

Minutes of Combs Parish Council Meeting
Monday 10th November 2025 @ 7.30 pm, Battisford Cricket Club

Present: T Kitson (councillor); C Ratcliffe (councillor); T Betchley (councillor); S Ottewell (clerk); T Bamber (councillor); A Tomlinson (councillor) County Cllr K Oakes; District Cllr J Matthissen

2511 - 01 Apologies for absence

None

2511 - 02 Declaration of Interest/Declaration of lobbying

None

2511 - 03 Public Forum

One member of the public attended the meeting

2511 - 04 To agree and sign minutes of meeting held on Monday 13th October 2025

The Minutes for Monday 13th October were reviewed. It was agreed they be signed as a true and accurate record of the meeting by the chairman.

2511 - 05 Clerk's Report

The Clerk sent out the report prior to the meeting to allow the councillors time to read.
No other questions were raised (Appendix 1)

2511 - 06 Action Points review

The action points summary was reviewed and updated.

2511 - 07 Chairman's Report

The Chair sent out the report prior to the meeting to allow the councillors time to read.
No questions were raised (Appendix 2)

2511 - 08 County Councillor's Report

The County Councillor's report was circulated to all the councillors prior to the meeting. No questions were raised (Appendix 3)

Cllr Oakes reported that she had requested a quote from Highways to replace the fingerpost on the corner of Mill Lane / Park Road / Bildeston Road and was happy to fund it from her budget. The Councillors all thanked her for this and Cllr Ratcliffe agreed to remove the old rusted post before it causes any damage.

2511 - 09 District Councillor's Report

Cllr Matthissen sent in the report prior to the meeting (Appendix 4). Call for Sites was discussed and Cllr Matthissen pointed out that the Call for Sites often receives more responses from landowners than is needed. It does not determine whether a site should be allocated for future development and does not give it any planning status.

Cllr Matthissen informed the meeting that Mid Suffolk District Council is in the process of pursuing legal action in respect to the current issues residents are facing at Hubbard Close, this also includes the non-payment of CIL money. Realistically, it would be unlikely that the contractor (Chatsworth Homes) would take on this responsibility in the long term, but it was hoped that the immediate landscaping requirements would be fulfilled. Afterwards, residents would need to assume this responsibility. Cllr Tomlinson asked if the contractors were not forthcoming in completing the landscaping, would the MSDC provide funds to hire a contractor to do the initial work. Cllr Matthissen agreed to investigate this and report back.

Cllr Matthissen confirmed that he could fund 50% of the fee of the "Pedestrians In Road" outside Oaks Meadow from his locality budget.

Action Point: Clerk to complete application form

Cllr Ratcliffe reminded Cllr Matthissen about the reported issues in Queens Close. Although reported to tenant liaison, Cllr Matthissen reported that he hadn't yet received a reply but would chase them up.

Cllr Matthissen then left the meeting to attend other Parish Council meetings

2511-10 Planning applications

DC/25/04832 17 Model Farm – Retrospective application for retention of external boiler
No objections raised

DC/25/04833 17 Model Farm – Listed building consent for retrospective application for retention of external boiler
No objections raised

Action Point: Clerk to respond to Planning

2511 - 11 Finance

a) Accounts review to date and finance approval

All councillors agreed with both the Budget Analysis/ Variance Report and the Accounting Statement report which had been sent out prior to the meeting. Questions were raised regarding the outstanding CIL receipt for Hubbards Close. It was agreed that the Clerk would contact MSDC for an update on the situation.

Action Point: Clerk to contact MSDC regarding outstanding CIL

b) Payments to hand

(i) Electricity for streetlights –October usage £230.71
Approved for payment - Parish Councils Act 157, s.3; Highways Act 1980. S.301

(ii) Monthly bank service charge – £6.00
Approved – Local Government Act 1972, s111

(iii) Cemetery grounds maintenance – £590.00
Approved for payment – Local Government Act 1972 s214

(iv) Fee for repairing streetlight in Moats Tye – invoice not yet received

(v) Combs Village website annual hosting fee £48.00
Approved for payment - Local Government Act 1972, s142

(vi) Newsletter printing costs £390.60
Approved for payment – Local Government Act 1972, s142

(vii) Remembrance Day Wreath £24.99
Approved for payment – War Memorials (Local Authorities' Powers) Act 1923 s.1)

c) The Councillors acknowledged that the CIL payment of £1500.00 to Battisford Cricket Club for the sewage treatment plant agreed in October 2024 had been paid as the work had now been completed.

2511 - 12 To review Oaks Meadow Report

Councillors were pleased to read the report submitted by Oaks Meadow and look forward to attending their AGM on the 18th November. November report attached as Appendix 5

2511 - 13 To discuss Oaks Meadow “Pedestrians In Road” signs and footpath

It was reported that the local charity considering funding the pavement extension are unable to help on this occasion. The councillors all agreed that the “Pedestrians in Road” signs originally requested should be arranged. Cllr Oakes confirmed she would arrange with Highways and for the Parish Council to be invoiced. As Cllr Matthissen had agreed to contribute 50% of the cost, a Locality Funding application would need to be completed by the PC.

Action Point: Cllr Oakes to arrange for signs to be installed

Action Point: Clerk to complete Locality Funding application form

2511 - 14 To review Oaks Meadow funding request

The Councillors noted that work on the pond pontoon had already commenced and questioned whether funding had been obtained from another source.

Action Point: Clerk to clarify situation with Oaks Meadow.

2511 - 15 To update progress on “Pride in Your Place” project

Cllr Ratcliffe reported that the project was going to plan and that the spring bulbs would be planted before the end of November. They have received emails from other residents congratulating them on their achievements and the difference it makes to the village. Cllr Ratcliffe suggested that signs, such as speed awareness, should be added to the gates and agreed to put a proposal together for the December meeting.

Action Point: Cllr Ratcliffe to investigate suitable signs for gates

2511 - 16 To consider CAB funding request

Citizens Advice Mid Suffolk had emailed the PC requesting possible funding, giving examples of help they have given to local residents. The councillors a donation of £250.00

Action Point: Clerk to arrange payment to CAB

2511 - 17 To consider Parish Council boundaries with Little Finborough

Following a recent announcement that Mid Suffolk Council has commenced a Community Governance Review to enable councils and residents to consider what changes are needed to parish arrangements, Cllr Kitson proposed that the parish boundary inconsistencies in Combs Green be addressed, as some houses are in Combs and others in Little Finborough; the boundary line also runs through several properties. It was then suggested that it might be beneficial for the two parishes to merge.

Action Point: Cllr Kitson to draft a double proposal for consideration at the December meeting

2511 -18 To consider domain name supplier following price increase

Following the November meeting, the Clerk received notification from Community Action Suffolk that they had recently increased their fees, triggering the councillors to re-think their decision. As the process hasn't yet commenced, it was agreed that the Clerk should contact Parish Online to start the process of changing our email addresses to gov.uk.

Action Point: Clerk to contact Parish Online

2511 - 19 To review Assertion 10 – Digital & Data Compliance Policy Requirements

Following October's meeting, Cllr Kitson had drafted an IT & Email Policy for the Councillors to consider. This was reviewed and accepted by all the Councillors. Cllr Kitson also confirmed he had made a few small changes to the Data Protection Policy which was again approved by all the Councillors.

The Clerk mentioned that the Internal Controls report would now need to be updated to reflect necessary checks

Action Point: Clerk to update Internal Controls Report

2511 - 20 To review 2026-27 budget

Following the Finance Working group meeting, a draft budget was presented to the councillors which showed expenditure in excess of receipts. The Councillors were asked for ideas to reduce expenditure, and another Finance meeting is to be arranged to discuss any ideas and present at the December meeting.

Action Point: All Councillors to consider ideas for reducing expenditure

Action Point: Cllr Tomlinson to arrange Finance meeting

2511 - 21 To agree 2026 Parish Council meeting dates

The Clerk had prepared a schedule of dates for 2026, keeping to the 2nd Monday of each month. This was agreed and accepted by all councillors.

Action Point: Clerk to notify Battsford Cricket Club of dates and update website

2511 – 22 Other Correspondence and items for next agenda

1. The Battsford PC clerk had emailed the understanding of Assertion 10 and suggested that both PCs undertake some joint training for all Councillors if possible. This was viewed positively

Action Point: Clerk to respond to Battsford PC

2. Cllr Ratcliffe reported that he had spoken to the resident concerned about several issues along Tannery Road. He was able to provide her with data from the SIDs regarding speeding and discussed with her the PCs ideas for tidying the roadsides and pathways. She was happy with the response.

Items for next agenda include budget, Call for Sites, Oaks Meadow 5-year Plan and Quiet Lanes

Meeting Closed at 21:13

**Date and time of next meeting: Monday 8th December 2025 at 7.30pm
@ Battsford Cricket Club**

Appendix 1

Clerk's Report November 2025

Finance

Total balance as of 30th September 2025 £112,620.28

Plus, October Receipts

Battsford PC newsletter contribution £300.00

Less Payments

Bank charges £6.00

Cemetery maintenance £1,180.00

Streetlight electricity (Sept) 190.13

CIL – Battsford Cricket Club sewage treatment £1,500.00

Balance as of 31st October 25 £110,044.15

Current account £4,376.60

General savings account £100,749.70

Cemetery savings account £4,917.85

Community Newsletter

The final edition of the year was completed in early November and is currently being distributed across Battisford and Combs. Thank you to everyone who helps with both the content and the distribution. Although I am still happy to continue editing and managing the newsletter, I will be looking for additional help in 2026.

Town Council update of Government Reorganisation

Cllr Kitson, Cllr Ratcliff, and I attended a webinar meeting on the 'One Suffolk' local government reorganisation.

Items of specific interest to us are,

- The proposed setting up of 16 Area Committees to focus on local issues.
- Lines of communication, aligned with the above, with named contacts, locally based staff.
- Devolution of additional powers to Towns and Parishes "as desired" with funding – provided capability to administer said powers can be demonstrated.

We look forward to hearing more from both Suffolk County Council and Mid-Suffolk District Council regarding their plans and how it will affect us when the reorganisation occurs.

Budget 2026-27

We have started working on the 2026-27 budget, having a very productive Finance Meeting on the 28th October. A draft budget was prepared, with a couple of areas needing clarification and discussion.

Clerk's training

I attended an Employment Forum run by SALC on the 3rd November, which ran through current legislation and requirements. It was all very interesting and has prompted me into checking all our record keeping. I couldn't attend the Cemetery Management training a few months ago as it had sold-out; the next sessions are in March 2026. As agreed at the July meeting, I will reserve my place as soon as booking becomes available (minute ref 2507-17)

Appendix 2

Chairman's Report November 2025

2026-2027 Budget

Councillor Tomlinson kindly hosted a meeting of the Finance working group on 28th October to derive a first-draft budget for the 2026-27 financial year. There was a £8570 deficit that will be addressed via a combination of lowering of aspirations, increases in the precept and funding from reserves.

Local Government Reorganisation

The Vice Chair, the Clerk and I attended a webinar hosted by Suffolk County Council's 'One Suffolk' project team on Monday 3rd November.

Of note were plans to devolve some powers to parish councils along with funding provided that: (a) those powers were desired; and (b) that the parish in question could demonstrate the capability to exercise them.

The setting up of Area Committees has been proposed to address concerns about degraded local representation under a Unitary Authority. These are intended to include parish council representation and will be bolstered by dedicated lines of communication with named contacts.

The One Suffolk submission and counter-proposals by District Councils will now be assessed by central government with replies due back in Spring 2026.

Remembrance Service

A representative group of councillors attended the Service of Remembrance held at St Mary's Church, Combs, on 9th November and laid a commemorative poppy wreath on behalf of residents.

Oaks Meadow

The Oaks Meadow Project holds its AGM on Tuesday 18th November. This is of especial interest this year as a new Five-Year Strategy will be presented along with the results of the survey distributed in the summer. I shall be attending and there is an open invitation to all councillors.

Appendix 3

Suffolk County Council report – November 2025

Councillors approve historic devolution deal, paving the way for major investment for Suffolk

Suffolk County Council's cabinet has voted in favour of creating a new mayoral authority for Norfolk and Suffolk - which will bring £1 billion to the counties in the next 30 years - following overwhelming support from councillors.

The new mayoral combined county authority (MCCA) would have access to a starting annual investment fund of £37.4 million - funded by the government. This is in addition to devolved funding from Whitehall to deliver public services.

The investment fund would enable the new mayor to support a wide range of long-term, locally driven projects that will boost economic growth, improve infrastructure and enhance the quality of life for residents. This could include transport infrastructure, housing and education and skills.

Margaret Catchpole letters on show in the UK for the first time

On loan from the National Library of Australia, and the State Library of New South Wales, the letters form the centrepiece of Suffolk Archives' latest exhibition *Behind Bars - Suffolk's Criminal Past*.

Servant girl turned notorious horse thief, Margaret's daring escape from Ipswich jail, her capture, and eventual transportation to Australia made her a Suffolk legend.

As well as telling Margaret's story, *Behind Bars* lifts the lid on Suffolk's lawless past. Discover gripping true crimes from the infamous Red Barn Murder that shocked the nation to the curious case of the Acton Dumpling Murderess. Step inside the world of historic investigations and harsh punishments, including Suffolk's last public execution.

Explore how justice has evolved, from dealing with riots and social unrest to the development of prisons and rehabilitation, supported by HMP Hollesley Bay. In partnership with Suffolk Constabulary, the exhibition also traces the history of policing in the county and how officers continue to keep Suffolk safe today.

Behind Bars is a free exhibition and runs from 24 October 2025 to 17 January 2026 at The Hold in Ipswich, the home of Suffolk Archives, a Suffolk County Council service. The exhibition is accompanied by a series of talks, walks, and workshops. Visit suffolkarchives.co.uk for more information.

Ofsted Focused Visit finds 'early signs of improvement' in Front Door Children's Services

The report, which noted 'early signs of improvement beginning to emerge' found:

- Children identified as at risk of harm receive prompt and appropriate responses with strong oversight and swift multi-agency collaboration
- Clear investment and support from the whole council for children's services
- High staff morale, stable workforce, strong peer and managerial support maintaining consistency for families despite leadership changes

The report also highlighted the following areas for improvement:

- Monitoring systems need to more reliably flag delays and support effective management decision-making
- More consistency in professional curiosity and threshold decisions needed
- Better recognition and response needed to pattern of concern when multiple or repeated requests are made for the same families

Since the ILACS report in August 2024, which found that the authority's children's services 'Require Improvement to be Good', Suffolk County Council's children's services have been on a transformation journey.

[Read the letter from Ofsted's focused visit](#)

1,000-year-old Sizewell silver coin hoard staying in its Suffolk home

Oxford Cotswold Archaeology carried out excavation works near the site of the future nuclear power station and discovered the lead and cloth package containing the mint condition coins.

The donation to SCCAS from Sizewell C, means that the find will be curated for posterity in its home county and will be made available to researchers of all levels.

Local and national museums can also apply for a short-term loan, so that as many people as possible can see it in the future.

"We are thrilled that Sizewell C is kindly donating this hoard, along with the rest of the excavated archive from the site to the county council's archaeological archive."

Councillor Debbie Richards, Suffolk County Council's deputy cabinet member for Archaeology and Landscape Partnerships

The hoard features coins minted between 1036 and 1044 during the reigns of Harold I, Edward the Confessor, and the lesser known Harthacnut. Though a large proportion of the coins were minted in London, many coins were struck at other locations, including Thetford, Norwich, Ipswich, Lincoln and Stamford.

Affectionately known as 'the pasty' - for its visual likeness to a Cornish pasty - it is speculated that it was the savings pot of a local figure, who buried it as a precaution in the face of the social and political upheaval of the 11th century.

Mapping project reaches major digital milestone

Suffolk County Council has reached a major digital milestone in putting the county on the map.

It has completed the Definitive Map and Statement (DM&S) consolidation project, using modern background mapping to prepare the updated legal record of public rights of way (PROW) such as footpaths, bridleways, and byways in Suffolk.

The consolidation project is the process of preparing a new digital DM&S that incorporates all legal changes since the previous issue.

Moving away from hand-drawn maps and written notes, the council has created new versions of the maps from a digital database using specialist software against Ordnance Survey Mastermap base mapping.

It has involved checking and digitising more than 10,500 individual routes across the county, ensuring they reflect the effects of more than 2,600 legal orders, including complex public path order packages.

This ensures that Suffolk's PROW network — which extends across thousands of miles of countryside — is properly recorded and accessible for generations to come.

The updated Definitive Maps are clearer and easier to interpret and working from a digital database makes it easier to share data with a wide range of partners, including user groups, councils, developers, the National Trust, Natural England, and the Forestry Commission.

Working copies of the maps are available for the public to view and download from the [Rights of Way and Access pages](#) of the Suffolk County Council website.

Councillor Paul West, Suffolk County Council Cabinet Member for Operational Highways, said: "The conclusion of this project marks the end of many years of dedicated and meticulous work for the team, and I congratulate them on their hard work."

The second phase of the project will now commence, establishing a rolling programme of consolidation to incorporate future legal changes and addressing mismatches between the Definitive Map parish boundaries and current administrative boundaries.

Suffolk's first DM&S was produced in the 1950s and was divided into 19 former rural and urban districts. The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 now place a statutory duty on councils to continually review the legal record of rights of way.

The first consolidated map was completed for Ipswich in 2009.

Since then, progress has continued steadily, with the sealed legal copies now held at Suffolk's Records Office, *The Hold*.

The working copies are available to view in hard copy by prior appointment at Phoenix House in Ipswich, which houses the highways department for SCC, and on [the county council's website](#).

Suffolk celebrates five years of investment in the National Cycle Network

Suffolk County Council is proud to mark five years of dedicated investment in the National Cycle Network – a key part of the county's infrastructure supporting safer, greener, and more accessible travel for all.

In that time Suffolk County Council has secured more than £5 million to enhance the network across the county.

This work has been delivered in partnership with Walk Wheel and Cycle Trust (formerly Sustrans), the national charity responsible for maintaining and developing the Network. Together, they have delivered improvements in signage, route safety, and connectivity - helping thousands of residents and visitors walk, wheel, and cycle more confidently and more often.

Key areas of improvement include routes from Ipswich Hospital to the Waterfront area, Nacton Road in Ipswich, Main Road in Martlesham, and areas within Woodbridge as part of the town's active travel project.

Appendix 4

Mid Suffolk District Council Report for Onehouse Ward – November 2025

New Local Plan 'call for sites' opens	<p>Mid Suffolk District Council is developing its new Local Plan, which involves identifying sites for development as well as setting the policies used to determine planning permission (alongside national planning policies and Neighbourhood Plans.) This plan will set out a framework for guiding planning decisions to the mid-2040s.</p> <p>As part of this work, a 'Call for Sites' was opened on 20 October. This runs until 5pm on 9 January 2026. This call invites submissions of land to be put forward for consideration to be included in the Local Plan - for uses such as housing, employment, sports and leisure and community purposes. It is important to note that the Call for Sites will not determine whether a site should be allocated for future development and does not give it any planning status. All sites will need to be assessed further, and the overall strategy for the Local Plan will be informed by a range of evidence as well as feedback from consultations. More information about this process can be found here: https://www.babergh.gov.uk/web/babergh/w/call-for-sites</p>
Green Skills Summit for schools	<p>The second Schools Green Skills Summit was held on 10th October. Around 90 students from across 11 schools in Babergh and Mid Suffolk took part in an event to encourage a better understanding of how climate change can be addressed, and to</p>

	learn about relevant careers. More details can be found online. https://www.babergh.gov.uk/w/babergh-and-mid-suffolk-councils-schools-green-skills-summit
Upcoming changes to bin collections	Suffolk Recycles is currently running a social media campaign to prepare residents for the upcoming changes to bin collections in the area from 2026. It is important for us all to ensure that people get the correct information - please do direct residents to this website https://www.suffolkrecycling.org.uk/recycling-composting/recycling-at-home/better-recycling where the facts are clearly laid out.
Purchase of new green space in Thorndon	Mid Suffolk District Council has purchased 60 acres of land in Thorndon. The site offers opportunities for increased public access to green space for the local area. It also has potential for natural flood management projects to help reduce flooding locally, as well as increasing biodiversity. Detailed plans are being developed alongside local residents.
Cabinet meeting October	The main agenda item was to approve the Nature Recovery Strategy, which has been developed in conjunction with the County Council. This will guide a range of projects and work into the future. See https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/planning-waste-and-environment/local-nature-recovery-strategy-lnrs
Council meeting October	Licensing policies were updated, new fees set for monitoring Biodiversity Net Gain and the State of the District Report was approved see https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/w/research-and-insight
Locality Budget	Subject to submission of application forms and quotes, I have now allocated all the budget for 2025/26. I'm always willing to discuss new ideas for projects needing support, as the 2026/27 budget will open after the May elections.
Council grants	For information on Mid Suffolk council grants available to support community projects and organisations, please see: https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/community-funding or email BMSDCgrants@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk for advice on funding options.

Mid Suffolk District Council services: see www.midsuffolk.gov.uk, phone 0300 123 4000
 John Matthissen councillor@matthissen.net 07976 308128

Appendix 5

Oaks Meadow Project Report For Combs Parish Council Meeting November 10th 2025

October has seen a change of colour on the meadow with beautiful hues of red, yellow and orange on the trees. The much needed rain has filled three IBCs from rain water off the WHS shelter.

The month started with the first of our education sessions with 13 children aged from 5 -12 years old enjoying a morning of bug hunting, plant identification and foraging. A detailed programme will be run out from Spring next year and will include pond dipping, bird watching, owl pellet dissecting, bug hunting, countryside crafts and foraging.

We held a very successful fundraising bingo night at St Mary's Church Hall with 60 people in attendance. The Halloween event held at the end of the month was well attended despite the rain. Both events were organised by the User Focus Group who support the Trustees with fundraising and public involvement.

Oaks Meadow Project has 32 volunteers on a regular basis, 305 followers on Facebook and 74 contacts on our email group. At a time when the Charity Commission and CAS report a drop in volunteer activity the Trustees feel very fortunate to have this support within our community.

The Friday morning working party has been maintaining the Reflective Space garden throughout this month and will continue to do so while the weather allows. As the pond begins to fill with water the reeds and rushes have been thinned out making space in front of the platform for pond dipping.

The Suffolk Local Nature Recovery Strategy was published on October 31st 2025. The Oaks Meadow Project Trustees have aligned much of the Five Year Strategy to this document, and are pleased to see that as a designated Healing Wood the meadow is recorded in the document.

The Trustees have been preparing for the AGM on November 18th 7:30pm at Battisford & District Cricket Club. The Five Year Strategy document will be presented as will the results of the recent survey. We would like to extend an invitation to all members of Combs Parish Council to attend.

Darren Lambert
Secretary to Oaks Meadow Project CIO