Combs Parish Council

Minutes of the Meeting held at Battisford Cricket Club on
Monday 12th October 2026 at 7:30pm

Present: Cllr T Kitson (Chair) Cllr C Ratcliffe; Cllr A Tomlinson; Cllr K Harding; Cllr S Penman; Cllr T Bamber; Cllr J Matthiessen; Cllr M Bentley
Clerks Mrs A Maloney; Mrs S Ottewell,

2610-01 To receive Apologies for absence
None had been received.

2610-02 To receive Declarations of Interest; Declarations of Lobbying; Declarations of gifts and hospitality
None had been received.

2610-03 To approve the minutes of the last meeting
It was AGREED: that the minutes of the meeting held on Monday 14th September 2026 be approved as a true record and signed by the Chair.

2610-04 Public Forum
No members of the public were present.

2610-05 Action Points review
The action points summary was circulated prior to the meeting. Cllrs were reminded to update the Clerk on completed actions.

2610-06 Chairman's Report
The Chairmans report was circulated prior to the meeting. (Appendix 1)

Memorial Plaque for Mr Thorpe
Cllr Kitson had been contacted regarding the possibility of arranging a memorial plaque in memory of the late Mr Thorpe.
The Clerk reminded the Council that any public expenditure must be justified to ensure that it benefits the community as a whole. Proposals were discussed including the family to organise a collection to cover the cost, with the Council offering its support and the possibility of the bench on the triangle in Moats Tye being used as a memorial, subject to the family purchasing the plaque.
Action: Cllr Kitson to contact the family to discuss further.

2610-07 County Councillor Report
Cllr Bentley was present at the meeting. His report was received and circulated prior to the meeting.
Cllr Bentley proposed introducing a self-help scheme to address outstanding actions due to the lack of response from Highways.
It was noted that the relevant Highways reference number should be provided to Cllr Bentley when requesting follow-up on outstanding matters.

2610-08 District Councillor Report

Cllr Matthissen was present at the meeting. His report was received and circulated prior to the meeting. (Appendix 2)

Planning applications: Any concerns regarding a planning application should be sent to Cllr Matthissen for referral to the relevant committee.

Section 106 housing: It was noted that houses provided under Section 106 agreements may be prioritised for people with a connection to the village, in accordance with the relevant allocation criteria.

Elections: Parish and District Council elections are scheduled for May 2027.

Neighbourhood Development Plan

Cllr Kitson reported that a request to register interest in the Neighbourhood Development Plan was submitted in May, but no response had been received to date. Cllr Matthissen would follow this up.

Cllr Matthissen highlighted the importance of identifying green spaces of value as part of the development of a Neighbourhood Development Plan.

2610-09 Planning applications for consideration

a) **REF: DC/26/03979** Householder Application - Replace a decayed, 15-20 years old, wooden driveway gate with a split wrought iron driveway gate at Trickers Green Farmhouse, Park Road, Combs, Stowmarket Suffolk IP14 2JR.
It was AGREED: That the Parish Council had no objections to this application. **Clerk to action.**

b) **REF: DC/26/04099** Application for Listed Building Consent - Install freestanding electric vehicle charger at 7 Model Farm, Park Road, Combs, Stowmarket Suffolk IP14 2JG
It was AGREED: That the Parish Council had no objections to this application. **Clerk to action.**

c) **REF: DC/26/04213** Application - Creation of a slabbed hard standing area and erection of a Breezehouse oval wooden garden gazebo at 5 Russet Gardens, Combs, Stowmarket, Suffolk IP14 2EU
It was AGREED: That the Parish Council had no objections to this application. **Clerk to action**

d) **REF: DC/26/03556** Application for Listed Building Consent - Installation of solar photovoltaic (PV) panels on the roof of the existing outbuilding at Holy Oak Barn, Church Road, Combs, Stowmarket IP14 2EH
It was AGREED: That the Parish Council had no objections to this application. **Clerk to action.**

e) **Planning Decisions**
The following planning decisions were noted by the council.

REF: DC/26/03188 planning permission is granted for Re-roofing works at 17 Model Farm.
REF: DC/26/03196 planning permission is granted for Re-slating of roof at 16 Model Farm.
REF: DC/26/03649 planning permission is granted for works to a protected tree at 3 Russet Gardens.

2610-10 Clerk's Report and Finance

a) The Clerk's Report was circulated to Councillors prior to the meeting (Appendix 3). Highways concerns raised by a member of the public were discussed.
Action: Clerk to report issues noted to Highways

b) Budget Analysis, Bank Reconciliation and Monthly Statement
It was proposed that the insurance renewal was to be reviewed three months early to review market.
It was AGREED: that the Budget Analysis, Bank Reconciliation and Monthly Statement be approved.

c) Payments and Receipts
It was AGREED: that the following Payments be approved.

Payments		**Receipts**	
Blackthorn Landscapes	£460.00	Burial Ground Income EofE Co-Op	£95
N Power Street Lights	£190.10	Bank Interest	£440.06
Clerk Salaries October and NI	£1026.35	Bank Interest	£80.66
Installation of Notice Boards	£440		
TOTAL	£2116.45	**TOTAL**	£615.72

2610-11 To consider 2027/28 Budget and Precept
The Finance Working Group will meet on Monday 26th at 7.00 pm to discuss budget requirements
Attendees: Cllr Kitson, Cllr Bamber, Cllr Tomlinson, Clerk

2610-12 To consider streetlights maintenance & upgrade to LED lighting
The street lighting proposals were discussed.
It was AGREED: that Option 2 would be taken forward.

Actions:
Cllr Kitson: Prepare and send a letter to residents advising them of the proposed change to the street lighting.

Clerk: Request a formal quotation for the works and issue a purchase order, setting out the Council's understanding of the anticipated costs.

2610-13 To receive an update on Complaint to BMSDC
A draft letter of complaint to BMSDC had been prepared and circulated prior to the meeting.
It was AGREED: that the letter would be submitted.

2610-14 To receive an update on Anglian Water Issues
Anglian Water were not present at the meeting – attendance had been postponed to 9th November 2026.

2610-15 To receive an update on Hubbards Close
The ongoing maintenance issues were discussed. A residents' committee would need to be formed, and confirmation received that responsibility for the ongoing maintenance would be maintained by the committee before Cllr Matthiessen could consider providing funding.

It was AGREED: that the Hubbards Close sign CIL fund application would be approved at a cost of £203.40. It was noted that funding for the signs would not set a precedent for future funding applications.
Actions:
Cllr Tomlinson to seek quotation for the installation of the signs.

2610-16 To consider Wreath purchase for Remembrance Sunday Service
It was AGREED: that a wreath would be purchased. – Cllr Kitson to action.

2610-17 To receive an update on the Community Emergency Plan
Cllr Penman, Clerk and S Ottewell had undertaken an initial meeting to discuss how to take the emergency plan forward.
Battisford Parish Council had expressed an interest in undertaking a joint plan; however, their plan was on hold until January.
Action:
An article would be prepared for inclusion in the newsletter and on noticeboards, inviting volunteers to join the steering group.

2610-18 To receive an update on Noticeboard Installation
The new noticeboards had been installed.
Action:
Arrange for the lock on the bus shelter noticeboard to be repaired.

2610-19 To receive an update on the Cemetery upgrade works
Cllr Bamber reported that tenders had been issued. A meeting was scheduled for the 15th October to review the proposed works. An update would be provided at the next meeting.

2610-20 To receive an update on the litter pick of 10/10/2026
Approximately 20 bags of litter had been collected but had not yet been collected by Public Realm.

Further advertising was recommended to encourage more members of the public to participate in future litter-picking events. The use of a banner was suggested. It was suggested that the next litter-picking event be held on a Sunday, taking traffic levels into consideration.

Action:

Clerk: Contact Public Realm to arrange collection of the bags.

2610-21 Items to be considered for the next meetings Agenda

The following matters were noted for inclusion on the agenda for the next meeting:

Anglian Water

Hubbards Close

Cemetery Upgrade

2610-22 To approve the date of the next meeting – Monday 9th November 2026 at 7.30pm

The Meeting Closed at 21:24

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Appendix 1

Chairman's Report October 2026

Clerk Handover

Suzanne Ottewell and Ange Maloney have been working diligently to effect a transfer of duties from the former to the latter. Ange is now effectively the Parish Clerk and Suzanne's tenure in the position formally comes to a close on Tuesday 13th October.

As Chair, I will record here my thanks to both Suzanne and Ange for their commitment to making the transition work so smoothly. We welcome Ange who has already demonstrated her worth in the role; and we say farewell to Suzanne, acknowledging the excellent levels of support, commitment and diligence she has demonstrated during her tenure as Parish Clerk.

Community Newsletter

Suzanne will continue to edit (and design and print and have distributed!) the popular Community Newsletter for another year. Councillors will remember that this venture is officially funded by Combs and Battisford Parish Councils jointly. Neither body has any administrative oversight although the accounting of income and expenditure is on our (Combs) books. Between us, we will need to find a new editor and should a volunteer not step forward we might have to entertain the notion that we could find ourselves paying for such a service.

Local Government Re-organisation

On Monday 7 September the Government made the (to my mind extraordinary) announcement that it was withdrawing its previous decision to create three new unitary councils in Suffolk (and this is also the case in Norfolk and Essex).

The Government will now carry out a rapid review of existing LGR proposals and will (at some unspecified time) provide further detail on how this process will operate. Elections in May next year will go ahead. These will no longer be for the proposed Shadow Authorities and will instead take place on existing district and borough boundaries. The Mayoral election for the Suffolk/Norfolk regional devolution programme is still due to proceed but the timing for that seems to be the subject to further challenge.

National Planning Policy Framework

A new NPPF was published on 17th August, replacing the December 2024 version and effective immediately. Whilst the current development plan for Babergh and Mid Suffolk remains in place, national planning policies will now carry significant weight where local policies are inconsistent with the new NPPF. Settlement boundaries will be reviewed and a new settlement hierarchy for Babergh and Mid-Suffolk districts will be proposed. Of significant potential impact, under Policy S4 of the NPPF, development proposals within settlements should generally be approved unless any adverse impacts would significantly outweigh the benefits.

From my perspective this make the case for adoption of a Neighbourhood Development Plan even more compelling: although we have to acknowledge that Combs will still be expected to accommodate its allocation of new housing an NDP would allow us to exert some control over where those developments will be sited.

To this end I am planning to attend the next Town and Parish Liaison Meeting on Monday 19 October, 3-5pm at the Mix in Stowmarket where I hope to enquire of someone in Planning who can speak to the status of our expression of interest in developing a Neighbourhood Development Plan.

Tony Kitson
Chair, Combs Parish Council

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Appendix 2

Onehouse Ward District Councillor Report - October 2026

Mid Suffolk Council writes to Government over changes to planning reforms	Mid Suffolk councillors have hit out at Government planning reforms, warning they could leave local communities with less say over new developments. The Mid Suffolk District Council is to write to the Government to raise concerns over changes to Neighbourhood Plans, green spaces and the way planning applications are decided, making most decisions at officer level.
Food Summit on Monday 16 November	The Suffolk Food Summit is returning to the Food Museum in Stowmarket this November, organised by MSDC to celebrate local food and drink production and its impact on the region's economy. The summit follows on from the council's recently published Food and Drink Action Plan which sets out an ambition to strengthen local production, build a resilient local food and drink network, improve food education and support the industry as a key growth sector.
Local housing for local people	Mid Suffolk District Council has recently agreed to introduce a Parish Connection Priority for new affordable and social rented homes secured through S106 agreements.
New double Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) in Stowmarket	Plans for a new multi-use games area at Stowmarket High School have been given the go-ahead after MSDC agreed to fund the stalled project. The multi-use games area (MUGA) will provide a space for sports including tennis, netball, basketball and football as part of wider efforts to improve access to sports facilities in the town. A new 3G pitch and athletics track for community use have already been completed.
Community projects receive cash injection	A community-run arts centre, recycling centre and village hall projects are all set to receive a share of more than £110k following the latest Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) awards by Mid Suffolk District Council. Community projects receive cash boost - Mid Suffolk District Council - babergh.gov.uk / midsuffolk.gov.uk
Councillors e-bike partnership receives national recognition	A partnership between MSDC and e-bike provider Eezybike has been shortlisted for two national awards, recognising the innovative work done in the districts to create active and sustainable travel options. Councils' e-bike partnership receives national recognition - Mid Suffolk District Council - babergh.gov.uk / midsuffolk.gov.uk
Free classes for older people improve their balance	Older people in Suffolk are being encouraged to take part in free exercise classes to help improve balance, fitness and flexibility. The 12-week Strength and Balance programme aims to improve the balance, co-ordination, flexibility and confidence of residents aged 65 or over who have had a recent fall or feel unsteady on their feet. Free classes to help older people improve their balance - Mid Suffolk District Council - babergh.gov.uk / midsuffolk.gov.uk

Appendix 3– Clerks Report

Finance

The total balance of the accounts as of 12th October 2026 is £111,974.25

September Payments and Receipts

Balance as of 31st August 2026	**£108,046.28**
Plus September Receipts	
Precept	£6203.00
Newsletter Income	£48.00
Bank Interest	£440.06
Bank Interest	£80.66
Less September Payments	
Internet Security	£9.99
Insurance	£580.35
Burial Grounds Maintenance	£95.00
Burial Grounds Maintenance	£460.00
Clerks Expenses Litter Grabbers	£33.96
Clerks Expenses Microsoft 365	£84.99
Clerks Salaries & Employers NIC	£1506.21
Street Light Energy	£161.25
Bank Charges	£7.00
Balance as of 30th September 2026	**£111,879.25**

Member of the Public Query

Initial query received from member of the public regarding the lack of white lines in the road in Little Finborough. Highways have responded to advise that it is not a priority.

The member of the public asked if the Parish Council could organise for the hedgerows to be cut back and for the Mill Lane triangle tidied up and the mud on the road surrounding it cleared?

Hedge Cutting Church Yard

Thanks has been received from Jim Sansom at Combs PCC for agreeing to meet the cost of the work done at the churchyard.

Cemetery Training

The cemetery training was useful; there are a couple of recommendations to be made.

- The implementation of a five-year schedule of memorial inspections
- Creation of an internal policy for Cemetery Management to ensure GDPR regulations are met.
- Utilising a data protection statement when sending out personal information for a lawful purpose.
- Request and keep hold of the Grave Diggers risk assessments and method statements.

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