

Minutes of Combs Parish Council Meeting
Monday 9th January 2023 at 7.30pm, Battisford Cricket Club

Present: T Kitson (chair); S Scarff (councillor); T Betchley (councillor); A Tomlinson (councillor); K Oakes (county councillor)(arrived 20:10); J Matthiessen (district councillor)(arrived 21:00); T Bamber (clerk) and one member of the public

1. Apologies for Absence

S Ottewell (vice chair) had sent her apologies for absence due to 'flu, and this was accepted.

2. Declarations of Interest/Lobbying

CLlr Betchley – non-pecuniary interest in respect of Oaks Meadow (item 14)

3. Public Forum

Past councillor Ian Walker was present and the Chair brought forward his correspondence to discuss. A local primary school pupil had put a notice on the notice board in the bus shelter encouraging green issues and Mr Walker wondered if this enthusiasm could be channeled and supported. Councillors agreed and CLlr Betchley will arrange to meet with the lad and explore options.

Mr Walker also asked if the notion of quiet lanes could be revisited as he was in support of them but as there had been no sign of further interest around the village it was agreed that this issue be kept under review.

4. Minutes of Meeting held on Monday 12 December 2022

Minutes for Monday 12 December 2022 were reviewed and it was agreed that they be signed as a true and accurate copy of the meeting by the chairman.

5. Matters arising from the Minutes

- (i) The clerk had applied for a new SID location in Moats Tye.
- (ii) The defective streetlight in Bildeston Road has been repaired.

Other matters are covered elsewhere

6. County Councillor's Report

The County Councillor had sent her report, and this is attached as appendix 1.

7. District Councillor's Report

The District Councillor had sent his report, and this is attached as appendix 2.

8. Parish Council Chairman's Report

The chair reported that he and the clerk would be attending a Mid Suffolk Town and Parish Liaison meeting on 7th February, with a view to building contacts with other local councils. Similarly, he will be making contact with the chair of Ringshall parish council, whose details he has recently been given.



9. Planning

- a. (none advised)
- b. Decisions received from MSDC
 - i. **DC/22/04779 – Land North of Bildeston Road** Reserved matters approval granted. Noted
 - ii. **DC/22/05275 – Moat Farm, Bildeston Road** – Change of use without prior approval granted. Noted

10. Finance

- a. **Accounts review to date** – The clerk reported the Current Account balance as of 31 December 2022 was £48,659.67 and the savings account balance was £1,922.90.

The Budget analysis and financial summary were reviewed and accepted.

- b. **Payments received**

None received

- c. **Payments to hand**

- i. Npower for streetlights (direct debit): £250.26. This was approved by all councillors (*Parish Councils Act 1957, S.3; Highways Act 1980 S.301*)
- ii. Oaks Meadow Project – safety training, as agreed last month - £370.00. This was approved by all councillors and cheque no. 22311 was written and signed (*Open Spaces Act 1906, s.s. 9 &10*)

- d. **Change of Bank**

CLr Ottewell had informed the chair that details were still being verified. CLr Oakes informed councillors that another local parish council had transferred to Unity Trust Bank and they were very happy with the service.

11. Budget and Precept for Y/E March 2024

The clerk reported that Mid Suffolk District Council's tax base has been confirmed as that which had been indicated, and discussed, at the last meeting. Accordingly the council AGREED unanimously to adopt the proposed budget, based on a planned expenditure of £19,677.90. It was further AGREED that the precept should remain unchanged at £9000.

The precept request form was signed by the chairman and the clerk.

Action: Clerk to submit precept request.

12. Audit 2023

Councillors agreed that SALC be again instructed to carry out the internal audit for this financial year.

Action: clerk to confirm to SALC

13. Cemetery

Following the discussion last month the clerk had discussed matters with a reputable local funeral director and had learned that the fees for a non-resident in Combs cemetery would still be less than the fees for a

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Stowmarket resident in Stowmarket cemetery. In light of the significant imbalance between residents and non-residents in the cemetery it was agreed that the clerk should work with Cllr Betchley to draw up a scale of fees that did not encourage non-residents.

Action: Clerk to work with Cllr Betchley on regulations and fees

14. Oaks Meadow

Cllr Betchley reported that the new play area will be opened formally on 26th March.

15. PIIP

The chairman informed councillors that prior to the meeting Mr Stephens-Row on behalf of the cricket club had thanked the council for their support. Because the parish council had confirmed it would be providing funding, the club had been able to secure further funding from other organisations, so the council's support was a double benefit.

16. Correspondence/Any Other Business

- The clerk had been warned that the window for council AGMs may not include the proposed date of 9th May, due to the coronation bank holiday. Councillors were asked to check what other dates shortly after that date might be suitable.
- Cllr Scarff had found a very good example of a village map, produced for Hemingstone parish council. Councillors agreed this was what was required, and the clerk was instructed to make enquiries.

Action: clerk to contact Hemingstone parish council

- On behalf of the absent vice-chair, the chair asked councillors to give thought to articles for the next newsletter:
 - chairman: PIIP;
 - Cllr Scarff: farm diary;
 - Cllr Betchley: Wattisham Museum;
 - Clerk: forthcoming elections

Action: councillors & clerk to draft newsletter articles

17. Date and time of next meeting –Monday 13th February 2023 at 7.30pm in Battisford and District Cricket Club.

The Meeting closed at 8.48 pm

ABG/Sm

Appendix 1

County Council report – January 2023

Keeping people in Suffolk warm this winter

“Suffolk Winter Warmth” provides items such as hats, gloves, scarves, blankets, duvets, baby sleep bags, hot water bottles, LED bulbs, draughtproofing and more, to households in need.

Following a successful pilot in November, Suffolk Winter Warmth launched this week. The project provides support for any household experiencing hardship and in need of support to prevent ill health and keep warm. Residents can be referred by professional or voluntary sector organisations supporting residents who are struggling to heat their homes. These organisations include District and Borough Councils, Health Professionals, Citizens Advice and Community Groups, Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service, Rural Coffee Caravan and more.

The project is backed by £50,000 of funding from Suffolk’s Collaborative Communities Board and is co-ordinated on behalf of the whole county by East Suffolk Council.

Professional and voluntary organisations can refer residents to the scheme by visiting: [Winter warmth referral » East Suffolk Council](#).

Solar farm proposal “not anywhere near acceptable”

Councillor Richard Rout, the council’s Deputy Leader, told the Planning Inspectorate’s Examination Authority panel that it is “the poorest application I have dealt with to date.”

Councillor Rout made these comments at the first hearing of the formal Examination process (Tuesday 6 December 2022) which hears representations from all interested parties of the proposal.

This process concludes on 28 March 2023, during which time more sessions will be held when the council will address its concerns in greater detail.

The council has many issues with the current application, including:

- The geographic scale of the proposal which will permanently transform the landscape
- The impact on local communities of the 24-month construction period
- Sunnica’s serious shortcomings in terms of both evidence and methodology
- Sunnica’s presentation of proposal which makes it, and impacts on local communities, unclear
- Mitigation proposals do not appear to be tailored to the local context

Historic half a billion-pound devolution deal hands Suffolk regeneration and skills powers to level up.

Suffolk will be devolved power over their Adult Education budget, so they can shape provision in a way that best suits the needs of the local community and will receive immediate support to build new

affordable homes on brownfield sites, as well as more capital funding to improve energy efficiency in houses.

The deal will also see Suffolk County Council handed control over a £480 million investment fund – this will be guaranteed for the next thirty years. This will enable the county to drive growth and plan for the long-term with certainty as it looks to level up and unlock its full economic potential.

Suffolk will also get a directly elected leader of the council. This not only provides a single person who is accountable to the people of Suffolk but gives the county a local champion who can attract investment and be a stronger voice in discussions with central government.

With three new devolution deals signed in the last seven days, 50% of England will now be covered by a devolution deal and reaffirms the government's commitment in the Levelling Up White Paper to offer a devolution deal to any area that wants one by 2030.

The deal also sets out the government's plans to devolve more power to Suffolk County Council through:

- Investment: It will bring decades of funding worth £480 million to improve the lives of Suffolk's residents and spend on their local priorities.
- Housing: The deal will provide £5.8 million to regenerate brownfield land into beautiful, affordable homes and drive economic growth across the area; Suffolk will also receive greater compulsory purchase powers.
- Education: The agreement devolves the Adult Education Budget so they can shape provision in a way that best suits the needs of residents and the local Suffolk economy.
- Transport: An integrated transport settlement starting in 2024/25, to support the area to improve key transport infrastructure priorities.
- The Environment: The new deal will help Suffolk deliver on its ambitions to be the country's greenest county with £3 million to improve energy efficiency in homes.

Council to protect frontline services and increase funding in budget proposal

Adult care services and children's services will receive £47m more funding as part of Suffolk County Council's £685m budget proposals.

Despite an incredibly challenging economic climate, the council has been able to produce a balanced budget. This will protect the services that people rely on the most and continue to care for the most vulnerable, which accounts for 75% of the whole budget.

Adult care services will have £34m more in their budget, and children's services will have a further £13m. This will help with the extra expense needed to meet the huge increase in demands for services, as well as higher costs due to inflation.

The budget-setting has been achieved with input from the council's partners, officers, departments and notably, Suffolk residents. Over 2,600 local people contributed to an online survey and focus groups, asking where they would spend more money, spend less money, and their views on Council Tax.

The top service areas where people wanted to spend more, were social care services for adults and children.

Adult and children's care were at the heart of our budget setting last year and are again this year. This is exactly what people told us in our public survey too, so we are all in agreement about investing more in these areas, and it meets one of our four ambitions for Suffolk - to look after people's health and wellbeing.

This year, it's a case of being prudent across all areas of the organisation. Even though we have created £15.5m of savings, our frontline services are protected and receiving more funding.

Alongside an increase in our funding from Government, and a history of excellent financial management at the council, I'm proud that we've been able to navigate our way through the extremely turbulent, economic waters caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and Vladimir Putin's illegal war in Ukraine. We will be able to ensure that the services which mean the most to people, are still provided.

Councillor Richard Rout, Suffolk County Council's Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Environment

Some of the service areas where people also said they wanted to see more money spent, will receive additional funding:

- £700,000 for SEND services to support new recruitment, which is on top of the £1.1m invested this year
- £500,000 for Highways: to use environmentally friendly weed treatments, and stop using glyphosate which can damage wildlife
- £110,000 for tree management: to support the 'right tree right place' policy, having an appropriate inspection regime and supporting the resulting tree management requirements.
- £45,000 for Citizens Advice: to support work during cost-of-living challenges

A budget gap for next year - the difference between what money is available and what needs to be spent - had already been identified, resulting in savings of £15.5m for next year.

Under the proposals, the council's budget would increase by 9.6% (from £625.3m to £685.3). Additional funds would come from a total 3.99% increase in Council Tax, and an increase in funds from the Government for adult and children's social care.

Regarding Council Tax, the proposed 3.99% increase would be made up of a 1.99% increase in general Council Tax and a 2.00% increase dedicated to funding adult care.

This means costs for a household would look like:

- Band B property: £22.32 per week (85 pence per week increase from 2022-23)
(Band B properties are the most common in Suffolk)
- Band D property: £28.70 per week (£1.10 pence per week increase from 2022-23)

Just like at the council, I understand that every penny counts in homes around the county.

Appendix 2 – District Councillor’s Report

District Councillor’s Report: Onehouse Ward January 2023

Solar Car Ports	70 solar carports have been erected within the car park at Mid Suffolk Leisure Centre in Stowmarket; they should provide around 20% of the centre’s annual electricity demand. The scheme includes battery storage, so excess energy produced during sunnier periods can be saved for later, and electric vehicle charging points, including one rapid charger.
Cabinet Meeting 9 January	Council Tax Reduction (Working Age) Scheme 2022/23 – up to 100% approved Fees and Charges – includes garden waste bin charges; Planning & Licencing Fees etc – increased. Council House Tenancy Policy approved
Suffolk Housing Board	Councils across Suffolk are working as the Suffolk Housing Board reviewing available housing (empty homes, second homes, homes available for rent and sale) and trying to match it with demand. This is to attempt to reduce the number of households in temporary or unsuitable accommodation.
Refuse Collection Vehicles	Babergh and Mid Suffolk asked residents to suggest names for their new environmentally friendly bin lorries. Amongst the winning names are Ed Sheerbin, Gary Bineker and Bindiana Jones.
Gateway 14	The spine road connecting A1120 through the site to Mill Lane, Creting St Peter, opened to traffic just before Christmas; landscape planting has commenced and will continue through to March 2023.
Parish Liaison Meeting	Mid Suffolk District Council will be holding a Parish Liaison Meeting on Tuesday 7 February, 1.30 to 3.30pm, at The Mix in Stowmarket. This will be an opportunity for MSDC Officers to share current thinking on Mid Suffolk budget setting, and update parishes on progress with the Joint Local Plan and plans for the 2023 elections. Parishes will be encouraged to share plans for Coronation celebrations. Recently appointed Locality Officers will be on hand to explain their role.
Budget 2023/24	Currently a 2.99% increase in Council Tax is proposed, leading to a surplus of about £3m but this is still evolving as Government settlement has come in since briefing on this. Will be finalised by Council meeting in February.

John Matthissen

councillor@matthissen.net

01449 258894

07976 308128