

Minutes of Combs 128th Annual Parish Meeting
Tuesday 10th May 2022 at 7.00pm, Battisford Cricket Club, Combs

Present: S Scarff (Parish Council Chairman); S Ottewell (Parish Councillor); T Kitson (Parish Councillor); T Betchley MBE (Parish Councillor); K Oakes (County Councillor); J Matthissen (District Councillor); J Stephens-Row; R Williams; J Thorpe

Attending: T Bamber (Parish Clerk)

1. Introductions

Parish Council Chairman Stuart Scarff took the chair and welcomed those present. He explained that due to the pandemic there had been no parish meeting in 2020 and that the 127th meeting had been held virtually. At the time of the virtual meeting it had been explained that, once face to face meetings were possible, a formal meeting would be held if there was any interest. No such interest had been demonstrated.

2. Apologies for absence

Cllr I Walker (Parish Council vice-chairman)

3. Minutes of the 127th Annual Parish Meeting held on 6th May 2021

The minutes were signed as a true and accurate copy of the meeting by Cllr Scarff (Chairman)

4. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

5. Chairman's Report

See Appendix 1

6. Report from Suffolk County Councillor

Cllr Oakes had previously circulated her report and this is attached as appendix 2.

7. Report from Mid Suffolk District Councillor

Cllr Matthissen had previously circulated his report and this is attached as appendix 3. In answer to a question regarding accommodation of Ukrainian refugees, Cllr Matthissen confirmed that the families he knew of had been settled successfully in the area. Cllr Oakes was able to add that 124 visas had been granted for Ukrainian guests in Mid Suffolk.

8. Councillor Reports

In the absence of Cllr Walker, the clerk read his report on planning. This is attached as appendix 4.

Cllr Betchley reported on the cemetery and this is attached as appendix 5.

Cllr Ottewell reported that the parish newsletter, which is delivered quarterly throughout the village, has been well received. She thanked all those who had made contributions to it and all councillors expressed their appreciation for her work in producing it.

Cllr Kitson provided a report both on footpaths and the speed indicator devices that the parish council manages. This is attached as appendix 6

9. Local Organisation/Club Reports

See appendices 7, 8,9 and 10 for reports from Battisford & District Cricket Club, the fete committee, the Parochial Church Council and the Gardening Club.

10. Parishioner questions, comments and suggestions

There being no further questions, Cllr Scarff thanked all those attending for doing so and closed the meeting

The Meeting closed at 7.40pm

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Alison", is located in the upper right quadrant of the page.

Appendix 1:

Chairman's Report

May 2022

Over the last few months we have seen the final restrictions lifted as a result of Coronavirus (Covid 19) and life get back to some sort of normality. This has allowed the Parish Council to hold its monthly meetings as a group again, our first meeting back was on 14th June 2021 at the Battsford village hall since March 2020. A decision was made to move our meeting to the cricket club at Moats Tye, Combs as this is within the Parish. Many thanks to the Battsford Hall for allowing us to hold our meetings there over the years.

Unfortunately the Parish Council has had two councillors resign in the last few months, Tori Whitehead and Tracey Chaplin both leaving due to other commitments. Tori was our liaison between Parish Council and the Oaks meadow project whilst Tracey had developed and produced the successful village news letter. We will miss them both. The clerk has started the process to advertise the two vacancies to fill the positions as soon as we can.

A lot of the time at our monthly meetings is taken up with planning applications. This year we have seen many applications for extensions to properties as well as new housing throughout the village. Detailed plans have been submitted for the development of 8 houses at the Tannery along with 9 houses to the north of Bildeston Road. The Parish Council were able to make their comments to the planning department.

The Parish Council has to have many control Policies in place, this includes standing orders, Financial Regulations, Risk Assessments and Data Polices to name a few. These have to be reviewed occasionally and Cllr Ian Walker has spent much time reading them and making suggestions. This has been a big asset to the council I thank him for this.

After an application was received from the St Mary's bell project for funding for the restoration of the church bells, the Parish Council were able to assist with funding to enable the first phase of the project to go ahead. The 4 original bells dating back to the 1600 have been removed from the church and taken to Taylors bell foundry at Loughborough. They will be repaired and restored and are due back shortly to be rehung.

The village newsletter continues to be a great way for the Parish Council to make contact with the residents of the village. Thanks to Cllr Suzanne Ottewell for taking the job of editing the newsletter which has grown by several pages.

Cllr Tony Kitson, with the help of Cllr Ottewell have been able to create a series of Parish walks around the village, these are available to download from the Combs Village web site. QR codes have been fitted to the footpath signs to enable identifying routes and links to other paths.

The Parish Council agreed to have two new oak notice boards made by Mr D Bellamy to replace the old ones at Queens close and the one at Model Farm. Mr Bellamy also went on to refurbish the roof on the bus shelter on Park Road.

After many years of maintaining the Cemetery and St Mary's churchyard David Windle gave notice that he was to retire at the end of 2021. We must thank David for all the work he put

into the upkeep of both graveyards and keeping them looking at their best. Hartley garden services has now taken on the work for us.

The Oaks Meadow project continues to strive forward and with the help from many people in the village planting trees, hedges and fruit trees, it is really starting to come together well. The new eco toilet has now been installed with many more ideas being planned. Cllr Terry Betchley has kindly been our coordinator with the project, keeping us up to date with the goings on. The Parish Council have been able to help with the funding of the new Oak gates which are to be installed shortly.

Our monthly meetings are attended by our Suffolk County Councillor Kay Oakes and our Mid Suffolk District Councillor John Matthissen. This enables the Parish Council to discuss with them any concerns we have regarding Highways, footpaths at County level or planning issues to waste collection at District level. They have always supported, listened and helped our Parish Council. I thank them.

Without our clerk Tony Bamber the Parish Council would not be able to operate, Tony makes sure that everything runs smoothly and in order. From getting the agendas out, all the details of the minutes, from budgets to detailed finances and end of year accounts, responding to our comments regarding planning applications, to submission for our external auditors. All done on time, well done and thank you it makes the chairmans position a lot easier.

Stuart Scarff

Combs Parish Council.

Appendix 2

County Councillor report

County Council Annual Report 2021-2022

Automatic number plate recognition cameras to be installed in villages across Suffolk

In March 2021, Suffolk County Council and Suffolk's Police and Crime Commissioner and Suffolk Constabulary, launched the use of Automatic Number Plate Recognition cameras.

The Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) cameras are being used to help detect and deter speeding offences that have been highlighted in Suffolk villages and educate drivers on the importance of road safety.

An ANPR camera will be installed at a site where it has been identified by a parish council, with support from their county councillor, there is a problem with speeding and / or rat running on roads with a 20 or 30mph speed limit.

An ANPR camera will identify a speeding vehicle by capturing an image of the number plate of the vehicle. Data will then be shared with the Police and the County Council. The County Council will write to the owner of the vehicle on behalf of both parties explaining that their vehicle has been registered as speeding. Repeat offences at a particular location could prompt the deployment of speed enforcement vans and subsequent fines to those who breach the speed limit.

Ten ANPR cameras will be purchased and each one will remain in situ for up to one week per site. There is the option of extending this period if needed.

The project received funding from the Suffolk 2020 Fund, which is a programme of work all about investing in community projects and improving Suffolk for all residents now and in years to come. The funding secures the ANPR project for a two-year pilot where its impact to reduce speeding will be monitored before it receives a further financial commitment.

Suffolk County Council begins procurement process for next Highways Service contract focusing on developing local skills and talent

In early July 2021 Suffolk County Council began the process of finding its next long term Highways Services partner.

The council was looking for a partner to deliver key operational projects after the current contract ends on 30 September 2023.

As part of preparations up to this point, the council has worked with leading industry analysts to understand the different types of arrangements that other local authorities have in place, to look at

which specialist providers are in the marketplace and to find out what aspects of contract agreement may work best for Suffolk based on the range of outcomes the council wants to achieve from any new contract process.

The council is looking to develop a contract that utilises a blended 'hybrid' approach, enabling the council to enter into one contract that covers the majority of Highways Service functions and two contracts with specialist providers for streetlighting and traffic signals (ITS). The council will be looking for the new contract to focus on delivering greater social value, utilising local skills and talent, giving young people the opportunity to work in the sector as well as building on the council's commitment to carbon reduction and protecting the environment.

The whole contract development process will take just over two years to complete. Once the appropriate tender documents have been prepared outlining the council's requirements, initial advertisements will go out in December 2021. Discussions will begin with any interested prospective contractors in early 2022. Following such a rigorous tendering process, the council hopes to be able to award its chosen contract in early 2023 with the new service provider beginning in October 2023.

The procurement process needs to begin now to provide enough time to go to the market to seek relevant specialist companies which may be interested in tendering for the contract which is worth in the region of £800m - £1 billion over a projected 20-year period.

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service adds four new enhanced appliances to its fleet, fitted with solar panels

In August 2021, Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service unveiled state-of-the-art rescue vehicles and equipment to provide firefighters with the latest technology for rescues.

Four new "enhanced rescue tenders" will be based at Bury St Edmunds, Lowestoft, Newmarket and Princes Street (Ipswich), giving cover across the county and strengthening the emergency response across Suffolk's communities.

The new equipment and vehicles are also the latest innovations in green technology, supporting Suffolk County Council's climate emergency declaration and ambitions to be net zero by 2030. The fire appliances are the first in Suffolk to be fitted with solar panels, have more fuel-efficient engines and also carry battery powered hydraulic rescue equipment.

New Suffolk Recycling Centres online booking system improvements to deliver greater customer experience

It was announced in September 2021 that Suffolk County Council has developed a new, more user-friendly booking system which enables residents to book slots for recycling.

For bookings from 27 September, people can view all available time slots in real time, to see which booking slots are free at any given moment. The system allows you to book up to

seven days in advance. If circumstances change, you can easily cancel your slot up to one hour beforehand or equally, you can click to amend your booking if required.

The system is also able to advise customers on which sites accept specific materials, such as plasterboard to ensure the correct type of booking is made to save customers' time, and it can also be used to share real time messages with customers, for example if any site needs to close due to adverse weather or emergency situations. The new booking system is connected to automated numberplate recognition to allow for a trial of automatic entry gates.

Customer survey results show overwhelming support for the use of a booking system and the Council has gathered feedback from customers and site staff on how the booking system can be further improved, which have shaped the design of this new system. Through the use of bookings the council can avoid the frustration of long queues at peak times and increase the overall throughput and efficiency of the service for residents.

MPs from Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex and County Councillors, unite to protect the countryside and communities from the worst impacts of new pylons and cables

In October 2021, the Offshore Electricity Grid Task Force (OffSET) was set up to review and respond to the Government's Offshore Network Transmission Review (OTNR).

A new group of MPs from across the region, under the chairmanship of Sir Bernard Jenkin, and including County Councillors from the region, has been set up to ensure that the emerging proposals of the Government's Offshore Network Transmission Review (OTNR), and proposals to change the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Planning regime, are effectively scrutinised.

The Offshore Electricity Grid Task Force (OffSET) supports the government's commitment to meet the target of Net Zero by 2050, and the aspiration to deliver 40GW of Offshore Wind, by 2030. However, this will result in a succession of electricity generation and connection projects in Norfolk, Suffolk, and Essex, over the coming decades, which will have significant impacts on the environment and communities of the region.

The group believes that these ambitions and targets cannot be met, on an "at any cost" basis. Therefore, the further development of the onshore transmission system, and the connection of offshore wind farms, and interconnectors, will require a new deal for communities and the environment. It remains a key priority that we speed up the Government's timetable to transition to the offshore transmission system, in order to protect our communities from the damaging effects of multiple cable corridors.

As well as scrutinising and responding to new policies and initiatives, the group will be a contact point for Ministers and senior officials, as well as for the National Grid, Crown Estate, and Ofgem, to engage with Regional Leaders. The group will also be inviting key stakeholders and community groups to meet with them, to better understand the impacts, and opportunities, of Net Zero transmission and generation infrastructure in the region.

OffSET's mission statement:

"OffSET exists to promote strategic leadership of the development of a coordinated offshore electricity grid, to address the need for increased grid capacity which off-shore wind, coastal new nuclear, and international interconnectors will demand, while standing up for the countryside of East Anglia so that the welcome transition to net zero electricity generation does not do unnecessary damage to our communities or the environment."

Suffolk continues to create the greenest county with £150,000 for new trees

It was announced in October 2021 that a joint bid by a number of Suffolk's authorities secured funding from the Forestry Commission to plant around 3,000 trees this coming planting season.

Suffolk County Council submitted the bid on behalf of itself, Ipswich Borough Council, Babergh District Council, Mid Suffolk District Council and West Suffolk District Council. The successful bid will see £149,712.55 come into the county for new trees, from the Local Authority Treescapes Fund.

The fund targets treescapes that have been neglected or suffered damage in the past, including disused and vacant community spaces and those affected by tree diseases such as ash dieback. The locations are chosen where they are likely to be experienced directly by people, as well as on improving the age structure of trees in all the project areas.

One of the interesting methods being adopted to re-establish woodland as part of this project, is the Miyawaki method.

It is regarded as one of the most effective tree planting methods for creating cover quickly on neglected land, or land that has previously been used for construction or agriculture. It uses natural principles, such as using trees already native to the area and replicating natural regeneration processes and is particularly effective in the urban environment.

Suffolk County Council investing £12.8m to decarbonise its buildings

It was announced in November 2021 that properties, including fire stations and libraries, will receive investment as the council continues to drive its ambition to be Net Zero by 2030.

Suffolk County Council will be committing £12.8m towards reducing the carbon produced by buildings in its corporate estate.

Cabinet members today (9 November 2021) approved a report to commit to this investment, as well as implementing the SCC Energy Management Strategy, as recommended by the Climate Emergency Policy Development Panel.

Suffolk County Council approves extra £20m investment in highway drainage and footpaths

In December 2021, Cabinet members committed an extra £20 million over the next three years into further improving Suffolk's highway drainage systems and footpaths.

In recognition of the increasing maintenance demand on these areas, councillors approved the use of £10 million to specifically deliver an increasing number of drainage schemes that deal with problems that affect larger numbers of people, and a further £10 million to improve footpath quality and access.

Suffolk Highways will use the drainage investment alongside funding from the Department for Transport to increase the number of highway flooding sites which are resolved, providing a highway network that is more resilient and accessible during heavy rain and severe weather events.

The footpath investment will be focused on urban areas and busy footpaths in rural areas - providing a safer and more accessible network that supports people accessing local bus services, health care services and local shopping precincts.

Over 10,000 new LED streetlights installed across Suffolk

It was announced on December 17th that Suffolk's LED replacement programme reached a new milestone, with over 10,000 streetlights upgraded with new, sustainable LEDs.

Bouygues Energies & Services, the contractor leading the programme has successfully installed 10,799 new lanterns and counting as part of the project to replace all 43,400 streetlights in the county. These lanterns use less energy and produce a more natural and focused light than the traditional orange glow of streetlights.

The project, which is due to complete by the end of 2022 will also allow opportunity for other streetlight owners within Suffolk such as Parish and District Councils to upgrade their streetlights as part of this process.

This upgrade supports Suffolk County Council's ambitions for becoming a carbon-neutral organisation by 2030. The benefits include supporting a reduction in carbon emissions by saving energy and reducing light pollution, as well as providing clearer images on CCTV, traffic cameras and dashcam footage for the benefit of public safety.

The teams have been working their way through the west of the county and are making progress in Stowmarket and Sudbury.

Aside from the reduction in energy usage and minimising light pollution, the project will also bring down ongoing maintenance costs for the authority. The County Council expects to reduce its annual electricity costs on the streetlights by around 76%, saving more than £1.7 million a year.

By upgrading the lighting system with smart technology, this will increase the control the County Council has over its power consumption which will further reduce costs.

Prior to commencing in towns or parishes, Suffolk Highways is contacting those councils in case they wish to upgrade their parish-council owned street-lighting at the same time. All heritage-style lanterns which have been identified will be upgraded towards the end of the programme.

Good news for Suffolk as Government gives the green light to negotiate a County Deal

Published in February 2022, Leader of the Council, Matthew Hicks, reflected on the news that Suffolk County Council was given the go ahead to negotiate a County Deal

Leader of Suffolk County Council, Councillor Matthew Hicks, explains why a new county deal is good for Suffolk, and why we don't need a new Mayor.

In August last year, I wrote about the efforts of Suffolk's Public Sector Leaders in working to secure from the Government a devolution deal for Suffolk. Last week, at the same time as the publication of the Levelling Up White Paper, we heard the news that Suffolk was successfully chosen as one of nine areas across the country to have been given the opportunity of negotiating a new County Deal.

This is fantastic news for Suffolk, and I am delighted about it.

One of the questions I've heard a lot since the announcement is, what would a deal mean for Suffolk? To clarify we do not have a deal yet, and we have many more months of negotiations and discussions with Government ahead of us before we can look to finalise an actual deal.

Some of the areas we included in our initial discussion centred around the development and roll out of Oyster style travel cards to increase the attractiveness and effectiveness of public transport and longer-term funding for major transport infrastructure upgrades, not just one-off funding.

We also discussed with Government the opportunity of keeping all the apprenticeship levy funding raised in Suffolk in Suffolk, benefiting more people here. This could create the opportunity to work with the University, colleges, business and others to explore how this money could be better used.

Negotiating the devolution of the powers necessary to develop more innovative projects to help deliver further action on Climate Change and make good on our promises around net zero by 2030 are also possible. Whilst I was delighted to read the other day that in a recent study Suffolk County Council was ranked as the third-best county council nationally for our response to the climate crisis, our ambitions in this area could be taken further still via a County Deal.

What I can promise you, however, is that during the negotiations I will be pushing the Government for the maximum amount of benefit for the people of Suffolk.

Finally, one of the areas related to this announcement which gained a lot of attention, especially from the media, was the potential for a directly elected Mayor of Suffolk, like the Metropolitan Mayors across the country in areas like the West Midlands. Let me say here and now, this is not something which Suffolk has asked for and importantly not something we need to secure a deal with Government.

Whilst of course we recognise the work of such Mayors like Andy Street and Ben Houchen, this additional level of oversight is not needed for our deal given the strong levels of co-operation and leadership already found here in Suffolk. Do not forget, this opportunity is the result of an ongoing dialogue to promote Suffolk to central Government strongly supported by our MPs and the partnership working with district and borough councils. Going forward this partnership working will continue alongside health partners, emergency services, the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Chamber of Commerce.

I have always been ambitious for Suffolk, and I believe the opportunities within a County Deal would help unlock more potential in Suffolk and help us level up across the county; especially as we start to slowly escape the clutches of COVID. We will negotiate hard for a deal that will give us the tools we need to build back better, build back stronger and build back greener.

Halfway mark reached as over 20,000 Suffolk streetlights replaced

In February 2022 Suffolk County Council's programme to replace 43,400 streetlights with new energy-efficient LEDs reached the halfway mark.

Contractor, Bouygues Energies & Services begins work in Ipswich.

To date, the teams have replaced 21,215 new streetlights with the new lanterns and are well on the way to successfully delivering the project on budget and to programme timescales.

These LED lanterns use less energy and produce a more natural and focused light than the traditional orange glow of streetlights. They are extremely long-lasting products and have an expected lifetime of up to 100,000 hours. This is approximately two times longer than a typical conventional street lighting lamp. As a result, Suffolk County Council is expecting to reduce its annual electricity costs on the streetlights by around 76%, saving more than £1.7 million a year. This is 16% more than what was originally anticipated.

The programme is on schedule to be completed by the end of May 2022, with all heritage-style lanterns being upgraded towards the end of the programme. Prior to commencing in towns or parishes, Suffolk Highways is contacting those councils in case they wish to upgrade their parish-council owned street-lighting at the end of the project.

Appendix 3

District Councillor report

Annual Report from District Councillor John Matthissen May 2022

Covid Community Response	I first pay tribute to all who have contributed by supporting local people through a second year of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Babergh & Mid Suffolk (BMSDC) staff have taken on a variety of extra tasks and maintained a reasonable service despite the practical difficulties of working from home and safe procedures.
Governance	<p>Many decisions are being decided on the Chairman's vote and there has been little collaborative working between the administration group and the Green and Liberal Democrat group. The Green party had a very successful result in a by-election in the Thurston Ward, so the Council remains hung at 17 each side. The opportunity to reconsider the Cabinet model was rejected.</p> <p>Council meetings are now being held in person, but virtual platforms continue to be used for briefings and internal meetings. It is hoped that the Council will in future be able to hold 'hybrid' meetings where voting Council members need to be physically present at meetings, but some officers and members of the public will be able to make presentations and representations online.</p>
Financial	Mid Suffolk's general fund budget continues to be in a healthy condition, and the District element of council tax will be frozen. The council agreed the proposal from the Green and Liberal Democrat group to spend some of the Growth and Efficiency Fund to provide 2 electric bus services to help residents get into Stowmarket for a 2 year period. The Council's investment in CIFCO continues to provide revenue despite the value of the assets deteriorating..
Climate Change and Biodiversity	<p>The Council has recently adopted the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure plan to encourage more residents to travel actively.</p> <p>As part of the Tree and Hedgerow planting scheme over 200 trees and c2,500 hedgerow plants have been delivered to parishes. Over 250 trees were given to celebrate births during 2021 as part of the 'Tree for Life' scheme.</p> <p>The construction of a solar carport is well underway at the Leisure Centre and the new visitor centre at Needham Lake will be opened this summer.</p> <p>The waste lorries are now all operating on hydrotreated vegetable oil (HVO) which should cut carbon emissions by 90%. MSDC adopted a Net Zero Carbon Toolkit as technical guidance for both developers and homeowners to help reduce the carbon footprint in new and existing buildings.</p>
Housing	<p>The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget was agreed by full Council, and as the Government have now lifted the rent cap, Council tenants will see a 4.1% increase in their rent. The HRA business plan is to be developed and hopes to include a programme of improvements to existing Council stock as well as building and acquiring dwellings.</p> <p>Part of the housing development on the old HQ site in Needham Market has been completed and this included 3 new council homes, and a further 15 affordable homes were acquired across the district in 2021. Over 100 residents were prevented from becoming homeless and the Council provided 16 dedicated beds for Rough Sleepers courtesy of grant funding.</p>

Ukraine war	As part of the response to the Ukraine crisis, BMSDC officers are carrying out housing checks on the properties which will be accommodating Ukrainian refugees, once the applications have been processed by the Home Office.
Planning	Following the examination interim report on the Joint Local plan, the Councils have agreed a 2-part local plan process with the inspectors.. This will enable the important social, economic and environmental objectives to be published in a Part 1 Joint Local Plan which will be adopted first, whilst the remaining work on spatial strategy matters and housing allocations will be addressed in a Part 2 Joint Local Plan. MSDC currently has over 9 years housing land supply.
Wellbeing	The council adopted its first Wellbeing Strategy this year. A number of initiatives across the district took place during the year including <i>Family Park Cooking</i> session in Stowmarket, free Christmas Holiday activity session , <i>Our Parks</i> (free outdoor fitness sessions) in Stowmarket and the <i>Active Schools</i> programme. MSDC together with Suffolk County Council and Stowmarket Town Council supported the launch in July of the Chilton Fields parkrun held every Saturday morning.
Economy	The Council continues the development of Gateway 14 which is now part of Freeport East. The business case has now been agreed by Cabinet. Almost 200 young people attended the Careeriosity event focussing on science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) and cultural industries. The Council held a Local Energy Showcase which attracted over 200 visitors and several local businesses. BMSDC's Virtual High Street project won an award.
Communities	Almost £400,000 worth of grants were distributed to support communities across the district. I was pleased to be able to allocate all my locality budget to community groups. A list is in current village magazines. The next tranche of locality funding is open for bids, so please get in touch with requests.
Combs	Homes opposite the Tannery - improved designs have been submitted, and this is likely to be approved shortly. It has been great to see the Oaks Meadow making excellent progress. A District-wide Governance review will see the Boundary change with Battisford considered at last. I believe the Infrastructure Levy payment for homes near The Punchbowl has come to Combs.
Little Finborough	It is good to see the village is hosting the Oaks Meadow project, with residents getting involved.
Onehouse	Working with the Parish Council I continue to try and resist the town encroaching towards the village. The fate of the final section of hedge in Union Road was sealed 18 months ago, when the principle of development was forced through on the casting vote of the planning committee chair. The County Council requires a visibility splay, but I am pleased to have persuaded the developers to retain hedges on the other 3 sides of the site. Next week I will be arguing in the planning committee that there is no need to breach policies to allow another 20 houses opposite the bungalows on Forest road. After months of argument, the idea of building on the land between Paupers Graves and the village has been withdrawn. Overall, too much large scale development is taking place, which is inevitably damaging, and has often not been carried out sensitively. I can only hope the end results will eventually mature into proper communities.

Great Finborough	It was good to attend the opening of the refurbished playground, good work by the parish council and all involved. Development proposal at Buxhall Lodge seems finally halted after a failed appeal. More affordable homes are on the way at Pear Tree Place fairly soon. I was very pleased to be able to persuade MSDC to buy the 3 acres of land beside the river at Wash Lane, preventing attempts at a very unsuitable housing development. It has been bought to protect and enhance the biodiversity corridor along the valley.
Harleston	It has been heartening to see the exceptional community energy and enthusiasm continued with new leadership from Andy and Hilary. The rewilding project brings a new dimension. I understand and share the frustration at the empty bungalows and continue to pressure MSDC housing officers to move forward with the refurbishment project.
Shelland	It is good to see residents supporting and getting involved in rewilding project with Harleston.

Appendix 4

Planning Report May 2022

As we have not had a public meeting since 2019 this report covers the applications considered by the parish council over the last 3 years.

In the course of the years April 2019 to March 31 2022 the parish council considered 72 applications, including three appeals. Not all of these were within the boundary of the parish itself but in those cases the council made comments in light of the local impact.

Of the 72 applications reviewed, 34 were supported. The Council objected to 16 and in 19 cases it neither supported nor object but made comments that it was hoped the Planning Department would take into account.

In terms of trends, the council considered 14 applications in 2019-20, 33 in 20-21, and 25 this last year.

In recent years there has been a relatively large increase in the number of dwellings proposed for the village and the council has to tread a fine line between preserving the essence of the village and accepting the need for each area to assist in meeting housing requirements. Councillors strive for consistency in their views but note with interest that the same approach does not appear to be part of the district council's policy.

Appendix 5

Report on the Cemetery for Combs Annual Parish Meeting

May 2022

Combs Cemetery is owned and maintained by Combs Parish Council. Once again it has been kept in good order throughout the year and feedback to this effect has been received from several family grave owners.

During the year April 2019- March 2020 there were 13 interments (8 burials and 5 cremated remains), all for non-residents of the civil parish of Combs.

During the year April 2020- March 2021 there were 18 interments (8 burials and 9 cremated remains), all but one were for non-residents of the civil parish of Combs.

During the year April 2021- March 2022 there were 14 interments (8 burials and 6 cremated remains), all for non-residents of the civil parish of Combs.

Our long-term ground keeper, David Windle, retired after many years of great service and we wish him and his wife a long and happy retirement. The role has been taken up by another independent contractor and the new arrangements look to be working very well.

The recently refurbished gatepost was again damaged last year. The driver who cased it drove off thinking they had not been seen, but we know who they are! Ex-councillor Jamie Crooks kindly offered to repair the post for the council.

Thanks must go to all parish councillors who have helped with the maintenance of the cemetery during the year, in particular Stuart Scarff, and ex councillors Jamie Crooks and David Thorpe.

Cllr Terry Betchley MBE

Combs Parish Annual Parish Meeting 10th May 2022

Footpaths

- Reviewed Parish Walks web site page
 - The existing walks by Bill Baldry were updated and some new ones were added
 - There are now 7 in total, the shortest being 1.2 miles and the longest 10 miles
 - The new documented walks include local photographs and Ordnance Survey maps
 - The Parish Council is now registered with the OS and we are able to reproduce content provided we acknowledge the copyright
- Signposts
 - The Parish Council supported the County Council's 'Discovering Suffolk' initiative
 - Councillors and other volunteers affixed 25 plaques to signposts with QR codes that link to SCC's website and to the Countryside Code
 - A further 10 signposts were notified to SCC as being damaged or in need of replacement. These have been subsequently acknowledged and listed for attention.

Speed Indicator Devices

- The first sets of data were extracted from the SIDs and analysed
- A full report was compiled, issued to all councillors and shared with Battisford Parish Council
- A full user manual was written outlining the process for data extraction, analysis and reporting

Appendix 7

Combs parish council report from BDCC May 22

We are delighted that you are holding your parish meeting here this evening and that as a council you have started using our premises for your regular meetings.

As you can see the chairs, which you kindly gave a donation towards in the last financial year, fit in well and are very comfortable.

We have been pleased that the club has been able to provide a venue for people from the local community and we have held wakes, a wedding and a birthday party in the last 12 months and we have another wedding reception shortly.

Cricket

We have two senior teams and T20 side, a ladies team and 3 junior teams. We hold coaching for juniors and seniors during the summer on a Friday night and we also run Allstars and Dynamos which are ECB initiatives to introduce youngsters aged 5-11 to the game. This year we have over 20 youngsters signed up for these sessions.

Last year the T20 side made the finals day for the 4th straight season.,

Our junior teams - under 7's , under 9's and under 11's had a mixture of 20 fixtures or festivals both home and away

The ladies unfortunately were only able to play half their scheduled fixtures due to a mixture of poor weather and lack of players. However this year they have had two games so far both of which they have won.

The Saturday team had a great season finishing 5th in the league. Out of 19 games played they won 12 and lost 7.

For the Sunday team they worked hard to secure 4th in the league and also recruited some new players and saw some fantastic performances from the juniors coming into the team and playing a big role in the teams success! Because of changes in the league we were promoted to division 4 for this season and we are looking to the challenges this will bring. We also held a number of friendly games with farmers, local restaurant, hockey club etc which will be repeated this year.

We are always looking for new players for all the teams so please do promote the club to your friends and family.

We were very pleased to be asked to host county junior and senior games last year and a 2 day Hertfordshire v Suffolk under 18 game. Everyone was very complimentary about the set up here. We have at least a 2 day county game here this summer and we are also hiring the ground to a team from Wattisham.

Social

We have a Vice Presidents scheme for individuals who are non playing, who want to support the cricket club financially and as a thank you we hold an annual lunch in a marquee at the end of August. The theme for 2021 was The Rainbow

We held a number of social events including a race night and had both juniors and seniors award evenings.

Despite Covid we were able to have a Sponsors and Grant Makers Event in June where guests enjoyed an outside gathering, watching T20 cricket whilst being served a plate of cakes and savouries. We are exceptionally grateful to a range of businesses for their support through the sponsor boards which are around the ground. There is always space for more. We are delighted that Skinner Building Services are our main sponsor.

Financial information and plans for the future

We would like to take this opportunity to thank yourselves, district and county councillors and others for the grants they have given to us. Over a period because of Covid when we haven't been able to play cricket or hold fund raising events this money has been very important. Because we own our ground and clubhouse we were very fortunate to receive some Covid related grants. We have continued to upgrade our facilities finishing the refurbishment to the social area and the kitchen, buying the chairs and some white goods for the kitchen, upgrading machinery, purchasing additional covers for the wicket and getting new gates. We are hoping to further extend the pavilion and reinstate the veranda and maybe have a clock. We were also planning to significantly refurbish our nets before the start of the season, however because of the impact on Covid on suppliers this has been unavoidably delayed.

We do have some concerns as to the impact of the two properties which are due to be built on land adjacent to the cricket club. We know that a ball strike assessment has been undertaken however because of the standard of cricket we play, and the use of the ground for county games, we are concerned that balls will enter the gardens and possibly strike the houses and occupants. We do already have balls going into this area and onto the road. We will continue to work with the planners and the developer to ensure that mitigation of this risk by way of a fence is put in place, as any claim against the club would be significantly detrimental to our future.

As a relatively small club run by volunteers we punch significantly above our weight both in terms of our cricket, our facilities and our place in Suffolk cricket. We are at heart, a family friendly club we want to inspire youngsters to take up the game. We were formed in 1973 and look forward to many more years to having cricket played here.

Julia Stephens-Row
BDCC secretary
May 2022

Combs & Battisford fete

Combs and Battisford report 2022

Thankfully things are now returning to what we know as “normal” pre-covid.

The organisation of this year’s fete is now in full swing. We did a mini fund raiser of afternoon tea boxes in March, to celebrate Mother’s Day. This proved to be a great success and added some much-needed funds to the fete pot.

This year we have managed to cut costs with the kind donation of the use of a generator for free. This has saved us a lot of money and has also cut the price of our insurance.

We have found some parts of the villages harder to attract than others. We are always open to new and fresh ideas if anyone has any to offer.

We will be holding our scarecrow competition over the month of June leading right up until the day of the fete on the 2nd July. Our ever-popular pig race is returning and we are also be having a barn dance to finish the two days off.

We are still a small committee of volunteers who are passionate about bringing our villages together to celebrate the fantastic place which we live in.

As always if anyone would be happy to lend a hand in any aspect of the fete, please let us know.

Rachel Williams

Chairperson

Combs and Battisford fete

Appendix 9

St Mary's Church Combs Report to Combs Village Parish Council for 2021/22

1. **New Rector**

Following the departure of Revd Chris Childs Combs & Finborough Benefice went through a period of interregnum to find a new Rector. The Benefice has been most fortunate as this period was relatively short and is delighted that Revd. Sarah Jenkins was installed as our new Rector in November 2021. This role covers the seven parishes of Combs, Lt Finborough, Gt Finborough, Buxhall, Harleston, Onehouse and Shelland. Revd Sarah is supported in this work by Revd Canon Pauline Highams (Associate Priest) and Revd Alison Lay.

2. **The PCC (Combs Parochial Church Council)**

The AGM for the PCC took place on 26th April 2022 and established the new PCC members and their roles for the next 12 months. Apart from the Clergy who are ex-officio members, the following people were established in their roles; Chair: Sarah Jenkins, Church Wardens: Jenny Straughier & Gerry Crease, Secretary: Chris Sansom; Treasurer and Lay Chair: Jim Sansom, Synod Rep: Jane Peters, other members: Anne Cole, Patrick Peters and Martyn Key. The following people stepped down from the PCC: Jill Scarff and Maria Scadding

3. **Service Pattern**

Following relaxation of Covid Restrictions and the appointment of Sarah the following service pattern has been established at St Mary's Combs: 1st Sunday of the month: All Age Worship; 3rd Sunday of the month: Family Communion. There are services at each of the other Parishes within the Benefice, such that each Sunday, there is a choice of type of service to suit all preferences. These are advertised on the web sites, notice boards and in the pew sheet. Weekday Services normally include Holy Communion at Onehouse on Wednesdays and a Morning Prayer by Zoom on Saturday. At varying times there is Evensong at one of the churches in the Benefice. In addition, as a legacy of Covid Restrictions, there is a Zoom Service every Sunday for those people who find it difficult to get out or who are still concerned about infection. It is likely that this Zoom Service will continue for the foreseeable future.

This pattern of services provides the opportunity for the Clergy to remain at the end of each service rather than rush off to another location, thereby enabling pastoral relationships to be established where appropriate.

Congregations have yet to return to their pre Covid Restriction numbers, but it is hoped with renewed stability numbers will soon return.

4. **Activities – St Mary's Combs**

4.1. "Meet-up Mondays"

Prior to Covid the church, with Revd Alison Lay taking the lead, established an initiative called Meet up Monday. This enabled people within the area to meet up and socialise. This was focussed on those 06.05.22 people who otherwise may not see many other people throughout the week. It initially proved very successful and following Covid Rule relaxation, this has been re-established at the Church Hall on the 2nd & 4th Monday each month and continues to be a success with about 20 people, including helpers attending. Tea, coffee, and cake is always available to enhance the social "feeling".

4.2. "Let's Get Crafty"

This is a group of mainly ladies who get together on 1st & 3rd Thursday each month in the church hall to share time whilst carrying out their various crafts. Originally this mainly consisted of knitting and many useful articles have been bulk-knitted for charitable causes. Examples include the end of life care unit at Ipswich Hospital, baby care unit at Bury Hospital, patients with dementia and mask extenders to NHS throughout the UK during Covid

4.3. Choir (Music Group)

The church has, for several years, had a thriving choir which continues to make music and enhance our worship during services. The choir is now run by our new leader, Andy Little, who is a talented musician and is increasing the range and repertoire of the choir including more modern sacred music. In previous years the choir has sung carols at Christmas and Easter at the Co-op shop in Combs Ford, however this year the "outing" was transferred, by invitation, to Alder Car Farm for their Christmas Fayre. Funds were raised at this event for the church coffers.

5. Fundraising

The ability to hold fundraising events has been considerably curtailed during Lockdown periods, however despite this, funds have been raised through the last 12 months and distributed to the Children's Society, Church Missionary Society, the Appeal for Ukraine and MacMillan Nurses.

Fundraising has also always been an essential activity to raise money to cover the running costs of the church, this has been curtailed in the last two years severely impacting our ability to finance the running of the church. It is planned to bring back some of these events this coming year including the Strawberry Fayre in June.

6. Projects & Maintenance

The Church is ancient grade 1 listed building and has significant ongoing costly maintenance issues which are largely dealt with on an ongoing basis as funds permit. However currently we have two costly and pressing maintenance and repair projects for which funding is urgently required:

a) South Aisle Floor refurbishment;

b) Repair of fallen plasterwork on East wall of Nave (For safety reasons the organ is out of action and access is restricted to areas of the church until these repairs are made)

In addition to the above major projects, we have a project to refurbish the original bells from the Church and reinstate them as ringing bells. This is part 1 of a much larger project involving bells and is well under way and should be completed this year.

Thanks are due to the Combs Parish Council who continue to maintain the churchyard. The condition of the churchyard is much appreciated by members of the church and public alike.

7. Church Hall

The Church Hall has begun to thrive again following Covid restriction relaxation. Most of the Regular Hirers have returned. These include Karate Club lessons, Pilates, Fitness Classes,

Guides, Brownies, Rainbows, Stowmarket Majorettes and Mini 1st Aid. In addition to these there are numerous private hires for family parties and other groups already booked and, in the pipeline.

Appendix 10

Gardening Club report

The Gardening Club went into hibernation for 18 months from March 2020 until October 2021, but after a stuttering start with the Winter Omicron, we have now had 7 meetings and have started the summer programme of visits.

We have over 60 members, nearly all are over 60; about half are from Combs and Battsford, but attract people living in Stowmarket, Needham Market and as far away as Ipswich.

We will be returning with the Show at the Fete. About half of the entries in the Show are normally from non-members. We have had 600 entries in previous years.

Denis Wicking
Chairman
Battsford and District Gardening Club