**Minutes of Combs Parish Council Meeting**

**Monday 8TH April 2024 at 7.30pm, Battisford Cricket Club**

**Present:**  T Kitson (chair); A Tomlinson (councillor); K Archer (councillor); T Betchley (councillor); T Bamber (clerk); S Ottewell (committee member); Cllr K Oakes (County councillor): Cllr J Matthissen (District councillor)

1. **Apologies for Absence**

Cllr Larsen - apology was noted and accepted.

1. **Declarations of Interest/Lobbying**

There were no issues involving councillors’ interests.

1. **Appointment of clerk & co-option of councillor**

Tony Bamber decided several months ago to step down as Parish Clerk after 7 years of service. Suzanne Ottewell agreed to stand for the role having many years’ experience in finance and admin. This was proposed by Cllr Kitson, seconded by Cllr Tomlinson and agreed by all in attendance. It was then proposed by Cllr Kitson that Tony Bamber should stand as a co-opted councillor. This was seconded by Cllr Tomlinson and agreed by all the other councillors.

1. **Public Forum**

There were no members of the public present.

1. **Minutes of Meeting held on Monday 11th March 2024**

The Minutes for Monday 11th March 2024 were reviewed. It was agreed they be signed as a true and accurate record of the meeting by the chairman.

1. **Matters arising from the Minutes**

No matters arising

1. **County Councillor’s Report**

The county councillor had sent her report previously and this is attached as appendix 1. All councillors agreed to having received it, no further comments or questions

1. **District Councillor’s Report**

The district councillor had previously sent his report, which is attached as appendix 2. He was asked if he had any update on the Burnt House Vineyard planning application, but no further update was available.

Cllr J Matthissen then left the meeting.

1. **Parish Council Chairman’s Report**

The chair reported that the only matter not raised elsewhere was the success of the Annual Litter Pick on the 24th March which was co-ordinated with Battisford Parish Council. It was attended by the largest number of volunteers in recent years and 27 bags of rubbish were collected over the area. It has been suggested that due to the amount of litter collected, another litter pick could be arranged for October. This will be discussed again in July.

1. **Planning**

Applications received for consideration:

* + - 1. *DC/24//01097 - Burnt House Vineyard – variation of conditions*While the council is sympathetic to the objections raised by some residents, it considers that these objections are insufficiently evidenced. Therefore, the council has no objections to this application.

1. **Finance**
   1. **Sub-committee report**Cllr Tomlinson reported that the council finances were in order and that a meeting has been scheduled for the 15th April to review PIIP expenditure. It was also agreed to investigate opening a long-term savings account which the (new) clerk has agreed to look into.

**Action Point – Clerk to research long-term saving accounts**

* 1. **Accounts review to date and finance approval**

The clerk reported that, as at 31st March, the Unity accounts had £4,805.33 in the current account and £68,763.43 in the savings account.

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

Due to unpredictable price variations during 2024 for both energy and insurance, under budget variances are being reported. It has been agreed to carry forward these surpluses into 2025.

It was also agreed that due to the good interest rate on the saving account that most funds should be transferred into that account on a regular basis, leaving a workable £4k in the current account. The chairman agreed to review the accounts on a monthly basis (just before each Parish Council meeting) and transfer any funds between the current and savings account to leave a balance of £4k in the current account.

**Action Point – Chairman to review current account on monthly basis and transfer funds over £4k into savings account**

* 1. **Asset Statement review and Sect 137 expenditure review**

Both statements were reviewed and agreed to be correct. Signed by both Chairman and Clerk

* 1. **CIL expenditure return**

The annual return of CIL expenditure has been completed and reviewed by councillors. To be submitted to Suffolk council.

**Action Point – Clerk to submit online to Suffolk Council**

* 1. **Payments received**

It was noted that cemetery income during the month £2625.00

* 1. **Payments to hand**   
       
     (i) Npower electricity for streetlights (direct debit) £204.26: This was approved by all councillors (*Parish Councils Act 1957, S.3; Highways Act 1980 s.301).* It was noted that three streetlights are no longer in use and that Npower should be informed – clerk to action.  
       
     *(ii)* Cricket Club payment has been actioned for £2500.00 towards resurfacing the carpark area. This was agreed by all councillors in the March 2024 meeting. (PIIP funds)

**Action Point – Clerk to contact Npower regarding unused street lights**

1. **Audit matters**

It was reported that the Annual Governance statement had been completed and everything was on track for the audits.

1. **Cemetery**A local resident has approached the parish council regarding planting an olive tree in the eco section of the cemetery close to her husband’s grave. This was viewed favourably, and Cllr Bamber will reply to the resident.

**Action Point – Cllr Bamber to reply to resident**

1. **Village Fete**The Combs & Battisford Village Fete committee have requested donation towards the 2024 fete. A contribution of £500 was discussed and agreed.

**Action point - Clerk to respond to fete committee.**

1. **Russet Gardens**

Some of the residents in newly built Russet Gardens are concerned about the lighting on the corner of their road and Tannery Road. Suggestion for low level lighting on the corner have been suggested as a safety feature but not all residents are in favour.

**Action Point - Cllr Archer to discuss with residents again to find an agreeable solution.**

1. **Council Policies**Councillorshad reviewed various council policies to ensure they remained appropriate and fit for purpose.Some minor changes have been made to the reserves policy and the financial regulations policy. These have now been agreed and signed by the chairman. The clerk will update the website.

**Action Point – Clerk will update the website**

1. **Communications Committee Report**

The Combs Parish Council website was discussed and ways to make it more appealing to the reader. The chairman will speak to Cllr Larsen for ideas and input.

**Action Point – The Chairman to speak to Cllr Larsen regarding ideas for updating website**

1. **Newsletter**

Ms Ottewell reported that the deadline for the next newsletter is Friday 19th April with a distribution date of early May.

She has also asked the Battisford Village Hall Committee (previous Barclif newsletter) some questions regarding the financing of the newsletter and is waiting for a response.

1. **D-Day Commemorations**

Plans for the quiz and the beacon lighting all going well. Car parking arrangements for the beacon lighting evening need to be addressed.

**Action Point - Cllr Larsen, Cllr Archer and the chairman to action**

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

The Annual Parish Meeting in May – emails to be sent to the various clubs etc in the area inviting them to attend the meeting and/or submit a report.

**Action Point - Cllr Bamber and Clerk to email the various different clubs**

It was suggested and agreed that a list of the defibrillator locations should be made available on the noticeboards**.**

**Action Point - Cllr Bamber and Clerk to action**

At the March meeting it was mentioned that SALC has again mentioned that central government is keen to encourage all councillors to have ‘gov.uk’ email addresses. The general consensus was that the parish is too small to warrant unnecessary administrative technology, but it was agreed that the clerk should make enquiries. All councillors have agreed that they do not want an additional email address at this current time.

Cllrs Betchley informed the councillors that Oaks Meadow is seeking funding to cover insurance. This was received too late for this month’s agenda so will be added as an agenda item for May.

Chairman Tony Kitson thanked Tony Bamber for all his hard work and dedication to the Parish Council over the past seven years. He will be missed in his role as clerk but everyone is delighted he decided to stand as a councillor.

1. **Date and time of next meeting: Monday 13th May 2024 at 7:30pm, Battisford Cricket Club.**

# The Meeting closed at 21.26 pmAppendix 1 – County Councillor Report

# County Council report April 2024

# Suffolk County Council considers LionLink proposals unacceptable and unfair

Suffolk County Council believes that the failure of two National Grid offshore projects to coordinate with each other will cause irreversible damage to important landscapes in the county.

The council considers that the proposed LionLink and Sea Link projects could share infrastructure where cabling is already proposed to come onshore at Aldeburgh, by the Sea Link project which is at a more advanced planning stage.

LionLink is an interconnector being proposed by National Grid Ventures. Sea Link is an electrical cabling and infrastructure project being proposed by National Grid Electricity Transmission – a different member of the National Grid family.

However, the LionLink project has published details to say that it has no intention to coordinate with Sea Link at Aldeburgh, instead it is proposing a separate landing point at either Southwold or Walberswick.

**Councillor Richard Rout, Suffolk County Council’s Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment and Finance said:**

“The high handed and process driven approach by National Grid Ventures is totally unacceptable. They are showing a complete lack of respect to Suffolk and its coastal communities.

“The absence of coordination between the Sea Link and LionLink projects will, if they are consented, result in over 10 miles of some of the most sensitive and important landscapes in the UK being dug up to create more trenches for more cabling.

“This additional and unnecessary destruction of the Suffolk countryside and natural environment could be wholly avoided, if there was project coordination – something we have been calling for, for years.

“If LionLink must make landfall in Suffolk, it must do all it can to minimise harm to our local communities and landscapes.

“The public, the Planning Inspectorate, and ultimately the Secretary of State at the Department of Energy and Net Zero, must have the opportunity to fully consider coordination with the Sea Link project as an alternative to Southwold or Walberswick. This would make for a much fairer process for all, and a better understanding for everyone concerned.”

The council’s submission to the last non-statutory consultation for LionLink [can be read here](https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/planning-waste-and-environment/major-infrastructure-projects/nationally-significant-infrastructure-projects-nsips/lionlink). National Grid Ventures expected to submit a Development Consent Order application in 2025.

# Funding boost for new and existing bus services across Suffolk

The council has been awarded £1.8 million per year for two years – a total of £3.6 million – from the Department for Transport’s Bus Service Improvement Fund Phase 2 (BSIP 2, renamed from BSIP+) to deliver improvements to public transport in Suffolk.

Suffolk’s Enhanced Partnership, which represents the county council and local bus operators, has agreed to allocate the first year’s funding in three ways.

First, following an open call for suggestions, £1.2 million will be allocated to support operator- and local community-led proposals for new or enhanced services across the county.

Submissions were reviewed against criteria including value for money, the number of passengers that could benefit, how they integrate with existing services, and their likely long-term financial sustainability after the BSIP 2 funding ends.

A full list of the successful schemes can be found [here](https://www.suffolkonboard.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/2024-03-12-BSIP2-Schemes-Summary.pdf).

All schemes are expected to commence operations between April 2024 and September 2024.

A further £450,000 has been allocated to commercial bus operators in order to support and stabilise the existing bus network and maintain essential social and economic transport links for local communities.

The final £150,000 will be used to develop bus priority schemes, creating opportunities for smoother and more convenient bus journeys and making bus travel a more attractive transport option.

It is proposed that funding for the successful schemes will continue into the second year using a similar proportion of that year’s allocation.

A decision on how to spend any remaining funding will be informed by further reviews of the existing commercial bus network in collaboration with the operators and continued feedback from partners and communities.

# Suffolk to benefit from huge £7.3 million EV investment

Suffolk County Council has secured millions of pounds of funding to help develop electric vehicle (EV) charging across the county.

The county council has been allocated the money after successful bids to the Government’s Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) fund, which supports local authorities to plan and deliver charging infrastructure for residents without off-street parking.

Suffolk residents without off-street parking will benefit from £5.9 million to support EV charging, and a further £1.4 million will be used to develop the county’s existing EV charging network in community locations.

Homes without a driveway face challenges when it comes to charging an EV - in some cases it is just not possible, and it is unsafe and hazardous to run cables across pavements. Along with inconvenient access to public charging, these are common reasons that people give for not choosing an EV.

However, the funding will start to provide solutions to some of these issues, with opportunities to develop:

* kerbside charging points
* community charging hubs
* car park charging points
* fast and rapid charging point infrastructure improvements

Suffolk residents are invited to ‘nominate’ their street for consideration for on-street charging points, using [this online form](https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/requestchargepoint/). Although not every road may be suitable, suggestions from residents will help indicate where there is demand for charging points.

This investment continues the council’s contribution to the [Suffolk Climate Emergency Plan](https://www.greensuffolk.org/about/sccp/climate_emergency_plan/), which identifies that the decarbonisation of vehicles in Suffolk is a key aspect of meeting the net zero by 2030 target for the county.

Complementing the new funding, is Suffolk County Council’s recently published [Suffolk Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Strategy](https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/transport-planning/electric-vehicle-charging-policy). It has been written with the input of all borough and district councils, aiming to improve the EV charging experience for drivers in Suffolk.

# Even more potholes filled as Roadmender trial hits Suffolk

The Roadmender has arrived in Suffolk, as the county sees a 34% increase in pothole repairs through extra investment, more resource, and new ways of working.

The county council has been working to repair the increasing number of potholes which have been breaking out following very wet and cold weather recently. One way in which the council is increasing its repair rate is by trialling new methods of fixing potholes.

Suffolk Highways welcomed ‘Highway Workforce’ with their Roadmender Elastomac solution - a repair method which results in sealed, longer-lasting pothole repairs, which are quicker to carry out.

The trial which began on 11 March, is eco-friendly and lowers the carbon footprint of repairs by 80% is effectively supporting Suffolk Highways in its fight against the rising number of potholes on the county’s roads.

The ‘Roadmender’ works on both asphalt and concrete roads and is designed for repairs to all types of road defects and is capable of overlaying areas with multiple defects in a single visit. The process is more efficient, reducing material and waste by 90% and avoiding unnecessary disruption on roads.

**Councillor Paul West, Suffolk County Council’s Cabinet Member for Ipswich, Operational Highways and Flooding, said:**

“Potholes are a huge issue currently facing local authorities up and down the country, here in Suffolk is no different.

“The extremely wet weather conditions have meant an increase in the number of potholes breaking out, so we are doing all we can to stay on top of the problem.

“Our efforts have included bringing additional resource in and trialling new machinery and methods which are focussed on fixing more defects, quicker and more sustainably.

“By investing more resource and trying new methods, we have been able to fix 34% more potholes than last year.”

Appendix 2 – District Councillor Report

**District Councillor Report:  Onehouse Ward** **– April 2024**

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| Homelessness strategy | Council has now adopted the new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy 2024 and the associated delivery plan.  Together with Babergh the councils want to aspire to go beyond the minimum required provision and aim to provide a bespoke person-centred and proactive service. |
| CIL expenditure framework | Full council approved the amendments proposed for the Community Infrastructure Levy Expenditure Framework following the sixth review.  The main changes include allowing applications for District CIL from sports clubs, community shops and cafes with provisos to ensure that any profit made by such businesses goes back to the community and allowing more flexibility for community project costs. |
| Suffolk Devolution deal consultation | The County Council has now opened the consultation period on the proposed Level 3 devolution deal for the county.  MSDC councillors debated this issue at last week’s Council meeting, our views will be fed back but we are not directly involved in the decision to go ahead, which will be made by County Councillors in July.  The deal would mean the county council would have some more powers alongside an investment fund of £480M over a 30 year period.  If agreed, there would also be a directly elected leader of the County Council, to be elected in May 2025.  More information and public consultation can be found here:  [https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/devolution](about:blank). |
| Local elections | An election will be held on Thursday 2nd May to elect Suffolk’s Police and Crime Commissioner for the next four years.  The position has been held by Tim Passmore since 2012.  There will also be a district by-election for the Chilton seat in Stowmarket.  There will be a general election sometime in the next few months.  Mid Suffolk’s elections team oversee all these elections.  A reminder that you need to bring approved photo ID if you want to vote in-person at a polling station, or you can apply for a postal vote via the council’s website or over the phone. |
| Council meeting cancelled | Due to the by-election in addition to the police election it was decided to cancel the April full council meeting to ensure no decisions could be seen as seeking to influence voters. This has deferred consideration of the Boundary review between Onehouse and Stowmarket for a further month. |
| Cabinet | Meeting is tomorrow so news is a little sparse today |

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