as of 2 July 2022 was £45,551.66 and the savings account balance was £1,922.90.

The Budget analysis and financial summary were reviewed and accepted.

- (i) Eon refund £42.48 (being refund of overpayment in final month of Eon contract)

The clerk reported that he had so far got nowhere in finding better prices for electricity and the rising cost of electricity was discussed. Cllr Oakes said that she was not aware of other councils discussing this and the chairman observed that this may be because Combs was unfortunate in that its contract expired just at the time when the industry was in the throes of rapid price increases: other councils were probably enjoying the terms of their contracts. The chairman will make enquiries of some other possible suppliers.

- b. **Payments received**

- (i) £870 burial ground fees - noted

- c. **Payments to hand**

- i. Npower for streetlights (direct debit): £268.95. This was approved by all councillors (*Parish Councils Act 1957, S.3; Highways Act 1980 S.301*)

- d. **Banking:**

The clerk reported that he was still getting no responses or help from Santander. When trying to call to discuss problems the typical wait is an hour, after which the business banking department explains that the council's account is under corporate banking and transfers the call there. Corporate Banking in turn say it is business banking. Upon finally getting through the clerk's experience is either that the line goes dead or they say they cannot talk to the clerk because he is not a authorised signatory.

On investigating the possibility of moving banks it seems that Santander is one of very few banks that do not charge fees to non-profit organisations. The level of service may not be unconnected with this and councillors expressed a willingness to consider moving to a bank that charges monthly fees if the service were substantially better. The clerk will make further enquiries.

Action: Clerk to report back at next meeting

11. Model Publication Scheme

Following circulation of the model publication scheme, councillors agreed that this be adopted and so noted on the website.

12. Parish Boundaries

The chairman noted that Battsiford Parish Council had discussed the idea of proposing a change to the parish boundaries, removing several properties from Combs and including them within Battsiford.

Cllr Oakes explained that the Boundaries Review had been intended to be complete in time for the elections last year but that, because of covid, this had been delayed and the deadline was now in time for the next elections in 2024.

The chairman asked councillors to review the current parish boundaries (Cllr Scarff will circulate a current map) with a view to:

- a) Establishing the exact boundary
- b) Form a view on the current situation and proposals, and
- c) Agree a position on these proposals.

Action: Chair to collate views of councillors

13. Oaks Meadow

Cllr Betchley reported that the Midsummer open day had been a great success. He was also able to report that funding from Virador Credits would be helping the project.

The committee would like to enquire if the dog waste bin, currently located a short way east of the meadow, could be relocated to the entrance of the field to assist dog-walkers. Councillors agreed to this. Cllr Scarff will ask Mr Thorpe to arrange this and the clerk will inform Mid Suffolk District Council of the move.

Action: Clerk to contact MSDC

14. PIIP Priorities

The Chair will be arranging an informal meeting during the summer.

Action: Chair to convene informal meeting

15. Correspondence/Any Other Business

- The clerk reported that the application for an unconventional memorial stone in the cemetery (as mentioned last month) had now been changed to meet the cemetery regulations.
- The clerk reported that the masons who installed a memorial stone with a photograph have been asked to remove it. Their lack of response, after first trying to suggest it was an issue for the council to resolve, would indicate that they are now working on the matter.

16. Date and time of next meeting –Monday 12th September at 7.30pm in Battsiford and District Cricket Club.

The Meeting closed at 8.33 pm



Appendix 1

County Council report – July 2022

Council objects to Norwich to Tilbury pylon proposals

On June 8th, Suffolk County Council confirmed its intention to object to the proposals for National Grid's East Anglia GREEN pylon run.

A new network is needed to deliver electricity between Norwich, Bramford and Tilbury, to cope with the increasing amounts of renewable and low carbon electricity being generated around East Anglia.

This is National Grid's East Anglia GREEN proposal, which would see many pylons installed across the county, affecting the Suffolk countryside and its communities.

But the council does not support this proposal as it stands. It believes that there are better ways to manage the project, for example involving an undersea network which has not been fully investigated.

The council has been campaigning for government ministers and officials to introduce a more co-ordinated offshore approach to meet the demands of all the energy projects in the region.

Councillor Richard Rout, Suffolk County Council's Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance & Environment, has written to the Minister of State for Business, Energy and Clean Growth:

"The council absolutely supports ambitions for renewable energy and the government's commitment to meet the target of Net Zero by 2050. We recognise the benefits that can come from this project, and we continue to work with the government to develop coordinated offshore transmission.

"However, the council objects to the proposal for National Grid's East Anglia GREEN as it stands. I am determined that Suffolk will not suffer unnecessarily therefore, we will continue to protect our communities, residents and natural environment.

"Suffolk County Council has been lobbying government for 11 years on the issue of better coordination for offshore transmission. We are demanding that a more collaborative solution is found to manage the different network connection requirements coming into Suffolk and East Anglia, and that all network options are fully explored.

"Alongside other regional councillors and MPs, through our OffSET group (the Off-Shore Electricity Grid Task Force), we regularly speak with government ministers and officials to express our concerns about the impact of these projects on Suffolk, and East Anglia.

Last week I wrote directly to the Minister, to continue to represent Suffolk's communities and residents, to re-emphasise the recent points made by OffSET."

Successful communities awarded £6.4m to 'Reclaim the Rain' and tackle flooding

Norfolk and Suffolk County Council's joint Reclaim the Rain project, which aims to implement innovative and sustainable water management projects, progressed on June 14th.

The Norfolk and Suffolk County Council's joint Reclaim the Rain project, which aims to implement innovative and sustainable water management projects progresses as six communities are selected across both counties.

The project team received 37 formal applications from communities keen to be involved in Reclaim the Rain. These applications were carefully considered and whittled down to three communities in Suffolk and three in Norfolk.

The three chosen communities in Suffolk are:

- Boxford – this community displayed a strong interest in sustainable water management and ways in which the community could be more involved with water management.
- Friston – who are exploring innovative ways of resolving long-standing hard-to-resolve flood issues.
- Little Blakenham – they identified some excellent opportunities to work with upstream landowners, allowing them to have a more proactive approach in managing flood water running off their land.

The selection process was based on various factors, including each community's vulnerability to surface water flooding, water resource needs, rurality and the likelihood of attracting funding outside of our project.

In the coming months, Reclaim the Rain will be working closely with these communities to develop projects which maximise the opportunities to manage risks from both flooding and droughts. The overall project objective is to identify new ways of working that can be learnt from and evidenced to inform and influence future policy, approaches to, and investments in how flood risk is managed nationally in the coming years.

Suffolk leading the way in UK's water conservation

Announced on June 16th, a new scheme based in Felixstowe reuses over 800,000 tonnes of water.

Since its launch in February 2021 a unique scheme to the UK, based in Felixstowe, has saved over 800,000 tonnes of water being lost to the North Sea - and reused it to grow Suffolk crops.

Drainage water has traditionally been pumped away to the River Deben and North Sea, damaging saltmarsh along the way. Instead, it is now pumped back inland, conserving the saltmarsh and refilling 14 reservoirs, which six local farms are using to irrigate their crops.

Last week (9-10 June 2022) local landowners and national organisations were invited to visit the site, to hear first-hand from the scheme's operators, Felixstowe Hydrocycle, and from farmers who are benefitting from the scheme.

Organised by Suffolk County Council, working with the Environment Agency and University of East Anglia as key partners of the project, the event aimed to inspire more schemes to be trialled around Suffolk, the UK and Europe.

Extra funding agreed by Cabinet to fund new SEND places

Funding for second phase of £45 million five-year project agreed by Cabinet.

Suffolk County Council's Cabinet has today agreed an additional £15.9million to complete the funding for the creation of at least 879 specialist places for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

This money marks the second phase of a £45million five-year project to deliver specialist provision for SEND students in Suffolk. These places include units attached to mainstream schools and three new special schools.

So far, 500 new places have opened across the county, with another 325 due to open between September 2022 and September 2024 under phase 1. The additional money will enable the completion of phase 2 of the project, and the creation of between 54 to 72 new places, depending on design and planning.

The new SEND places support the growing number of children and young people in Suffolk who need specialist help at school. Between September 2021 and May 2022 there have been 1,333 referrals for specialist placements for children currently in mainstream schools.

Appendix 2 – District Councillor’s Report

District Councillor’s Report: Onehouse Ward Parish Councils July 2022

Residents’ survey	Babergh and Mid Suffolk are carrying out their annual survey of residents. Hopefully this will enable the Councils to understand more about residents’ and communities’ resilience and to help improve the Councils’ service. Up to 8,000 households (about 10%) from the districts have been randomly selected and invited to take part.
Mid Suffolk Council finances	For 2021/22, Mid Suffolk District Council has announced an underspend of £1.2 million against budget with net expenditure on services down by £1.6 million against a budget of £12.7 million. Total reserves stand at just over £24 million up nearly £4 million on the previous financial year. Capital expenditure was £13.3 million against a budget of £30 million. Recent capital expenditure includes £756,000 on the solar carport at the Stowmarket Leisure Centre (not yet operational due to issues with obtaining inverters), £666,000 on the Needham Lake café and £4.5 million on Gateway 14.
Housing Revenue Account Business Plan	At last month’s Council meeting the HRA business plan was agreed. It sets out the long term priorities and plans for the future of council housing in the district. The main priorities include tackling climate change, developing new council housing, involving tenants and improving the neighbourhoods.
Stowmarket Sport Hub	The full council endorsed the preliminary plans for this scheme embracing both Chilton Fields and the land behind the High School and Kingsfield. This confirmed that the land between Paupers Graves and the village of Onehouse will not be included.
Gateway 14	The Range has announced a £200 million investment to base a major distribution centre at Gateway 14 creating 1,650 jobs (across three shifts). Once a reserved matters planning application has been approved, work is expected to start in January 2023 and occupation of the new distribution centre in Autumn 2023.
UK Shared Prosperity Fund	This Fund has been set up by Government as a replacement for EU funding (although with less funds available) and in order to access it Councils must submit an investment plan. Funding is expected to be approximately £140,000 for the rest of this year, £280,000 next year and £780,000 the year after.
Grants for carbon-reduction	A new fund for community-based carbon-reduction projects is now open. Projects could include promoting cycling/walking, improving energy efficiency and raising awareness of climate change. Applications can be made via the Green Suffolk website. https://www.greensuffolk.org/news/

Locality Funding

I welcome applications from any local club or organisation in need of funding towards the cost of a local project.

<https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/communities/grants-and-funding/locality-awards-guidance/>. Please contact me with ideas in the first instance.

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