

Minutes of Combs Parish Council Meeting
Monday 13th July 2026 @ 7:30pm, Battisford Cricket Club

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

2607-01 Apologies for absence

Cllr J Matthissen

2607-02 Declarations of Interest / Declarations of Lobbying / Declarations of gifts and hospitality

None

2607-03 Public Forum

None

2607-04 To agree and sign the minutes of the meeting held on Monday, 8th June 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.

2607-05 To pay tribute to Davide Thorpe, former Parish Councillor

By Cllr Bamber:-

It is with great sorrow I report that David has passed away. He was a councillor for many years and was a popular sight around the village on his red tractor, regularly helping residents and keeping the village in good order. Without doubt the village was a better place because of David and he will be sorely missed.

2607-06 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)

2607-07 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.

2607-08 Chairman's Report

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

2607-09 County Councillor's Report

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

2607-10 District Councillor's Report

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

2607-11 Planning applications for consideration

None received

2607-12 Finance

a) Accounts review to date and finance approval

All councillors agreed with the Budget Analysis/Variance Report, the Accounting Statement Report and Bank Reconciliation as of 30th June 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 – June usage £122.79
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. Cemetery maintenance £920.00
Approved for payment – LGA 1972 s214
- v. Newsletter printing £393.75
Approved for payment - Local Government Act 1972, s142

2607-13 External Audit update

The clerk confirmed that she had not yet received any correspondence or dates relating to the external audit.

2607-14 To discuss advertising strategies for recruiting a new clerk

Following the resignation of the Parish Clerk, the councillors discussed the next steps for advertising the vacancy. It was agreed that the role should initially be promoted locally through the parish noticeboards and website, with a leaflet drop also considered. The Clerk would also make enquiries about advertising the vacancy on the SALC website.

2607-15 To review Charity Donations Policy / Appraisal

The updated policy had been circulated to councillors before the meeting for review. Councillors agreed to approve the policy.

2607-16 To review and agree amended Accessibility Statement

The updated statement had been circulated to councillors before the meeting for review, and Cllr Ratcliffe confirmed that he had completed the required tests. Councillors agreed to approve the statement

2607-17 To consider Civility and Respect Pledge

Following the internal auditor's recommendation, councillors considered adopting the Civility and Respect Pledge. However, they agreed it was unnecessary, as the council already conducts itself respectfully towards one another and local residents.

2607-18 To consider streetlight maintenance and upgrade to LED lighting

Following earlier difficulties in arranging a contractor to repair a streetlight, the Clerk investigated whether SCC could provide future support. It was noted that an annual maintenance contract may be available for all streetlights and could also help reduce energy costs. The Clerk agreed to investigate further.

Action Point: Clerk to follow up with SCC

2607-19 To consider renewal of insurance policy (current policy expires in October)

It was proposed and agreed that the clerk should seek 3 quotes for the renewal of the insurance policy for consideration

Action Point: Clerk to obtain quotes before the September meeting

2607-20 Update on notice boards project and funding

Following receipt of the funding awarded by Suffolk County Council, Cllr Tomlinson agreed to review the noticeboard order ready for submission. He also agreed to contact a local contractor who may be able to install the notice boards.

Action Point: Cllr Tomlinson to arrange ordering noticeboards and for installation.

2607-21 Update on cemetery planning

It was agreed that quotes should be obtained for the planned works to the cemetery car park and the opposite church entrance.

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

2607-22 To consider community speed watch

Battisford Parish Council had suggested the possibility of a Community Speed Watch Campaign across both villages. The councillors were not in favour of making this a Parish Council responsibility and proposed that Battisford and Combs residents could set up a group if they wished.

Action Point: Clerk to advise Battisford PC of outcome

2607- 23 To consider autumn litter pick

As in previous years, it was suggested that Battisford and Combs PC's conduct their litter pick on the same weekend. Several dates were suggested; the weekend of the 10th and 11th October being the most favourable.

Action Point: Clerk to advise Battisford PC of suggested dates.

2607-24 Other correspondence and items for next agenda

Cllr Tomlinson reported that he had received correspondence from a Hubbards Close resident about the communal gardens. The developers had not completed the gardens' landscaping, and it had previously been suggested that the PC and the District Councillor might assist with financing the initial work before a management company was established. Cllr Kitson agreed to follow this up with Cllr Matthissen.

The accumulating rubbish outside a house on Queen's Close was also reported and Cllr Kitson agreed to follow this again with Cllr Matthissen

Action Point: Cllr Kitson to contact Cllr Matthissen regarding both the Hubbards Close and Queens Close issues.

The clerk received correspondence from the warden at St Marys Church about the overgrown hedge at the entrance to the churchyard. The excessive growth blocked vehicle access. A local contractor was hired to trim it, unaware that this task falls under the Parish Council's responsibility. The clerk agreed to contact the cemetery maintenance company to clarify that this issue should be managed by the council in the future.

Action Point: Clerk to speak to the cemetery landscaper to ensure this is taken into account

Items for Next Agenda

Litter pick policy

Committees and working groups policy

Meeting Closed at 21:12

Date and time of next meeting: Monday 14th September 2026
@ Battisford Cricket Club

APPENDIX 1 - Clerk's Report – July 2026

Planning Application Responses

- (i) **DC/26/01780** 16 Model Farm - Listed Building Consent, Re-slating of roof (retrospective) – **WITHDRAWN**
- (ii) **DC/26/01690** Pennyplot House, Little London - erection of single-storey extension – **GRANTED**
- (iii) **DC/26/01839** Application for listed building consent – replacement of 5 windows and 1 set of patio doors. Location: 16 Model Farm, Combs IP14 2JG – **GRANTED**
- (iv) **DC/26/01843** Application for listed building consent – installation of external boiler. Location: 16 Model Farm, Combs IP14 2JG - **GRANTED**
- (v) **DC/26/01933** Householder Application for retention of external boiler. Location: 16 Model Farm, Combs IP14 2JG - **GRANTED**

Finance

Total balance as of 31ST May 2026 **£107,012.77**

Plus June Receipts

Burial grounds income	£1,707.00
Newsletter Advertising	£238.00
Bank interest received	£493.61
Locality Funding Received	£5,200.00

Less June Payments

Bank charges	£7.00
Streetlight electricity (May usage)	£141.38
Parish Online Subscription fees	£64.80
Clerk's salary & HMRC payment	£754.47
Burial grounds maintenance	£920.00
Training	£60.00
Oaks Meadow picnic benches (inc VAT)	£2,408.31
Cricket Club funding for new roller	£1,000.00

Balance as of 30th June 2026 **£109,295.42**

Current account	£3,350.86
General savings account	£89,532.89
Cemetery savings account	£16,411.67
Total in Bank as of 30th June 2026	£109,295.42

Oaks Meadow Funding

The three picnic tables have been delivered and installed at Oaks Meadow, much to the pleasure of trustees and visitors over the past few weeks.

Roads signs outside Oaks Meadow

The “Pedestrians in Road” signs are now installed on Bildeston Road near Oaks Meadow, where there is no footpath. Thanks to everyone who helped make this happen.

APPENDIX 2 - Chairman’s Report July 2026

David Thorpe RIP

I’m sure everybody in Combs who knew David, a former councillor, will be hugely saddened at the news of his passing. I have spoken to his daughter Sarah to obtain her approval for us to honour David’s memory in our meeting and Tony Bamber will pay tribute accordingly.

Clerk Resignation

Our highly regarded Clerk, Suzanne Ottewell, has decided to step down to be able to accommodate family commitments through the next calendar year. She has elected to stay on past her formal notice period to enable us to recruit a new clerk and effect a proper handover.

I will record here my thanks to Suzanne for the excellent levels of support, commitment and diligence she has demonstrated in the role.

Town and Parish Council Liaison Meeting 2026

I attended the above webinar, held to update smaller councils on the Joint Local Plan process for Mid Suffolk. There are several stages in the Plan’s development with ‘gateway’ review points for the Planning Inspectorate to examine progress. A first draft local plan is due to be published in early 2027 with adoption in April 2029. Planning Authorities have been tasked with identifying an overarching vision for the future of the area with up to 10 supporting measurable outcomes that will in combination define (and limit) the scope of the plan.

MSDC will support communities that are preparing Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs) and it was made clear that those actively planning for future housing needs will stand a better chance of official endorsement than those relying on existing commitments.

Oaks Meadow picnic tables

The Oaks Meadow Project Trustees have thanked us for the gift of three new picnic tables. We took delivery on 16th June and I am told they have been well used since. The Trustees have offered to conduct a guided tour for new councillors and any others who aren't familiar with the set-up.

APPENDIX 3 - Cllr Matt Bentley

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

07889036492 Matt.Bentley@suffolk.gov.uk

Post-16 Travel Policy Agreed for 2026-27

At Cabinet on Tuesday 16 June, the council considered the proposed Post-16 Travel Policy for the academic year 2026-27. The council is required to publish an annual policy to set out the charges for students over 16, as it receives no funding from the government to provide travel for them – despite it now being a legal requirement for young people to be in education or training until they are 18. The council consulted on the new policy in March 2026, with no changes to charging proposed for the second year in a row. The charges therefore remain:

- £1,050 for a mainstream seat
- £780 for students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)
- The 50% discount remains in place for:
 - Students from low-income families receiving Free School Meals
 - Students with an EHCP or SEND (including those without an EHCP but unable to travel independently due to disability) who also receive Free School Meals

There are currently 30,471 pupils in Suffolk who are eligible for Free School Meals, a 91% increase since 2020.

Some post-16 education providers also provide bursaries which can assist families on a low income with travel costs, and cheaper travel may also be possible via public transport in some cases, so parents and carers are recommended to look into these options too.

Funding Agreed for A140 Major Road Network Planning

Cabinet on Tuesday 16 June also agreed funding of up to £1.35 million for the council to develop a business case for improvements to the A140/A1120 junction in Earl Stonham. The Department for Transport has indicated it would be willing to pay 85% of the project's cost, with the council providing the rest. The council's Cabinet voted to approve the proposal, although my group and other opposition councillors pointed out that the ability of the council to fulfil its financial obligations were far from certain, particularly if the works were delayed and the costs increased, as the government's financial contribution would remain at 85% of the cost set out in the business case with the council liable for any extra spend. The

proposed works are also close to an ecologically sensitive parcel of land which contains rare orchids. The next step will be for a full business case to come back to Cabinet in mid-2027, with work predicted to start at the site in 2028.

Increased Support for Apprenticeships

Businesses in Suffolk will now benefit from extra support to recruit and train their workers because of the expansion of the Levy Support Scheme, which will now enable large employers to transfer levy funds to other businesses. Major employers such as East Coast College and Suffolk County Council have already pledged or are planning to pledge unused levy funding so that micro-businesses and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) can train up their employees at reduced or no cost to them. The scheme was started by Apprenticeships Norfolk, who oversaw more than £6 million transferred to over 280 businesses. Businesses who are interested in pledging unused levy funding can find out further information on the scheme here:

<https://www.apprenticeshipsnorfolk.org/article/71670/Levy-Support-Scheme>

Businesses in Suffolk who want advice on apprenticeships and skills can contact Apprenticeships Suffolk by email on apprenticeships@suffolk.gov.uk

£3.6 Million Investment in New Fire Engines

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service has invested over three million in a new fleet of fire engines across the county. The eleven new fire engines are in addition to the existing fleet and have been bought as part of the service's ongoing fleet renewal programme to make sure fire engines are up to date and reliable. The new engines will be delivered later this year and will be active at fire stations from November. The fire service is also celebrating the first anniversary of its new fire control room, which is based in west Ipswich. The new control system was recently shortlisted in the International Critical Communications Awards, the leading awards in the sector, in the category 'Best Use of Critical Communications in Public Safety'.

Suffolk Against Fraud Partnership Launched

Suffolk Trading Standards has teamed up with Suffolk Constabulary and businesses in the county to launch Suffolk Against Fraud. This means they will work together to investigate, share information and prepare campaigns to raise awareness and protect vulnerable people and small businesses from the effects of fraud, which now accounts for over 40% of criminal offences in Suffolk. Residents who think they may have been a victim of fraud should report it at www.reportfraud.police.uk or by calling 0300 123 2040. If money has already been transferred, they should contact their bank immediately. In addition, Suffolk Trading Standards are very active on social media and will post information regularly about current scams that local communities and businesses should be aware of.

Fourth Annual NSIP Conference Held in Ipswich

Suffolk County Council welcomed representatives from councils all over the country to its fourth annual conference on Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs), which was

held at The Hold in Ipswich on 17 June. There were speakers from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, legal experts and industry organisations. The government was questioned on its plans to reform the NSIP system, as it is currently consulting on reducing the role of councils in the delivery of energy transmission projects. Other topics discussed included how communication by project promoters can improve relations with host communities, what local authority good practice looks like in dealing with NSIPs, and an update from Suffolk County Council and East Suffolk Council on the challenges so far with Sizewell C. Suffolk County Council is recognised as a NSIP Centre of Excellence in the UK, following experience of around 20 large scale projects in the county including offshore wind, solar developments and National Grid reinforcement projects.

Social Media and Helpful Links

Follow us on:

Instagram - <https://www.instagram.com/scc.green/>

Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/suffolkgreens/>

Group Website - <https://suffolkgreens.org.uk/>

Cost of Living help and advice:

[https://infolink.suffolk.gov.uk/kb5/suffolk/infolink/family.page?familychan](https://infolink.suffolk.gov.uk/kb5/suffolk/infolink/family.page?familychannel=6)

[annel=6](https://infolink.suffolk.gov.uk/kb5/suffolk/infolink/adult.page?adultchannel=0) Benefits advice and support:

[https://infolink.suffolk.gov.uk/kb5/suffolk/infolink/adult.page?adultchan](https://infolink.suffolk.gov.uk/kb5/suffolk/infolink/adult.page?adultchannel=0)

[nel=0](https://infolink.suffolk.gov.uk/kb5/suffolk/infolink/adult.page?adultchannel=0)

Flood preparation advice: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/suffolk-fire-and-rescue-service/fire-and-rescue-safety-advice-in-the-community/what-to-do-in-a-flood>

<https://suffolkprepared.co.uk/get-prepared/risk-advice/flooding/>

Flood recovery advice and support: <http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/about/flood-recovery-information-for-suffolk>

APPENDIX 4 - July 2026 District Councillor Report: Onehouse

Waste collections	We have now completed 4 weeks of the new bin collection schedule. It has been challenging for the new crews to get all the bins collected during the heat wave, but last week they collected 162 tonnes of food waste across both districts which was a 6% increase on the previous week. The Waste team are now continuing to improve on • New bins to communal bins stores and properties, completed last week. • New food collection drivers and loaders productivity and quality • Pushing up the food waste daily completion rates • Further reducing the causes which are driving the high volumes of calls and e-mails (mainly missing or missed bins)
Pride in your place grants	Applications for Mid Suffolk District Council's Pride in Your Place grant have reopened, offering funding to projects that bolster community pride and celebrate the heritage of towns and villages across the district.
Scoping Consultation for the Joint Local Plan	Parishes should have received this now. The Consultation opened on 5th June and will run until 31st July Details of the consultation can be found here https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/w/joint-local-plan-scoping-consultation
Armed Forces Day held in Stowmarket 27th June 2026	Hundreds of people gathered in Stowmarket to celebrate Suffolk Armed Forces Day. The free event was put on by Mid Suffolk District Council in partnership with Stowmarket Town Council. The day began with a parade, and this was followed by musical performances as well as the opportunity to take part in a variety of family friendly activities. It was a great event and enabled people to celebrate and support all members of our Armed Forces – both current ones as well as veterans.
Gateway 14 news	A £45M manufacturing facility opened at Gateway 14. It is Assan Panels first manufacturing operation in the UK. It has the capacity to produce up to 4.5 million square metres of insulated wall and roof panels each year.
Locality budget	The 2026-27 Locality budgets have now been launched so I would love to receive applications for funding from any community group in the ward. Details can be found on the website https://midsuffolk.gov.uk/w/locality-awards . It is usually a good idea to contact me to discuss your application before submission.
Street trading licensing scheme	MSDC will designate all public streets and roads across the district as 'Consent Streets' – each application for a licence would be considered on its merits, with elements of control and regulation (such as Food Hygiene and Insurance requirements) and a cost-recovery-only fee.
Cabinet Agenda this week	They will be considering : Proposed Food and Drink action plan to tackle food security and build resilience by sustainably producing more locally, reducing environmental impact and adapting to the challenges of a warming climate. Town Centre Gateway Fund awards to: • Redevelop former fire station for voluntary sector • Conversion of part of Fox Yard for arts and design • Support for proposed hospitality businesses
Council Motion re Potholes	Leader to write to the new Leader of SCC to request changes to the intervention thresholds for potholes and pavement repairs to maximise pedestrian, cyclist and vehicular safety on Mid Suffolk's roads, and address the many loose and rocking paving slabs that plague our vital high streets.

John Matthissen

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