

**Minutes of Combs Parish Council Meeting
Monday 11th September 2023 at 7.30pm, Battsford Cricket Club**

Present: T Kitson (chair); S Ottewell (vice chair); T Betchley (councillor); A Tomlinson (councillor); T Bamber (clerk)

1. Apologies for Absence

Clr K Oakes (county councillor); Clr J Matthissen (district councillor)

2. Declarations of Interest/Lobbying

There were no issues involving councillors' interests.

3. Public Forum

No members of the public were present.

4. Minutes of Meeting held on Monday 10th July 2023

Minutes for Monday 10th July 2023 were reviewed and it was agreed that they be signed as a true and accurate record of the meeting by the chairman.

5. Matters arising from the Minutes

The clerk had contacted Npower to ensure the direct debit with the new bank would be put in place. There were no other matters arising that are not dealt with elsewhere.

6. County Councillor's Report

The county councillor had sent her apologies and her report will no doubt follow.

7. District Councillor's Report

The district councillor had warned he would be attending other parish council meetings first and did not arrive in time for the Combs meeting. A copy of his report is attached as appendix 1.

8. Parish Council Chairman's Report

The chair had no matters to raise that were not dealt with elsewhere

9. Planning

a. Applications received for consideration:

i) *DC/23/03460 - Land Adj. The Gardeners Arms – Erection of 1 self build dwelling*

Councillors' views on development of this land remain unchanged (see DC/20/04631) and they fully support the points made by the cricket club. If any development were to take place on this site it should surely be accepted by the developers that any risk of damage by cricket balls should be borne by them or the subsequent owners.

Councillors also note that, while the application describes the building as one self build dwelling the 'annex' appears to contain sufficient rooms to be conveniently converted to a second dwelling.

ii) *DC/23/03373 – North Cottage, Post Office Cottages South – Erection of extension*

Councillors have no objection to this application.



iii) DC/23/03659 – The Cottage, Little London – Insulation render

Councillors have no objection to this application

Action: clerk to file responses

- b. Decisions received from MSDC:
 - i. DC/23/01808 – 15 Model Farm – Insulation of glazed rooflight – listed building consent granted-noted
 - ii. DC/23/01594 – Jacks Farm Cottage, Jockeys Lane – Erection of extension – granted - noted

10. Finance

a. Accounts review to date

The clerk reported that the Current Account balance with Santander as of 30 May 2023 was calculated to be £39,068.85 (no statement yet received) and the savings account balance was £0, while the new Unity account had £21,548.99 in the current account.

The Budget analysis and financial summary were reviewed, and these were accepted.

While reviewing the asset sheet it was noted that while all else was in order, there was no mention of the beacon, and while the risk and impact of loss was remote, it was agreed that this be noted in future.

b. Payments received

(i) Burial ground income paid by stonemason by BACS	£ 500.00
(ii) Burial ground income paid in via cheques	£4,200.00

c. Payments to hand

(i) Npower electricity for streetlights (direct debit) £109.78: This was approved by all councillors (*Parish Councils Act 1957, S.3; Highways Act 1980 s.301*)

(ii) Combs Parochial Church Council: charge for cutting hedge to enable security system £30.00. This was approved oved by all councillors and the clerk was authorised to process this for BACS payment. (*Local Government Act 1972, s.214(2)*)

(iii) Hartleys Garden Services Ltd – Cemetery and Churchyard cutting March to July: £1595.00. This was approved oved by all councillors and the clerk was authorised to process this for BACS payment. (*Local Government Act 1972, s.214(2)*)

(iv) Mid Suffolk District Council election recharge: £140.12. This was approved by all councillors and the clerk was authorised to process this for BACS payment. (*Local Government Act 1972, s111*).

Action: clerk to process payments and inform councillors when ready for their authorisation

d. Banking

The clerk had completed the bank papers needed to authorise the addition of the Charman as a user without payment authority, and these were duly approved and signed by councillors.

Action: clerk to submit bank form

e. Insurance

The clerk reported that the insurance renewal invitation had been received and that he had found a lower

quotation from another insurer, but that the level of cover was not so good. Despite having previously been authorised to act on this matter in the best interests of the council (June 2023 meeting) he sought the approval of councillors to negotiate with both insurers to obtain the best combination of price and cover. Councillors all agreed that he be so authorised.

Action: clerk to negotiate insurance renewal.

11. Newsletter

Cllr Ottewell reported that she was still awaiting some contributions and that the print date was set for 15 September.

Noting that the editor of the BARCLIF newsletter was retiring, Cllr Ottewell expressed an interest in possibly taking this work on. Councillors agreed that this would be very helpful and that, were it to fall under the editorship of Cllr Ottewell, there would be no need to continue with the parish newsletter, as all the information usually contained there would be included in a new version of BARCLIF. It was agreed that Cllr Ottewell would meet with the Battsiford Village Hall Management Committee (the charity under which the newsletter is produced) to discuss this possibility and understand what is required.

12. Battsiford Village Hall donation request

A request had been received for financial help in updating and insulating Battsiford Village Hall. Councillors were unable to agree to the request of £3,000 but agreed to make an offer of £1,500 towards the costs out of CIL funds. The chair will convey this offer to the village hall management committee.

13. Battsiford and District Cricket Club donation request

Following the extension of the cricket club it had become apparent that the sewage treatment facilities were insufficient to handle the new facilities, and the club had written to the council seeking financial support towards the cost of a new treatment system. The total cost of the work appeared to be in the region of £6,000 and the amount requested from the council appeared to be this full amount. Councillors agreed that this should be clarified and that the degree of support from other potential funders be ascertained.

Action: clerk to revert to cricket club.

14. Oaks Meadow

Cllr Betchley provided an update on the meadow.

A planning application had been submitted for a car park and, as had been agreed in previous planning applications for the Oaks Meadow committee, councillors agreed that this could be made in the name of the council in order for the charity to benefit from discounted planning fees.

15. Community Governance Review

The chair reported that this was now being revisited by MSDC, and that the boundary between Combs and Battsiford was to be considered. Councillors agreed that the statement previously submitted by Combs was still valid and the clerk was instructed to ensure this point was noted.

Action: clerk to contact Community Governance Review team

16. Role of Parish Clerk

The clerk informed the council that he was thinking of standing down at the end of the financial year, after completion of the audit. This was not formal notice but rather information offered with an aim to aid forward planning.

The chair asked councillors to give thought to possible options.

17. Data Backup procedure

Councillors discussed the various procedures in place for data backup and all agreed that current arrangements were more than sufficient.

18. Correspondence /Any other business/ items for inclusion on the next agenda

- The parochial church council had written to inform the council that the internal hedge cutting for the churchyard, which was not part of the parish council's responsibility, was becoming hard to arrange with dwindling volunteer numbers. They had received an offer for the work to be taken on by people serving community service orders under the control of the Probation Service and were seeking the approval of the council. Councillors agreed this was acceptable.
- The clerk had received an enquiry from a resident, asking if funds might be available to help clear the overgrown pond opposite Kimberley Cottages. He had established that the land owner had the pond clearance work on his list of work to do and the clerk will report this back to the resident.

19. Date and time of next meeting -amended to Monday 16th October 2023 at 7:30pm, Battsford Cricket Club.

The Meeting closed at 9.10 pm

Appendix 1 – District Councillor Report

Pride in your place campaign	Applications must be received by the council by 31 October 2023 and awards and payments will be made within 21 days of receipt of an eligible application.
New business grants	Businesses in both council areas are set to benefit from a new round of funding thanks to the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF). Mid Suffolk District Council was allocated £821,658 over the next two years. Grants are available between £5,000 - £10,000 per application and will fund a maximum of 50% of total project costs up to the maximum value of £10,000. Eligible projects include net-zero developments, agriculture and farm diversification, visitor economy business expansion as well as SME investment and diversification or investment in community facilities in our rural areas.
Free trees, hedgerows and wildflowers scheme	This scheme is open for applications that both help wildlife and have public access. Applications can be for individual trees, tree planting schemes, small community woods, hedgerows, community or scattered orchards and wildflower meadows. MSDC tree canopy cover across the district is currently well below the national average. We want to help get 30% of our land managed for wildlife by 2030 (30 by 30 national initiative). We are doing what we can on the council's land, but need help on other land to be really successful. This can include parish land, school grounds, recreation grounds, land open to the public regularly, millennium greens and community spaces.
Support for residents struggling with the cost of living	The following support was provided for residents in Babergh and Mid Suffolk who were struggling with the cost of living during 2022/23. £100,000 was awarded to tenants through the household support fund, £150,000 to households struggling with the cost of their rent through Discretionary Housing Payments and a reduction in council tax for low-income households. During last winter, a total of £110,995 was provided to 62 organisations through Winter Warmth grants. Over 588 homelessness applications were received in Mid Suffolk. Additionally, Mid Suffolk Citizens Advice received a 30% uplift in funding.
Solar farms	The appeal against MSDC planning refusal for a Solar Farm at Somersham was successful as well as the appeal for costs. There are currently several other applications for large solar farms in the district and this appeal decision will be an important material consideration. The appeal inspectors are reflecting strong policy direction from Government, such that loss of good agricultural land and impact on the landscape will often be outweighed by the need for non-fossil fuel electricity in the public interest.
Section 106 Grants	MSDC recently contacted community organisations and sports clubs in Onehouse to make them aware of Section 106 that can be applied for within their parishes. Section 106 is available to apply for by community groups towards the improvement of existing and creation of new social infrastructure, including play areas, village halls and sports facilities.
Boundary Review	A group of councillors not affected by the changes proposed have been chosen to consider the requests for changes between Onehouse and Stowmarket and between Combs and Battisford.