

Minutes of Combs Parish Council Meeting
Monday 13th February 2023 at 7.30pm, Battisford Cricket Club

Present: T Kitson (chair); S Ottewell (vice chair); T Betchley (councillor); A Tomlinson (councillor); K Oakes (county councillor); J Matthiessen (district councillor); T Bamber (clerk) and one member of the public

1. Apologies for Absence

S Scarff (councillor) had sent his apologies for absence due to family health issues, and this was accepted.

2. Declarations of Interest/Lobbying

Cllr Betchley – non-pecuniary interest in respect of Oaks Meadow (item 17)

3. Public Forum

Mr James Scarff was present to discuss the planning application for Burnt House Vineyard (item 9 (a)(ii)) and the Chair brought forward this item to discuss. For ease of future reference this is noted in its original order under item 9.

4. Minutes of Meeting held on Monday 9 January 2022

Minutes for Monday 9 January 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 requested SALC to conduct the internal audit.
- (ii) The clerk has contacted the parish clerk at Hemmingstone and she is making enquiries as to the source of their footpath map..

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 went through his report, and this is attached as appendix 2.

8. Parish Council Chairman's Report

The chair reported that he had made contact with the chair of Ringshall parish council, as part of his aim to build good relations with neighbouring councils.

In addition he and the clerk had attended a Mid Suffolk Town and Parish Liaison meeting, learning of a small scale neighbourhood plan, which may be appropriate to Combs. He will develop this thought in future months.

9. Planning

- a. Applications received for consideration
 - i. **DC/23/00182-HSE Jack's Farm Cottage, Jockeys Lane:** two storey link extension
Councillors object to this application. The proposed extension is substantially out of character with the area and unsympathetic to the extant property.



- ii. **DC/23/00261-FUW Burnt House Vineyard:** variation of opening hours
Councillors support this application. They have noted objections from neighbours and also the actions proposed by the applicants to address these concerns, and would ask that the District Council include those proposals in any approval they may choose to give.
- iii. **DC/22/05948 Moats Tye Livery** – amendment of application for lighting times
Councillors have no objection to this application.

b. Decisions received from MSDC

- i. **DC/22/05834 – Battsford & District Cricket Club** – Erection of extension - granted. Noted

10. Finance

- a. **Accounts review to date** – The clerk reported the Current Account balance as of 31 December 2022 was £48,051.08 and the savings account balance was £1,922.90.

The Budget analysis and financial summary were reviewed, noting that there had been an unexpected overspend on electricity for streetlighting and this was accepted.

- b. **Payments received**

None received

- c. **Payments to hand**

- i. Npower for streetlights (direct debit): £283.59. This was approved by all councillors (*Parish Councils Act 1957, S.3; Highways Act 1980 S.301*)

- d. **Change of Bank**

Cllr Ottewell had informed the chair that all details have been clarified and the council agreed that she and the clerk were authorised to implement the change of bank once the precept instalment had been safely received.

11. Confirmation of Precept for Y/E March 2024

The clerk circulated a copy email from Mid Suffolk District Council confirming the precept for Combs was to be £9,000 and this was noted by councillors.

12. Newsletter

Cllr Ottewell reported that plans for the next newsletter were nearly complete and that she would arrange printing in the next few days, calling for assistance as offered by the chair and the clerk if needed.

13. Review of Data Breach Policy

Councillors had reviewed the data breach policy currently on the website and agreed that it was still appropriate for Combs.

Action: clerk to update website with date of latest approval.

14. Review of Internal Control Report

The chair reported that he had reviewed the current document and had updated it as appropriate. He will circulate this for approval and, subject to agreement from all councillors, will sign the report and hand it to the clerk for uploading to the website.

Action: Chair to sign and clerk to update report on website

15. Litter Pick

The chair proposed that this year's litter pick be held on Sunday 2nd April. The clerk will ask for permission to use the Tannery car park for volunteers to meet, and if granted, the date will be noted in the newsletter and the chair/clerk will ask Cllr Scarff for help with posters around the village.

Action: Clerk to contact the Tannery, confirm date to Cllr Ottewell and ask Cllr Scarff to arrange posters

16. Cemetery

Cllr Betchley and the clerk introduced a proposed range of cemetery fees that sought to discourage non-residents from seeing Combs cemetery as the cheapest in the area. It was AGREED that these fees and the corresponding regulations be updated as proposed, with effect from 6th April. The impact of these new fees on non-resident burials will be monitored and reviewed over the next few years.

Action: Clerk to publish regulations and fees and circulate to local funeral directors

17. Oaks Meadow

Nothing to report this month.

18. Correspondence/Any Other Business

- The clerk has had confirmation that the proposed May meeting date (9th) would be within permissible dates for AGMS (clarifying information received last month).
- The council has received a letter from St Mary's church bells committee thanking councillors for participating in the Christmas tree competition.
- The cricket club has commenced work on their extension so the donation previously agreed by the council should be put on the next agenda.
- In writing to the council, the cricket club kindly informed the council that there would be no hire charge for council meetings in 2023 and 2024. The clerk on behalf of the council has sent a note of thanks.

19. Date and time of next meeting –Monday 13th March 2023 at 7.30pm in Battsford and District Cricket Club.

The Meeting closed at 9.12 pm

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Appendix 1

County Council report – February 2023

Council's net zero plans making progress

The council has been keen to lead from the front with its ambition to reduce its own emissions and energy costs, while inspiring and supporting others to do the same.

It is one of only a few local authorities in the country to publish a 'Carbon Budget'. This looks in detail at its environmental impact, to identify actions and costs needed to reduce emissions.

"The council has made incredible progress in the last few years to reduce its carbon emissions, but we are very open about the fact we still have a long way to go and much work to do."

"Since March 2019, when we declared a climate emergency, I have been adamant that achieving net zero by 2030 will be tough. But it's a challenge that we simply must rise to, so that we can stand tall as an authority knowing that we're doing the best we can to reduce our operating costs as an organisation and eliminate as many carbon emissions as possible."

"The council is not immune to the rising energy costs confronting residents and businesses across the country and this work has an important role to play in making our buildings more efficient and cheaper to run. For example, we have reduced gas consumption in one of our properties, Constantine House, by 80% over a 12-month period."

- **Councillor Richard Rout, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Environment at Suffolk County Council**

Changes it is making include moving its small vehicle fleet to fully electric by 2025, it has upgraded street lighting across the county, changed to a renewable electricity tariff, and is increasing the number of solar panels across its estate.

But one of the elements that will determine the council's progress to net zero, is the ambition shown by the businesses in its supply chain. Although these are not carbon emissions directly produced by the council, its suppliers and contractors still affect the council's target.

Plans to boost funding for Citizens Advice to support people during Cost-of-Living challenges

Suffolk County Council plans to increase its funding to Local Citizens Advice in Suffolk by £45,000, to support Suffolk Residents during the current Cost of Living challenges.

The Council has set out in its 2023/24 budget proposals, that it plans to increase the amount of funding it provides to the Citizens Advice Bureau from £120,000 in the 2022/23 financial year, to £165,000 for the 2023/24 financial year. Suffolk County Council's budget proposals will be voted on in February.

The additional funding reflects the increased demand the service is seeing considering the current cost of living pressures.

“The Local Citizens Advice Network across Suffolk appreciate the financial support given by Suffolk County Council to their core service at a time when we are seeing an increase in demand and also in our own cost base. This funding helps us to continue to provide residents across Suffolk with the advice and support they need at this difficult time, and we look forward to working closely with the Council in the future.”

Cabinet backs consultation on devolution deal worth over half a billion pounds for Suffolk

On January 24th, Councillors agreed to progress to consultation on Suffolk’s proposed devolution deal which would hand the county more powers and control of over half a billion pounds in investment.

Councillor Matthew Hicks, Leader of Suffolk County Council, said:

“This proposed deal represents a big opportunity for Suffolk. By improving local transport infrastructure, building more affordable homes, and developing skills and training provision in a way that meets the needs of the local economy and local people, we could create new opportunities and raise living standards for our communities.

“This is the start of a journey for Suffolk, and if agreed, this deal would mark a step change in our relationship with Government, placing us front and centre as a key partner and allowing us to ensure that Suffolk’s voice is heard in the national conversation. In time, it would open the door to further negotiations and even greater self-determination.

“I look forward to hearing residents’ and businesses’ views on this proposed landmark deal.”

A public consultation will be undertaken in early summer 2023 which will give residents and businesses the opportunity to have their say on Suffolk’s proposed devolution deal. To enact the deal, a resolution to change the County Council’s governance to a Directly Elected Leader and Cabinet model will need to be taken to Council for consideration. If approved, the Directly Elected Leader’s election will be held within six months of that decision.

Appendix 2 – District Councillor’s Report

District Councillor’s Report: Onehouse Ward February 2023

Cabinet Meeting Feb 6	Very unsatisfactory news that Cabinet decided to halt the electric bus project indefinitely, despite this being a decision of the full council.
Empty Homes	The figures for mid Suffolk 2022 are now available, and while not as worrying as North Norfolk, 323 are long term empty, and there are also 504 second homes. There are council staff and grants to try and bring the 323 back into use, if they know where they are. I will chase any addresses you can provide, on a confidential basis of course.
Recycling	https://www.recyclenow.com/ is a useful web site where you can check what can and cannot be recycled in our area, and where. I will also put in the village magazines.
Gateway 14	The spine road connecting A1120 through the site to Mill Lane, Creeting 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 held a Parish Liaison Meeting on Tuesday 7 February, at The Mix in Stowmarket. Were parishes advised of this, and did anyone attend?
Budget 2023/24	Currently no increase in the Mid Suffolk Council Tax is proposed. This will be finalised by Council meeting later in February. Rents will need to go up to balance the Housing budget.
Enforcement	I have now had a long discussion with the manager to explain the issues which residents report, but are too easily ‘swept under the carpet’. My attitude is clear; there must be a level playing field for all builders, businesses and residents, and those cutting corners must not take advantage. More next month on the serious cases.

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