

COMBS PARISH COUNCIL

Autumn 2022 Newsletter



Chairman's report

It's been a momentous period in the life of the nation. By now we will all have had time to reflect on the passing of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and the accession of King Charles III and how these events have affected us individually and collectively. As a council we elected to cancel our September meeting which fell just after the Queen's passing, holding instead a short informal gathering for urgent matters commencing with a period of silence as a mark of respect.

We also face a new political and economic landscape. Your small Council is not untouched by these wider circumstances, most obviously in the escalation of energy and insurance bills. You may know that some of our street lighting is funded by residents through what is known as the 'precept' which is collected as part of the Council Tax. Our supply contract ended in March when we were paying less than £100/month: this has leapt to £250/month. Similarly, our insurance renewal was 60% higher than last year (it would have doubled but we are fortunate to have a Clerk with extensive experience of the insurance sector who helped secure the most competitive price.)

We will be putting our budget for next year together soon and believe that we can keep the precept the same (as indeed we did last year). We do have funds for infrastructure projects: much of this is provided by property developers who must pay in a proportion of their costs. This is known as a Community Infrastructure Levy, or CIL, and is distributed to local councils on a 'use it or lose it' basis. We're close to completing a 10-year Infrastructure Investment Plan which will help us allocate expenditure where it's most needed. Items include improvements to the cemetery; better road signage; roadside upgrades; bench restoration; litter and dog bins etc. We'll post it on the website when it's completed but in the meantime if you have any suggestions please don't be shy in letting us know.

Finally, I extend a warm welcome to our new councillor Alan Tomlinson who introduces himself on page 2.. We still have two more vacancies . . . and we'd love to hear from you.

Tony Kitson
Acting Chair

New Councillor

An introduction to our new councillor Alan Tomlinson...



Originally from Wiltshire but moved to Maidstone, Kent shortly after getting married. There we lived for several years before deciding town life was getting a little too crowded and busy. After coming to Suffolk a couple of times on holiday, we quickly came to the decision this was the place we wanted to move to. Not sure where in Suffolk we wanted to live, my wife had the brilliant idea of applying to the BBC show, *Escape to the Country*. We were fortunate to be accepted and through the program, we found the home we wanted. We moved in along with our two daughters in the summer of 2006, it has been the best move we ever made..

My business background has primarily been with the running of my own company in the retail sector, which I did for 18 years before selling and I have now moved into sales consultancy. I am looking forward to becoming a member of the parish council and assisting any in way I can.



Do you want your home to be warmer?

Are high energy bills preventing you from putting the heating on?

Do you know any friends, family or neighbours who need extra help heating their home?

We are here to support you and keep Suffolk warm.

Who can get the Warm Homes Fund grant?

Grants to help insulate and make your property more energy efficient are available if you're a home owner or private tenant and the total gross income (from all sources) of everyone in the property is under £30,000. Landlords whose tenants qualify for support can receive up to two-thirds subsidy of costs for improvement work.

We can make the biggest difference by improving the least energy efficient properties in the county, so we particularly want to hear from you if your home has an EPC rating of D, E, F or G.

For more information and to register to be considered see www.warmhomessuffolk.org

If you're finding it hard to stay on top of bills, make sure you know what money you've got coming in and out each month. Citizens Advice has an online budgeting tool that can help with this - visit citizensadvice.org.uk/debt-and-money to find this tool and more.

It's also worth finding out if you're eligible for any benefits or support with your energy and living costs. On the Citizens Advice website citizensadvice.org.uk there's a benefits calculator, advice on how to reduce living costs and information on other ways to increase your income. The good news is there is help with rising energy bills. From 1 October 2022, there's a limit on gas and electricity prices for most households - this is called the Energy Price Guarantee and will be in place for two years.

From October 2022 to March 2023 you'll also get £400 off your electricity bill. This is called the Energy Bills Support Scheme.

You should automatically receive the energy discount if you pay by direct debit, standard credit or payment card. If you have a prepayment meter that isn't a smart meter, you'll get the discount via vouchers or as an automatic credit when you top up at your usual top-up point. Your supplier will let you know how they will issue it. If you have a smart prepayment meter, the credit should be automatically added to your meter.

If you can't pay your bills, speak to your energy supplier as they have a responsibility to help you come up with a solution.

Citizens Advice Mid Suffolk can provide advice on this and other issues, including debt, employment, benefits and family law. You can contact them on 01449 676060 or use the contact form at midsuffolkcab.org.uk/contact-us.

News from your District Councillor - John Matthissen

Representing Onehouse, Great & Little Finborough, Combs, Harleston and Shelland

New parents free tree - Mid Suffolk's popular Tree for Life scheme, which offers a tree for new parents, is open once again for 2022 applications. The scheme is open to all families in the District who have or are welcoming a new born, or newly adopted child, between 1 January and 31 December 2022. Parents who may have lost a child during the same period are also able to apply for a remembrance tree. If you have no space for a tree at home, it can be planted for you on Council land. Call 0300 1234000 or see <https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/environment/planting-schemes/tree-for-life/>

Rising cost of living - The District Council is providing extra support to Citizens Advice and the Food Bank, help for council tenants, and discretionary help with council tax is also available. The focus on wellbeing is being strengthened through social prescribing, discounts on gym and swim admissions and supporting local initiatives.

Locality fund - The next round of Locality Grants is open for bids from local organisations planning projects. See <https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/communities/grants-and-funding/locality-awards-guidance/>.

Please contact John Matthissen: councillor@matthissen.net Tel 01449 258894 (7 days a week!)

On The Farm

Every year is different, it certainly is for the countryside. The last six months we have seen some very high temperatures and in this part of the country the lack of rain has been very concerning. On the farm, harvest started earlier than normal in July and finished before we would normally have started. The very high temperatures have meant that the grain was dry without having to go through our grain drier. Our only concern was keeping the combine from overheating to reduce the risk of fire. Overall it was a good average harvest with good quality grains.

In the vineyard, we have just finished picking the grapes. This year we have had up to 40 people picking, many of these have been locals enjoying the lovely weather in the vineyard. The hot dry weather did have its effect on the vines this year, as we have picked the fruit a month earlier than in the past, but with the heat our grapes have produced some of the finest intense flavours, however due to the lack of rain the berries did not put on as much weight. Our pickers picked over 50 tonnes of grapes which will be turned into still and sparkling wines.

With the very hot weather, the countryside and wildlife on the farm has been under severe pressure. It was quite noticeable seeing a lot of trees run out of moisture and leaves turned colour very early on and the grass just died and turned lawns brown. Wildlife has struggled with no rain, several of the ponds have simply dried up making it difficult for animals to find water to drink. I put several water drinkers around the farm just so the wildlife could find some water. These needed topping up every 2 to 3 days. We also have a number of bird feeders around the farm, normally I start putting these out towards the end of October but I noticed that it seemed that a lot of small birds have been struggling so all the bird feeders have been filled up early this year. We are lucky in this part of the country with many different animals in the area, Have you seen the numbers of Roe Deer, Brown Hares, Badgers, Muntjac, Buzzards, Kite, Kestrels? There are some flocks of yellow hammers and sparrows in the hedges. We have held off from cutting some of our hedges around the farm as there has been an abundance of fruit on the hedges and this will allow the small mammals and birds to feast before winter sets in.

Will mother nature ever sort itself out after this long hot dry spell that we have had? she normally does.

Stuart Scarff



Did You Know.....

St Mary's Church, Combs - THE MEDIEVAL GLASS

This church has a supply of fine medieval stained glass, just imagine the blaze of colour when all the windows in the church were filled with this glass.



The glass suffered greatly when much of it was blown out as a result of an explosion at the gun cotton factory in Stowmarket in 1871.

The fragmented glass was subsequently deposited at the Ipswich Museum where in 1939 it came to the attention of a Miss Howson, whose home was in Putney. She was so impressed by the quality of the glass that she stressed the importance of preserving the glass and suggested that it should be restored. Because of the prohibitive cost of piecing together even a small section, she offered her services free of charge.

However the outbreak of war meant a delay in starting the work. The glass was transferred to North Wales where it was deposited in a coal mine at Porthmadog to ensure its safety against enemy bombing.

After the war there was a further delay of two years in carrying out the work while Miss Howson was engaged in repair work to the windows of the Chapter House of Westminster Abbey. The fragments were finally pieced together and windows reconstructed with great skill and dedication and were replaced in the Church in 1952.

The oldest glass in the church dates from c.1350 and may be seen in the heads of the arches and in the tracery of the south Chancel windows. Much of this glass appears to be in its original position and will have been put there when the windows themselves were made. Other jumble fragments may be seen in the north chancel windows. In the South aisle windows may be viewed of complete figures and scenes which are master pieces of the late 15th Century artists and glassmakers skills.



The information above has been taken from a booklet written by Roy Tricker.

Oaks Meadow

The Trustees were glad to have the vehicular access constructed prior to our event on June 21st. The pedestrian access has also been completed and pedestrians are welcome to use this whenever they like. Vehicles will be allowed through the gates in due course when all the necessary additions are completed. Thanks once again to Combs Parish Council for purchasing the gates.



Thank you to everyone who attended the Midsummer event on June 21st . A Medicine Wheel garden was created, stones were imaginatively painted, tea and cakes were consumed, burgers were barbequed and everyone had a most enjoyable afternoon and evening in the company of their friends and neighbours. So much so that we have been asked to make this an annual event!

We are pleased to announce that Oaks Meadow has secured funding from Viridor Credits with a contribution from MSDC to install the play area equipment. It is hoped the work will start in November.

Email: oaksmeadow@gmail.com

Website: www.oaksmeadow.org.uk



Parish Council Meetings
Battisford & District Cricket Club 7:30pm

Monday 14th November

Monday 12th December

Monday 9th January

**Please contact our clerk 7 days
before if you wish to suggest
an item for the agenda or to
attend a meeting**

combsparrishcouncil@gmail.com

DON'T FORGET

**THE CLOCKS GO BACK
ONE HOUR ON SUNDAY
30TH OCTOBER**



Battisford & District Cricket Club

As the night starts to draw in and there's a bit of a chill in the air those who are cricket lovers are feeling a little sad as another season has come to end. One thing that we cannot complain about this year was the weather! Like most gardens the outfield turned very brown and it didn't need cutting; its amazing how with our recent rain and dewy mornings it has now fully recovered. We only lost one weekend of cricket to the rain which sadly was the last game of the season.



We have just held our end of season awards for our juniors enjoying a BBQ and our seniors with the annual dinner in the marquee. Overall our season has been quite mixed in terms of our senior teams however we are keen to celebrate that our T20 side runners up for the last few years were winners of the competition last week. Our junior sides have participated in many festivals and games with our under 11 team being exceptionally successful winning many of their games against much more experienced opponents.

We are also delighted to share with you that David Stephens-Row received a lifetime achievement award as part of the England Cricket Board Grassroots Cricket award. David was a founder member of the club in 1973 and has been groundskeeper for many years. He took the lead in constructing the pavilion in 2003 and was involved in the recent extension. He is also now our bar manager! So he is quite sad that the season is over however he might get a few jobs done at home this winter!



The club remains open on Monday, Tuesday and Friday evenings up until mid December when it will be reviewed. We will also be holding social events over the winter and junior and senior indoor training will start in March 2023 so keep an eye on our Facebook and website for more information.

Finally we are holding our AGM on Friday 11th November starting at 7.30pm. We are always keen to encourage new members and volunteers to help with a range of roles. If you have a few hours to spare then please contact me to talk about your skills and ideas.

Julia Stephens- Row
BDCC secretary

Orchard Barn News



On October 1st we celebrated 15 years of the Orchard Barn project with over 60 guests – volunteers past and present, trainees and members of the local community. There was an abundance of cake including ‘Orchard Cake’ made from apples and greengages grown on site, apple juice pressed from our own apples by volunteers, and music and dancing from local side Boudicca Border Morris. It was a wonderful opportunity to catch up with friends and celebrate all our achievements over time including the good progress of our latest project, the re-instatement of our 1580s Long House.

Our Annual Wassail will be held on Saturday 4th February at 2 – 4 pm, and everyone is welcome. In line with tradition, we will process around the orchard singing songs to wake up the fruit trees and bang pots and pans to ward off bad spirits from the orchard. Mulled cyder will be drunk to toast the good health of the orchard trees and ensure a good crop of fruit for the year ahead. Volunteer now, get involved in this unique project.

We are in need of more Volunteers to make shingles (wooden roof tiles) this Autumn and Winter for our re-instated 1580s Long House, as well as to pack insulation into the walls again in the Spring.

If you are interested, you can call Sarah for an informal chat on 07766 054042 or email Carole at carole.orchardbarn@gmail.com

For more information see our website www.orchardbarn.org.uk



**Combs Green IP14 2NP from 10am – 12pm
on the 2nd Thursday of each month**

**Next visits are
13th October
10th November
8th December**

Contact Diana 07494 572153

www.ruralcoffeecaravan.org.uk

FOOD MUSEUM
STOWMARKET, IP14 1DL

APPLE WEEK

Would you like to learn how to make delicious apple juice?
Do you have a tree full of fruit in your garden or on your allotment?
Perhaps you are involved with a community orchard?

WE OFFER DIFFERENT TYPES OF JUICING SESSIONS...

LEARN TO MAKE DELICIOUS APPLE JUICE!
Be guided through the process of cleaning, crushing, pressing, bottling, pasteurising and labelling. Take a bottle of the tasty juice you make home at the end of your visit. Apples provided.
Dates: Sun 23, Mon 24, Tues 25 October, 11am-1pm, with time to explore the museum
Suitable for all ages, but children under 12 must be accompanied by an adult.

TURN YOUR OWN APPLES INTO DELICIOUS JUICE!

PRIVATE SESSION
Bring your own apples or pears and be guided through the juicing process. Take home your juice. Best for community groups or people bringing at least a car boot-load of fruit.
Dates: Wed 26, Fri 28, Sun 30 October, 11am-1pm, with time to explore the museum

COLLECTIVE JUICING SESSION
Bring your apples and mix them with ours and with those of other participants. Be guided through the juicing process. Take home a share of the juice in proportion to the fruit you bring. Best for people who have a smaller amount of apples.
Dates: Thurs 27, Sat 29 October, 11am-1pm, with time to explore the museum

FOR PRICES AND TO BOOK:
FOODMUSEUM.ORG.UK/EVENTS/APPLE-WEEK