

Minutes of Combs Parish Council Meeting
Monday 8th June 2026 @ 7:30pm, Battisford Cricket Club

Present: T Kitson (councillor); C Ratcliffe (councillor); T Bamber (councillor); A Tomlinson (councillor); K Harding (councillor); S Ottewell (clerk)

2606-01 Apologies for absence

Cllr S Penman, due to work commitments, accepted by all the councillors

2606-02 Declarations of Interest / Declarations of Lobbying / Declarations of gifts and hospitality

None

2606-03 Public Forum

None

2606-04 To agree and sign the minutes of the meeting held on Monday, 11th May 2026

The minutes for Monday, 11th May, were reviewed. It was agreed that the chairman should sign them as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

2606-05 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)

2606-06 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. Cllr Ratcliffe confirmed that the signs for the village gates were being ordered and should be in place within the next few weeks.

2606-07 Chairman's Report

The Chairman's report was circulated prior to the meeting and no questions were raised. (Appendix 2)

2606-08 County Councillor's Report

Cllr Bentley submitted a report prior to the meeting but was unable to attend (Appendix 3)

2606-09 District Councillor's Report

Cllr Matthiessen submitted his report prior to the meeting but was unable to attend (Appendix 4).

2606-10 Planning applications for consideration

- (a) DC/26/01839 Application for listed building consent – Replacement of 5 windows and 1 set of patio doors. 16 Model Farm Combs**
- (b) DC/26/01843 Application for listed building consent – Installation of external boiler. 16 Model Farm Combs**
- (c) DC/26/1933 Householder application – Retention of external boiler. 16 Model Farm, Combs**

Although councillors do not oppose the changes, they pointed out that these applications are all retrospective and that similar requests for the same property have been considered in previous months. It was agreed that councillors are generally unlikely to approve future retrospective applications and that the subject should be raised with the District Councillor.

Action Point: Clerk to submit response to MSDC

Action Point: Clerk to raise issue with Cllr Matthiessen

2606-11 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 May 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 £141.38
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. Parish Online mapping software annual subscription £64.80
Approved for payment – LGA 172, s137
- v. Cemetery maintenance £920.00
Approved for payment – LGA 1972 s214

2606-12 To check the list of policies along with their next review date

Due to the extensive number of policies needed by the council, a list was compiled with their latest and upcoming review dates. All councillors agreed to share this responsibility, with each one ensuring their policies remain “fit for purpose” and promptly flag any necessary amendments.

Action Point: Clerk to send out the revised policy list, including the councillor responsible

2606-13 To review Anti Bullying and Harassment Policy

The NALC template for the Anti Bullying and Harassment policy has been updated for Combs Parish Council and distributed to all councillors for review ahead of the meeting. It was agreed to adopt the policy.

Action Point: Cllr Kitson authorised to sign the policy, and the Clerk is to post on the website

2606-14 To review Training and Development Policy

The NALC template for the Training and Development policy has been updated for Combs Parish Council and distributed to all councillors for review ahead of the meeting. It was agreed to adopt the policy

Action Point: Cllr Kitson authorised to sign the policy, and the Clerk is to post on the website

2606-15 To Consider amendment to the Financial Regulations to Procurement / Contracts

Currently for contracts exceeding £3,000, the Clerk should currently obtain at least three fixed-price quotes. It was proposed that, since this threshold has not been raised and costs are increasing, it should be increased to £5,000 excluding VAT. All the councillors agreed with this amendment.

Action Point: Clerk to update Financial Regulations and Chair to sign.

2606-16 To consider Battsford Cricket Club funding request

A funding request was made for a new roller. The Cricket Club specified that this is a one-time request caused by an unexpected equipment breakdown. They have secured other funding, and a £1,000 amount was requested. All councillors approved this request.

Action Point: Clerk to inform the Cricket Club and arrange payment

2606-17 To Consider Community Emergency Plan

The Clerk informed the councillors that MSDC had emailed about developing a Community Emergency Plan and had offered help with ideas and its set-up. It was agreed that the Clerk would organise an initial meeting to gather more information.

Action Point: Clerk to arrange meeting

2606-18 To consider pavement clearing on Poplar Hill

The pavements, especially on Poplar Hill, were found to be heavily overgrown. Although the hedges need trimming as well, the overgrowth on the pavements is the more urgent concern because it significantly hinders walking, particularly for individuals with pushchairs or mobility aids.

Action Point: Clerk to contact MSDC as the initial step.

2606-19 Update on notice boards project and funding

Cllr Kitson confirmed he had asked County Cllr Bentley for an update and would report back once he had more information.

2606-20 Update on cemetery planning

Cllr Kitson had prepared an expression of interest pack to send to prospective builders and shared it with all the councillors prior to the meeting. It was agreed that this should be sent to at least three contractors for quotes.

Action Point: Councillors Kitson, Bamber, and Ratcliffe to continue with the project and gather quotes.

2606-21 Update on the storage of historic paperwork

This project is ongoing, and we are uncovering some interesting documentation. It was agreed to keep this on the Action Point Log and remove it from future agendas.

2606- 20 Other correspondence and items for next agenda**Other Correspondence**

- Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils are creating a Joint Local Plan to guide the future development of both areas, outlining policies for housing, employment, infrastructure, town centres, the environment, transport, and community facilities. The consultation survey is open until Friday 31st July 2026. It was agreed that this would be added to the July agenda for further discussion.
- A resident of Combs has reported to the PC that a fence has fallen across one of our footpaths, and the homeowner needs to be notified.
- The Clerk reported receiving a “Planning Application for Prior Approval” (DC/26/02305) to demolish nine buildings on Jockey Lane for the councillors' comments. This was received after the agenda deadline, and the 10th June comments deadline cannot be extended. Additionally, a second application (DC/26/02307) was received to develop additional dwellings on the same land, and the Clerk has requested an extension for that deadline.

The following comments were noted.

Jockeys Hall development application DC/26/02305 – proposed demolition of outbuildings

These buildings are the subject of previous application 24/02974, under which permission was granted for their conversion to six small dwellings, none of which are capable of providing more than two bedrooms.

There is a pending application (26/2307) for the building of six dwellings on the site, each with four or five bedrooms. The application for demolition states that if the demolition is not approved, the fallback position would be to exercise the rights granted under the previous application 2974.

While the new application for six much larger buildings should be the subject of fresh consideration, councillors are concerned that the wording of the application for demolition of the existing outbuildings implies that approval of their demolition should be deemed acceptance of the proposed new buildings. It is our view that the existing approved application DC/24/02974 should not be leveraged to establish the principle of proposed new dwellings on the land to the south and any proposed new development should stand in its own right. Councillors believe that to avoid any unnecessary misunderstanding, there should be full opportunity for the matter to be aired in public.

Items for Next Agenda

Charity Appraisal / Policy
Civility & Respect Pledge
Joint Local Plan

Meeting Closed at 21:12

**Date and time of next meeting: Monday 13th July 2026
@ Battsford Cricket Club**

APPENDIX 1

Clerk's Report – June 2026

Planning Application Responses

- (a) **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 – **GRANTED**
- (b) **DC/26/01250** - Application for Listed Building Consent - Construction of rear porch Dots Cottage 2 Little London Combs – **GRANTED**
- (c) **DC/26/01780** 16 Model Farm - Listed Building Consent, Re-slatting of roof (retrospective) – **AWAITING DECISION**
- (d) **DC/26/01690** Pennyplot House, Little London - erection of single-storey extension – **AWAITING DECISION**

Finance

Total balance as of 30th April 2026	£105,463.05
Plus May Receipts	
Burial grounds income	£615.00
Newsletter Advertising	£285.00
Reclaimed VAT	£2,804.90
Less May Payments	
Bank charges	£7.00
Streetlight electricity (April usage)	£164.05
SALC Annual Subscription fees	£361.66
Clerk's salary & HMRC payment	£754.47
Burial grounds maintenance	£460.00
Internal Audit Fees	£348.00
Training	£60.00
Balance as of 31st May 2026	£107,012.77
Current account	£4,561.82
General savings account	£97,480.50
Cemetery savings account	£4,970.45
Total in Bank as of 31st May 2026	£107,012.77

Oaks Meadow Funding

At the May meeting, it was agreed to fund £2,768.37 from CIL for picnic tables at the Oaks Meadow project. Oaks Meadow has negotiated a larger discount with the supplier, and the total payable is now £2,408.30, including £401.38 VAT – a saving of £360.07.

Since the PC was asked to cover the entire cost, I revisited the VAT regulations and found that changes regarding gifting and VAT took effect from 1st April 2026. I verified this information with SALC to confirm my understanding. Due to this ruling, we will now be invoiced by the supplier

and will pay them directly, then gift the tables to Oaks Meadow. This results in a saving of £360.07 on the order, plus £401.38 to be reclaimed in our next VAT return.

Roads signs outside Oaks Meadow

In March, SCC agreed to install “Pedestrians in Road” signage on Bildeston Road by Oaks Meadow, with a deadline set for before the end of May. As this deadline hasn’t been met, I have followed up with Highways, who are now also pursuing it with their contractors. Hopefully, this will be completed shortly!

APPENDIX 2

Chairman’s Report June 2026

My thanks to all councillors who have entrusted me to continue in the position of chair for another year. I’m also delighted that Councillor Ratcliffe was re-elected as vice-chair. We have space for one more councillor and I hope that we can find someone suitable who is willing to be co-opted. In the meantime I’m confident that there’s sufficient talent, wisdom and commitment in our team to continue to provide excellent service to our community.

In a break with my usual style of report in which I highlight issues that have arisen and/or are being addressed I should like to look forward and set out some thoughts for the coming administrative year.

The way things are shaping up it looks as though we’ll potentially have two significant capital projects to consider for 2026-27: Neighbourhood Planning and Cemetery improvements.

We have expressed our interest in developing a Neighbourhood Plan to MSDC’s Planning function and have requested that we be considered for a grant to support the work involved. Despite the requirement for this activity to be community-led, I suspect the PC would be significantly involved. With that in mind, it was encouraging to have volunteers from residents expressing their support for this at last month’s Annual Parish Meeting.

We are also looking at a civil engineering-type project regarding the cemetery and churchyard. At this stage we are minded to extend the car park lengthways and will shortly be contacting local contractors for expressions of interest. We will also ask them to consider providing improvements to the entrance to St Mary’s churchyard.

These projects, should we decide to pursue them, will likely require significant funding from our CIL reserves and this in turn might impact on the levels of donations we are able to make to other local bodies. It would be wise therefore for us to model a few scenarios and review the impacts on our capital investment plan so things can be appropriately prioritised and balanced. Likewise, our budget and precept planning for 2027-28 will likely require some hard decisions given the current low-growth, high-inflation economic climate. Thankfully, and as confirmed by recent internal and external audits, our residents can be assured that we have the people and processes in place to rise to the attendant challenges.

Tony Kitson
Chair, Combs Parish Council

APPENDIX 3

Cllr Matt Bentley

Endeavour House, 8 Russell Road, Ipswich, IP1 2BX

Matt.Bentley@suffolk.gov.uk 07889036492

2026 Council Elections

I am the new Green councillor for your division, elected during the local elections on Thursday 7 May. Along with other Green councillors at Suffolk County Council, I will be part of the official opposition. Our group will not be in charge of making decisions, as Reform UK have 41 councillors and will have the majority of votes in the council chamber to pass their decisions. However, we will work hard to hold the council and the Reform administration to account and challenge them and their decisions. If you have enquiries relating to services provided by Suffolk County Council, please make contact with me using the above contact information and I will investigate the issue for you.

Suffolk County Council Annual General Meeting

On Thursday 21 May, Suffolk County Council held its AGM and the first meeting of its new administrative term. Councillors from Reform UK, as the largest group at the council, were appointed to the positions of Leader, Chairman and members of the council's Cabinet were announced. Two motions were also tabled at the meeting. My group tabled a motion based on Reform UK campaign literature which had criticised the council's spend on translation services, proposing support for the service this money was providing to families in need of support, Ukrainian guests, children seeking sanctuary who arrived alone and British Sign Language for the hearing impaired. This motion was voted down by the Reform UK councillors. The other motion was originally tabled by the Labour group in favour of the proposed Northern Relief Road for Ipswich, but was subsequently amended and tabled by an Independent councillor and seconded by Reform. This motion was passed and detailed the council's commitment to look into options again to reduce reliance on the Orwell Bridge and the impact of the crossing on Ipswich traffic when it was closed or partially closed.

Removal of Ukrainian flag at Endeavour House

Flags remain a contentious issue around the country, mostly recently in Suffolk the Reform administration at the county council have taken down the Ukrainian flag at its headquarters in Ipswich, raising the St George cross instead. The council raised the Ukrainian flag in solidarity with Ukraine when Russia invaded them in 2022 and it has been flying since that time, with the council administering the government's Homes for Ukraine scheme and hundreds of Suffolk residents welcoming Ukrainian refugees into their homes. My group and other opposition groups at the council have criticised this decision in the local press and have emphasised their ongoing support for Ukraine during the conflict.

Latest Update on Local Government Reorganisation

Following the government's decision that it was minded to approve creation of three unitary councils in Suffolk, the councils in the county have banded together to create a website to provide the public with information on the plans and timeline for the changes. If all proceeds as planned, elections for the new 'shadow' authorities will be held next May in 2027, with the councils up and running from April 2028.

However, the Reform UK leadership at Suffolk County Council have announced that they will be making a legal challenge to the government about this decision, on the basis that they do not want the county split in three. Norfolk and Essex county councils, who are also run by Reform, are also challenging the reorganisation decision in their counties.

For information on the plans for Local Government Reorganisation in Suffolk, please see link to the website here: <https://www.suffolkgrhub.gov.uk/>

APPENDIX 4

Mid Suffolk District Council Report - Onehouse Ward June 2026

Joint Local Plan Scoping	The District Council will be asking the public for views on what's important to them as our districts grow and develop and how best we can include them in the process.
Construction of £18m Stowmarket Innovation Gateway complete	Construction of a 'transformational' £18 million, state-of-the-art skills and innovation centre in Stowmarket has been completed – and is ready to open next month. The Innovation Gateway will offer a range of office spaces for high growth start-ups, collaboration and innovation areas, meeting rooms and high-quality training spaces. The project, led by Mid Suffolk District Council, was made possible thanks to a Freeport East agreement to provide £16.66m for its construction, with the remaining costs provided by the council.
Stowmarket to host Suffolk's Armed Forces Day celebrations	Stowmarket will play host to Suffolk's 2026 Armed Forces Day celebrations, with military fanfare and a full day of family fun to recognise and celebrate the contribution of the armed forces community. The free event, organised by Mid Suffolk District Council in partnership with Stowmarket Town Council, will take place at the Recreation Ground on Saturday 27 June and brings together service personnel, veterans, families and the wider community for a day of both fun and reflection.
CIL allocation for local communities	Developers building homes within the districts are charged a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), which the councils then reinvest in neighbourhoods via their towns and parish councils. In this latest round of funding, 29 town and parish councils in Mid Suffolk will receive a share of £553k.

Mid Suffolk Youth Council	Announced last year by MSDC, the Youth Council is designed to give young people a chance to have their voice heard and get involved in local politics. The initiative was driven by research showing the disconnect between young people and politics, with almost three quarters of those asked believing that politics should be taught more in schools or colleges. Each school can elect three students aged between 11 and 19 to serve a two-year term.
Better recycling	This is expected to take 2 cycles, ie 6 weeks, to settle down but progress so far is reasonable. Please email recycling@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk with the full address and postcode regarding any issues. https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/future-changes-to-bin-collections
Riverside land purchased for nature recovery	A riverside site will be protected from development and enhanced as a wildlife haven after Mid Suffolk District Council purchased the land and teamed up with the River Waveney Trust. The land is by the River Waveney in Palgrave, and is mostly covered in trees and scrub, alongside some more open areas. Mid Suffolk has now agreed a plan with the River Waveney Trust (RWT), which will take over the management and restoration of the site.
Mid Suffolk Council Funding for Citizens Advice	Citizens Advice services in Babergh and Mid Suffolk have received significant financial backing as part of the latest round of community funding from the district councils, with Mid Suffolk Citizens Advice has received £129,265. These local Citizens Advice branches are recognised as key strategic partners of the councils and, by receiving these crucial funds, they can continue to provide residents with free and essential guidance on everything from housing and debt to benefits and wellbeing support.
Food Museum award	The Food Museum's exhibition featuring "all the things that you will love, and love to hate" when it comes to school dinners has won a national award. The museum was awarded Best Temporary or Touring Exhibition of the Year at the Museum and Heritage Awards.

John Matthissen

councillor@matthissen.net