

Abelson

(iv) Post & post-rammer for dog bin – £92.41  
Approved, already paid 15<sup>th</sup> November 2024 – Litter Act 1983 s5 & s6

(v) Laminator & pouches - £39.98  
Approved, to be paid by BACS - LGA 1972, section 137

(vi) Monthly bank services charges - £6.00  
Approved – Local Government Act 1972, s111

**12) To review and agree the 2025-2026 budget and precept**

Following the tax base being confirmed by MSDC, both the budget for £23, 512 and the precept of £10,106 as presented at the December meeting where both agreed by all councillors. Appendix 5

**Action Point – clerk to post budget and submit precept form**

Cllr John Matthissen arrived at meeting and talked through his report (item 9)

**13) To consider how to proceed with the Neighbourhood Plan project**

It was agreed that an article would be included in the March newsletter regarding the future of the village and any long-term plans. The Chair would also highlight it in his report. A more detailed letter to Combs residents would then follow giving more information.

**Action Point – Cllr Kitson, Cllr Archer and Cllr Ratcliffe to write article for newsletter**

**14) Commemorative bench request**

A request has been received for a commemorative bench to be located by the footpath opposite Hill House. Although Cllrs were in favour of the idea of the bench, concerns were raised about the location. There had previously been a bench in the same location but had been removed due to anti-social behavior. It was suggested that the original bench be relocated to Oaks Meadow and this was gladly accepted.

**Action Point – Clerk to check with local residents regarding any anti-social behavior**

**Action Point – Clerk to respond to person requesting the bench**

**15) Oaks Meadow CIL request**

The Oaks Meadow Project have requested £10,000 of funding to improve the playground area by including some swings and a water flow play panel for the mud kitchen. A discussion was held regarding the value of the request and that no other sponsors had been approached. Cllr Matthissen agreed to check if he had any funds available through his Locality Budget. Combs Parish Council agreed to fund the balance.

**Action Point – Clerk to check with Cllr Matthissen regarding available funds.**

**16) To review newsletter update**

This was agreed by all councillors that the newsletter should continue as a joint venture between Combs Parish Council and Battisford Parish Council working closely with the newsletter editor.

**17) Correspondence / Items for inclusion on the next agenda**

The clerk reported that she had received email correspondence from the gardening contractors regarding the maintenance of parts of the cemetery which needed tidying and will be following up on it.

February agenda to include fencing at Russet Gardens; Neighbourhood Plan; Appointment of SALC as internal auditors

**Date and time of next meeting: Monday 10<sup>th</sup> February 2025 at 7:30pm, Battisford Cricket Club**

**Meeting closed at 21:16**



# APPENDIX 1

Clerk's Report January 2025

## Planning Decisions Approved

- i) DC/24/03555 – Walnut Tree Cottage, change thatched roof to tiles – approved
- ii) Appeal Ref: APP/W3520/W/24/3345132 - Land at Woodlands Farm - The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for a solar farm

## Finance

Balances as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2024

Current account	£4,409.12
General savings account	£93,396.96
Cemetery savings account	£500.49

## Receipts during September

Cemetery	£465.00
Interest Income	£617.89

## Cemetery

1 burial took place in December 2024

## Battisford Cricket Club CIL Funding

Scaffolding was due to be erected last week and the solar panel will be erected week commencing 13.1.25. It was agreed that their application for £4000 forwards the solar panels be paid on commencement of the work (May minutes, item 20)

## Newsletter Advertising

In the November issue of the Community Newsletter, we included eight paying advertisements from local businesses. Three of these started advertising part way through the year. I have contacted the other five with details for continuing with their advertisements in 2025.

Of the five advertisers, three have already confirmed they wish to continue. I have also received applications from two new advertisers.

# APPENDIX 2

## Chairman's Report January 2025

### Newsletter

Suzanne Ottewell (Newsletter Editor), Jon Cook (Chairman of Battisford Parish Council), Dean Williams (Chairman of the Village Hall Committee) and I met on 17<sup>th</sup> December to discuss the future funding and management model for the joint parish newsletter. The following points were agreed:

- We all value the Newsletter and wish to continue producing it as a 'joint venture' between the two parishes. We agreed that 3 issues a year was the optimal production target.



- Suzanne is happy to continue as editor and also willing to liaise with prospective advertisers. Suzanne's position as editor confers on her sole authority over the content of any individual issue and both councils will reinforce this if required
- Both Battsford PC and Combs PC will contribute to production costs – an initial payment of £400 per council per annum was mooted although this figure might change depending on the level of advertising income. Suzanne – wearing her Combs Parish Clerk hat – will modify her Combs finance work book to separate out income and outgoings specifically pertaining to the Newsletter and make those figures available to both councils for the sake of transparency. Mr Cook made the case for keeping any surplus as a 'float' to cover likely increases in printing costs
- To reduce costs, we will limit the amount of colour used. This applies to advertisers and to contributions from parish-sited contributions and Suzanne will nudge contributors to amend copy to conform. BCVH will be allocated one page per issue to advertise its facilities and events – additional space will be charged for.
- We will establish a sub-committee comprising Suzanne as editor and one councillor from each parish to monitor financial status and future projections/budgets. We will trial this model in 2025 and review before 2026 to adjust as necessary.

### Badley Solar Farm Appeal

We have learned that the above appeal, at which we lodged a representation expressing concerns about the proximity to SSSI Combs Wood, was upheld by HM Planning Inspector. This did not come as a surprise and the exercise has been useful in enabling the Parish Council to formulate a precedential response.

### Town and Parish Liaison Meeting

The Clerk and I will be attending a Teams online meeting organised by MSDC on the morning of 22nd January to be updated on Devolution and Local Government Reform and Planning Matters (including the revised National Planning Policy Framework).

## APPENDIX 3

### County Council report – January 2025

#### Suffolk's rural communities hit by loss of £3 million in Government funding

£3 million of vital public funding - designed to support rural communities in Suffolk - will be cut by the government next year, it has been revealed.

The funding, known as the Rural Services Grant (RSG), was introduced in 2016/17 to support councils who serve rural communities and sparsely populated areas where it costs significant amounts of money to deliver public services. Suffolk County Council will, from April 2024, no longer receive the grant. [The government announced last week that the funding will be redirected elsewhere](#) – adversely impacting rural areas like Suffolk.

**Cllr Richard Smith MVO, Suffolk County Council's Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Economic Development and Skills, said:**

["It is deeply disappointing that the government has once again decided that disproportionately harms rural areas."](#)



“Delivering essential services, like bus services, social care and road maintenance, is inherently more expensive in county areas like Suffolk due to our sparse population. The decision to scrap this grant compounds the challenges we are facing already with the rising costs of services like adult and children’s care and home-to-school transport.

“Yet the government continues to overlook these realities, prioritising urban areas instead.

“It is becoming clear that any additional funding promised to support local authorities is to be undermined by cuts and additional costs elsewhere. This is a troubling pattern where supposed solutions offer no real relief and councils are faced with great financial uncertainty.

“I am concerned that the government’s response to rising local government costs is to shift the burden onto residents, forcing councils to impose steep Council Tax increases to balance the books. This approach is both unsustainable and unfair to those in rural communities.”

Nationally, the Rural Services Grant is worth £110 million a year to rural communities. Other counties, including Lincolnshire, Oxfordshire and Northumberland have also spoken out about the removal of the rural grant.

### Cabinet approves bold new vision for Suffolk’s future

Suffolk County Council’s Cabinet has approved ambitious new plans to position Suffolk as a national leader in sustainable growth and innovation.

Suffolk’s Economic Strategy, also known as a Local Growth Plan, has been developed by the Suffolk Business Board in collaboration with businesses, partners and stakeholders across the county.

It seeks to harness Suffolk’s unique strengths, including its thriving renewable energy sector and innovative, collaborative business environment, to transform the region into a hub for clean technology, long-term economic prosperity and competitiveness.

By 2045, the strategy sets out to achieve:

- An additional £14billion contribution to the economy, surpassing the average growth rate in England
- 45,000 more people qualified to Level 3 or higher
- 35,000 more people participating in the workforce
- A significant increase in average wages across the region.

At its core is EPIC Suffolk, a framework to guide investments and funding priorities built on four key pillars: **Economic wellbeing, Productivity, Inclusivity, and Clean growth.**

- **High Growth sectors:** Suffolk is already a national leader in clean energy, with offshore wind and nuclear projects at the forefront. The county’s agri-food and drink sector are set to grow through sustainable practices and agri-tech innovation, while the county’s ports and logistics sector is a critical gateway for UK trade.
- **Emerging and Value Growth sectors:** Suffolk’s technology sector also shows strong potential for growth, in areas such as ICT, digital creative industries, life sciences and financial services. Elsewhere, there are opportunities to further improve productivity and job quality in advanced manufacturing, construction, health and social care, and the visitor economy.

- **Tech Convergence:** Suffolk has the potential to become a leader in Tech Convergence, where technologies such as digital, AI, clean tech, robotics and satellite applications intersect and integrate with existing industries, creating an environment ripe for innovation and growth.

To support Suffolk's continued growth, the strategy places a strong emphasis on workforce development and infrastructure. Investments in skills, housing, digital connectivity, and road and rail networks will be critical to meeting the demands of a growing economy and ensuring that the region remains competitive in the global marketplace.

The strategy is underpinned by a comprehensive investment plan which aims to attract £4 of private investment for every £1 of government economic funding, including a multimillion-pound pipeline of projects to boost productivity, create jobs and attract new companies to Suffolk.

### Council calls on government to prevent scrapping of influential department

The CAA is intending to close its Airfield Advisory Team.

Through its work on major infrastructure projects, officers at Suffolk County Council have learned that the team will not be available to provide advice to planning officers or planning inspectors after March 2025.

Suffolk County Council has written to Mike Kane MP, Minister of State for Aviation, to review the proposal.

The Airfield Advisory Team has been instrumental in helping to shape improvements to infrastructure projects and informing planning across Suffolk. This includes the proposed Norwich to Tilbury pylon project, as part of National Grid's 'Great Grid Upgrade' and other proposed energy projects such as solar farms and wind turbines.

Without this team, it is anticipated that there will be no robust and effective advice to support the design and delivery of new infrastructure projects, and that this will compromise scrutiny of their design and delivery.

The impact of obstructions such as where pylons are placed or the glare from solar farms may also limit the commercial, strategic, and recreational operation of airfields across Suffolk and the rest of the country.

In July 2024, Suffolk County Council raised its concerns about the proposed Norwich to Tilbury pylon project when it formally objected to plans, published at the time.

Amongst a few fears, it cited that there would be "serious implications on nine airfields" with pylons close to runways which, in some cases, could possibly stop flying all together.

Suffolk County Council's letter to Mike Kane MP, Minister of State for Aviation, can be read on [suffolk.gov.uk](https://www.suffolk.gov.uk)

### Suffolk and East of England councils seek fairness in the face of energy projects

Suffolk County Council is joining with other local authorities in the region to challenge National Grid and the government on energy projects, demanding fairness for their communities and environment.



The county councils from Suffolk, Essex, Norfolk and Lincolnshire all face similar challenges with Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) being planned for their counties.

These are typically related to energy projects, including solar farms, wind turbines, pylons and the infrastructure associated offshore wind farms, such as substations and cabling.

Two of Suffolk County Council's main concerns, shared with the other counties, are:

- The uncoordinated approach to NSIPs - this is creating significant challenges for Suffolk's rural communities under the current planning policy as applied by the planning inspectorate and Secretary of State
- The government's 2030 target for decarbonising the electricity grid – this is too hasty, making it impossible to deliver alternative solutions to pylon projects like Norwich to Tilbury

Suffolk County Council has had a longstanding position to support the need for low carbon energy to provide energy security for the country, and the progress to net zero – but not at any cost.

### **Suffolk councillors to consider devolution and council reorganisation**

Suffolk County Council will hold an extraordinary meeting of councillors, and a meeting of its Cabinet, to debate and then decide on whether to put Suffolk forward for the government's new devolution and reorganisation programme.

The government has required that formal notice be given if Suffolk wishes to be part of the Devolution Priority Programme by 10 January 2025. Therefore, the meetings, both to be held on 9 January 2025, will see all 75 councillors debate and vote on a proposal to recommend Suffolk is at the front of the queue. Following the Full Council meeting, the Cabinet will make a final decision.

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

"The government has set out its devolution and reorganisation proposals and has asked that Suffolk County Council submit an expression of interest by 10 January if we wish to be part of the Devolution Priority Programme. As a result, we must hold these extraordinary meetings. On 9 January, all Suffolk County Councillors will be given an opportunity to have their say before a final decision is made by Cabinet.

"Changes of this scale create an opportunity to streamline local government, empower joined-up decision making, save taxpayers money and ensure councils are resistant to economic challenges.

"I welcome the positive engagement of Suffolk's district and borough councils. This is a significant decision and one that will not be taken lightly."

On 16 December, the Government published its much-anticipated [English Devolution White Paper](#), outlining plans for broader and deeper devolution coupled with a programme of coordinated local government reorganisation.

Key to the proposals is a reorganisation of council structures, particularly in two-tier areas like Suffolk, with a shift away from district, borough and county councils towards unitary councils. The government argues that unitary councils can deliver better outcomes for residents and save money that can be reinvested in public services.



For most areas, the government says that this means creating councils serving populations of 500,000 or more, with exceptions where they make practical sense.

Alongside reorganisation, the government is also proposing to create new Mayoral Authorities – with a single directly elected Mayor covering larger geographies (for example Norfolk and Suffolk) and with powers over strategic policy areas like transport infrastructure, health improvement and blue light services.

At this stage, no decisions have been made about what will happen in Suffolk.

The meetings will be held consecutively from 2pm in the King Edmund Chamber at Endeavour House, 8 Russell Road, Ipswich, IP1 2BX. The meetings will be live streamed on the council's YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/user/SuffolkCC>

## APPENDIX 4

### District Councillor Report: Onehouse Ward - January 2025

<b>Mandatory housing numbers</b>	The Government are now proposing new mandatory housing targets for each local authority area. There will need to be a process to revisit the current housing numbers for each town / village in the district. JLP review.
<b>Potential Local Government Reform</b>	Last December, Government announced major reform of local government. This is likely to mean one elected Mayor to represent Norfolk and Suffolk combined, who will have powers and funding to move forward the Government's agenda. Our two-tier system of district and county councils will be replaced with large new unitary councils, with SCC proposing one for the whole of Suffolk, which Mid Suffolk is very likely to oppose as being too large. Discussions are ongoing at both district and county level as to the various benefits and disadvantages of these proposals, and how best to prepare for the major changes ahead. The county council are also trying to get the elections due in May cancelled. Your District councillors are strongly opposed to this, as existing councillors would have their mandate extended to 6 years.
<b>General Fund Budget</b>	Proposals for the General Fund budget were approved in last month's second cabinet meeting and discussed later in the Overview & Scrutiny committee. This shows the council's finances to be in surplus, in part due to expanded housing developments and income generated from Gateway 14, with these surplus funds being used to proceed with the Mid Suffolk Plan. Key figures include an increase of £1.689m in net revenue service expenditure, a £2.660m increase in gross expenditure, no increase in council tax from 2024/25, and a capital budget of £29.986m in 2025/26.

<b>Pride in Your Place</b>	<p>This grant, which was first launched last year, is open for town councils, parish councils and local voluntary, community, faith and social enterprises (VCFSE) organisations to apply.</p> <p>Grants of between £250 and £5,000 may be applied for, allowing for more significant projects to take place across the district.</p> <p>Eligible projects include, but are not limited to, the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planting</li> <li>• The development of local history, heritage culture</li> <li>• The purchasing of village signs</li> <li>• The purchasing of seating and benches for community spaces</li> <li>• Maintenance or enhancement of open public spaces</li> <li>• The purchase of equipment to enable the maintenance of open public spaces, including community litter picks</li> </ul> <p>The grant window opens on 1 December and will remain open for applications until the annual £50,000 budget is fully allocated across the district.</p>
<b>New jobs in the area</b>	<p>There are quite a few new jobs being created in the Stowmarket area.</p> <p>Bauder Ltd, which makes sustainable roofing, is building a warehouse on Stowmarket's Gateway 14 business development, creating 20 jobs.</p> <p>Assan Panel, which also makes building materials, is opening a £45m plant, also at the Gateway 14 site, and will be looking to fill 100 "highly-skilled" jobs.</p> <p>Retailer The Range has recruited some of the 1,000 employees for its warehousing operation, also based at Gateway 14 on the outskirts of the town.</p> <p><a href="https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c786926j947o">https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c786926j947o</a></p>
<b>New bridge and lifts at Stowmarket station</b>	<p>This is a Greater Anglia project but is something the District Council has been lobbying for.</p> <p><a href="https://www.railadvent.co.uk/2024/12/new-design-of-modular-bridge-being-installed-at-suffolk-station.html">https://www.railadvent.co.uk/2024/12/new-design-of-modular-bridge-being-installed-at-suffolk-station.html</a></p>

Councillor John Matthissen

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## APPENDIX 5

### Combs Parish Council Budget & Precept Calculations 2025 – 2026

#### Expenditure

Category	Reserves b/fwd (subject	Budget 2025- 26	Total Available Spend	Comments



	to change)			
Audit Fees	180	700	880	Internal/External
Bank Charges		72	72	
Newsletter	736		736	
Consumables		250	250	SIDS & Defibs
Burial Grounds Maint		9725	9725	Additional work
Clerk's Expenses	200		200	
Clerk's Salary	1739	6691	8429	
HMRC Er's NIC		514	514	From April 2025
Community Projects	916	3500	4416	Neighbourhood Plan
Councillor Expenses	100		100	
Dog / Waste Bin Maint		850	850	
Donations – section 37	506		506	
Election Expenses	860	200	1060	Building funds
Hire of Hall	575		575	
Insurance	436		436	
Miscellaneous	500		500	
Streetlights – Energy	1752	600	2352	
Streetlights – Maint	445		445	
Subscriptions & Fees		410		
Training	704		704	
<b>Totals</b>	<b>9647</b>	<b>23512</b>	<b>33160</b>	

### Receipts

Category	Budget 2025 – 2026
Reclaimed VAT	700
Savings Account Interest	1500
Burial Ground Income	4500
Precept	10,106
<b>Total</b>	<b>16,806</b>

Additional expenditure from general reserves

### Precept

Precept	2023 – 24	2024 – 25	2025 - 26
Tax Base for Combs	316.26	330.35	339.47
Band D Charge	28.46	30.59	29.77
Effect of change in precept			
Precept	9,500	10,106	10,106
Increase %	5.26	6.00	0.00
New tax band D	30.04	30.59	29.77
Tax Increase	1.11	2.13	-0.82



Tax Increase v%	3.83	7.5	-2.69
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