

**Minutes of Combs Parish Council Annual Meeting
Monday 11th May 2026 @ 8:20, Battisford Cricket Club**

Present: T Kitson (councillor); C Ratcliffe (councillor); T Bamber (councillor); A Tomlinson (councillor); S Penman (councillor); K Harding (councillor); S Ottewell (clerk); plus three members of the public

2605 -01 Election of Chairperson and declaration of office

The clerk started the meeting by requesting nominations for the Chairperson for 2026-27. Cllr Kitson was nominated, seconded, and unanimously approved by all councillors. No other nominations were received. Cllr Kitson gladly accepted the role and agreed to sign the declaration of office. Cllr Kitson then assumed control of the meeting.

2605-02 Election of Vice-chair

Cllr Kitson requested nominations for the vice-chair position. Cllr Ratcliffe was nominated, seconded, and unanimously approved by all councillors. No other nominations were received, and Cllr Ratcliffe accepted the role.

2605-03 Apologies for absence

District Cllr Matthissen and newly elected County Cllr Bentley

2605-04 Declarations of Interest / Declarations of Lobbying / Declarations of gifts and hospitality

None

2605-05 Public Forum

Three members of the public attended the meeting with an interest in Oaks Meadow

2605-06 To agree and sign the minutes of the meeting held on Monday, 13th April 2026

The minutes for Monday, 13th April, were reviewed. It was agreed that the chairman should sign them as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

2605-07 Clerk's Report

The Clerk distributed the report ahead of the meeting, giving councillors a chance to read through it. No further questions were raised (Appendix 1)

2605-08 Action Points review

The action points summary was circulated to the councillors ahead of the meeting, and they were reminded to inform the Clerk once they had completed any assigned tasks.

2605-09 Chairman's Report

No report was submitted because the Chairman had already provided a full report at the Annual Parish Meeting.

2605-10 County Councillor's Report

There was no available County Councillor report following the recent elections

2605-11 District Councillor's Report

No report was submitted as a full report was provided at the Annual Parish Meeting.

2605-12 Planning applications for consideration

**(a) DC/26/01780 16 Model Farm – Listed Building Consent for re-slating of roof
(retrospective)**

While the councillors did not object to this application there was concern about seeing more and more retrospective applications

(b) DC/26/001690 Penny Plot House, Little London – erection of single-storey extension

No objections were raised

2605-13 Finance

a) Accounts review to date and finance approval

All councillors agreed with the Budget Analysis/Variance Report and the Accounting Statement Report as of 30th April 2026, which had been circulated prior to the meeting.

b) Payments to hand

i.

- i. Clerks & Emp'ers NI payment £754.47
Approved for payment – Local Government Act 1972, s112
- ii. Electricity for streetlights – April usage £164.05
Approved for payment (direct debit) - Parish Councils Act 157, s.3;
Highways Act 1980. S.301
- iii. Monthly bank service charge – £7.00
Approved for payment (direct debit) – LGA 1972, s111
- iv. Internal audit fee £348.00
Approved for payment - Accounts & Audit Regulations 2003
- v. Cemetery maintenance £460.00
Approved for payment – LGA 1972 s214
- vi. SALC Annual membership £361.66
Approved for payment – LGA 1972 s143
- vii. Cemetery Management training courses £120.00
Approved for payment – LGA 1972 s111

c) Internal Audit Update and to consider recommendations

The Councillors acknowledged that the internal audit was successfully completed and that they had received the Internal Audit Report for review. See Appendix 2 attached for recommendations and agreed actions.

Action Point: Clerk and Chair to ensure policies and other recommendations are implemented

d) Set dates for the period when public rights will be exercised

It was proposed and agreed that the dates for the “Notice of Public Rights & Publication of Unaudited Annual Governance & Accountability Return” will be Wednesday 3rd June 2026 to Tuesday 14th July 2026

Action Point: Clerk to publicise on website and noticeboards

e) VAT return

The clerk reported that the VAT return for April 2025 – March 2026 had been completed and a value of £2804.90 reclaimed. This is a larger value than in the past due to the extra expenditure on the PiYP items.

f) Annual Contract with Blackthorn Landscapes Ltd

Three providers have been approached to supply quotations for the cemetery ground maintenance. A quote was received from Blackthorn Landscapes Ltd; the second declined to quote; and the third did not provide a quote. It was proposed and agreed to continue using Blackthorn Landscapes due to the high quality of their work.

2605-14 To consider funding request from Oaks Meadow

Oaks Meadow requested £2768 in CIL funding for picnic benches, including an accessible option for wheelchair users. Councillors discussed the proposal in terms of value for money and evidence of need. The Chair of Trustees for Oaks Meadow confirmed that this would be the only funding request for the current financial year. Approval was granted.

Action Point: Clerk to arrange funding payment

2605-15 To discuss, and agree on how to proceed with the Neighbourhood Plan funding offer

Cllr Kitson discussed the Expression of Interest form for MSDC funding to develop an NHP. He completed the form and shared it with councillors ahead of the meeting for their review and agreement before submitting it to MSDC. The councillors agreed the funding should be requested and briefly discussed the next steps of the project, mainly canvassing residents for support and creating a steering group.

Action Point: Cllr Kitson to lodge Expression of Interest form

2605-16 Update on noticeboards project and funding

Cllrs Tomlinson and Kitson confirmed that the funding request had been submitted to Suffolk CC and that they were waiting for a response.

2605-17 Update on cemetery maintenance planning

Cllr Bamber reported four of the councillors had met to discuss the requirements to update the cemetery car park. Subject to costs, they are investigating extending the car park, using the far end for spoil; installing a fresh water tap by the car park; repairing and improving the gateway to St Mary's Church. All the councillors agreed to continue with the proposal.

Action Point: Cllr Bamber to investigate further and obtain quotes

2605-18 Decision on the storage of the council-owned safe and historic paperwork

Cllr Kitson retrieved the documents from the safe and organized them for distribution to the councillors for sorting and review. It was agreed that no items should be discarded at this stage but rather categorized for further evaluation. Since the PC no longer requires the old, heavy safe, it was agreed that the former councillor, whose property has housed it for many years, can keep it in place.

Action point: All councillors to help review paperwork

Action point: Clerk to amend assets register

2604 – 19 Other correspondence and items for next agenda

Next agenda to include Policy listing review, staffing policies, Standing Order amendment, 3 planning permission applications received; pavement clearing on Poplar Hill

Meeting Closed at 21:29

**Date and time of next meeting: Monday 8th June 2026
@ Battsford Cricket Club**

Appendix 1

Clerk's Report – May 2026

Planning Application Responses

- (a) **DC/26/01221** – Listed building consent 7 Model Farm, Replacement of rotten timber windows and front door. Existing softwood double glazed storm casements with drip detail and solid glazing bars with same. Existing timber door with glazing panel replaced with same – **Granted**
- (b) **DC/26/01180** – Listed building consent 7 Model Farm, 1no. new opening formed in original brickwork wall (expose and enlarge existing opening); modern partition walls removed and altered, and new partition walls installed; 2no. bathrooms relocated to adjacent areas; 1no. new single bedroom formed; 1no. existing – **Awaiting decision**
- (c) **DC/26/01250** - Application for Listed Building Consent - Construction of rear porch Dots Cottage 2 Little London Combs – **Awaiting decision**

Finance

Total balance as of 31st March 2026	£101,140.59
Plus April Receipts	
Burial grounds income	£344.00
Newsletter Advertising	£95.00
Precept	£6,203.00
Less April Payments	
Bank charges	£7.00
Streetlight electricity (March usage)	£209.84
Newsletter printing	£393.75
Clerk's salary & HMRC payment	£754.47
Bench refurbishment	£954.48
Balance as of 30th April 2026	£105,463.05
Current account	£4,212.10
General savings account	£96,280.50
Cemetery savings account	£4,970.45
Total in Bank as of 30th April 2026	£105,463.05

Training

I can confirm that I have completed and passed the FILCA course (Financial Introduction to Local Council Administration). I am now exploring the CILCA qualification and plan to start my studies soon.

Both Cllr Alan Tomlinson and I are enrolled in the Introduction to Cemetery Management course scheduled for October 2026, as this was the next available date.

Cemetery

I have looked at the number of burials taking place at Combs Cemetery, and have summarised my findings below

	2025	Jan – April 2026
Full Burial	7	4
Burial of Ashes	11	3
Green	1	0
Total	19	7
Combs Village residents	1*	1
Combs Ford	9	5
Non-resident – Re-opening (EROB)	5	1
Non-resident – Green	1	0
Non-resident - Other	3	0
Total	19	7

*Previous resident

We continue to maintain the cemetery to a high standard, with regular grass cutting and general maintenance. I have also visited the cemetery on a few occasions to remove dead flowers and any rubbish. Unfortunately, the car park area has been used on several occasions as a meeting spot and has been littered with drink cans etc. Thank you to the resident who kindly tidies this area. Finally, the family planning to plant a memorial tree in the cemetery has chosen to delay their plans until late summer.

Suzanne

Appendix 2

Internal Audit Report Actions Required

Section	Item	Internal Audit Recommendation	Action Required by Combs PC
Assertion 10	Publication Scheme	Council should seek to ensure that it adopts a scheme which should be tailored to the council to accurately reflect the activities undertaken and in the manner in which information is made available	TK & SO have completed information Reviewed and accepted at May 26 PC meeting and uploaded onto website. Added to Policy listing for annual review
	Civility & Respect Pledge	It was noted that the Parish Council is missing from the website any employment policies.	May 2026 agenda to discuss all 3 Staff policies.
	Anti-Bullying & Harassment Policy	Recommendation to adopt or review and update as council feels appropriate any employments policies	It was agreed that TK & SO would review the NALC templates for these policies and adapt them as appropriate.
	Training & Development Policy	such as civility & respect pledge, anti-bullying / harassment policy and training and development policy	
Evidence	Previous internal audit report	The Clerk should minute that the report is not only distributed but considered and approved for adoption and any actions are identified and agreed	Clerk to address when writing May 2026 minutes
	Previous external audit	Recommendation to ensure that the minutes reflect that the parish council have been provided with the report and that it has been considered by the councillors	Clerk to address when writing minutes following completion of external audit
	Terms of Reference of Committees / working groups	To publish on the Parish Council website and document as annually reviewed	Reviewed and accepted at May 26 PC meeting and uploaded onto website. Added to Policy listing for annual review