

**Minutes of Combs Parish Council Meeting
Monday 11 March 2019 at 7.30pm, Battisford Village Hall, Straight Road, Battisford**

Present: S Scarff (Chairman); C Todhunter (Vice Chairman); V Whitehead (Councillor); D Thorpe (Councillor); J Crooks (Councillor); T Chaplin (Councillor); K Oakes (County Councillor); T Bamber (clerk); S Winter (Battisford Village Hall Management Committee)

Absent: Cllr D Whybrow (District Councillor)

1. Apologies for absence

S Reynard (Councillor);

2. Declarations of interest

Cllr Chaplin in respect of 11 c (iii)

Cllr Crooks in respect of 11 c (iv)

3. Public Forum

Mrs Winter informed the Council that the village hall was in need of re-flooring, which would cost £30,000, and asked the council if they might be willing to contribute towards the costs. The chairman confirmed this would be discussed.

4. Minutes of meeting held on Monday 11 February 2019

Minutes for 11 February 2019 were reviewed and were signed as a true and accurate copy of the meeting by the Chairman.

5. Matters arising from the minutes

There were no matters arising that are not covered elsewhere.

6. County Councillor's Report

Cllr Oakes provided the attached report.

7. District Councillor's Report

Cllr D Whybrow was not present

8. Parish Council Chairman's Report

Nothing to report that is not covered elsewhere.

9. Clerk's Report

Nothing to report that is not covered elsewhere.

10. Planning

- a. Applications received for consideration
 - i. DC/19/00662 - Erection of up to 138 dwellings – Land to the East of Poplar Hill. Cllr Todhunter had circulated a draft letter of objection, which was discussed. It was agreed that he make a few amendments and that this be circulated for approval whereupon the clerk is to lodge the letter on the planning website.
 - ii. DC19/00790 – Erection of single storey extension – Battisford Cricket Club. It was agreed the Council had no objection, and supported the fact that the club encouraged activity in the village. The clerk will write accordingly.
 - iii. DC/19/00736 – Erection of Single storey flat roofed rear extension – 13 Combs Green. Deadline extended to 13 March. *No objection*
- b. Decisions received from MSDC
 - i. DC/18/05415 – 25 Combs Green – erection of rear conservatory. Noted
 - ii. DC 17/05908 – 7 Model Farm – Replacement of doors and windows. Noted

11. Finance

- a. **Accounts review to date** – Current Account balance as of 26 February 2019 was £15,404.98 and the savings account balance as of 2 March 2019 was £1,907.79. The Budget analysis was reviewed and accepted.
- b. **Payments received**
 - i. T/L Joan Filby – Memorial £ 90.00
 - ii. T/L Margaret Cage – interment £250.00
 - iii. T/L Sheila McLelland – Inscription £100.00
- c. **Payments to hand**
 - i. SALC – Councillor training (cllrs Whitehead & Chaplin) - 247.20. Payment was agreed by all councillors. Cheque number 22193 was written, and signed by Cllrs Thorpe and Scarff. (*Local Government Act 1972, s111*).
 - ii. SALC Grants & Funding Workshop (cllr Whitehead) - £31.20. Payment was agreed by all councillors. Cheque number 22194 was written, and signed by Cllrs Thorpe and Scarff. (*Local Government Act 1972, s111*).
 - iii. T Chaplin – newsletter printing - £48.00. Payment was agreed by all councillors. Cheque number 22195 was written, and signed by Cllrs Thorpe and Scarff. (*Local Government Act 1972, s142*).
 - iv. J E Crooks – Litter Pick equipment - £246.36. Payment was agreed by all councillors. Cheque number 22196 was written, and signed by Cllrs Thorpe and Scarff. (*Litter Act 1983ch 3 , s6 (2) (a)*).
 - v. Clerk's pay & PAYE to HMRC (£2446.20 & £611.40). Payment was agreed by all councillors. Cheque numbers 22197 & 22198 were written, and signed by Cllrs Thorpe and Scarff. (*Local Government Act 1972, s112*).
 - vi. Battisford Village Hall reflooring: the council discussed the request for a contribution and agreed that they would support a payment of £500 immediately, and that they were willing to consider further support in the future if needed. As the item was not on the agenda this is to be formalised at the next meeting.
- d. **Electricity contract review**

The current electricity suppliers, Eon, had announced a sizeable increase in their charges (for street lighting). Following discussions they have now proposed a three year contract that will cost no more than the Council is currently paying. It was AGREED that the clerk should take up this contract in the name of the Council.

ACTION: Clerk to arrange signature of contracts.

12. Appointment of Annual Internal Auditor

It was AGREED that SALC be instructed to conduct the required internal audit. ***ACTION: Clerk to contact SALC.***

13. Grants and fundraising

Cllr Whitehead reported on the workshop she had attended, summarising that there is quite a lot of support available. It was agreed that councillors should give thought to suitable projects and that the next newsletter should include an invitation for villagers to submit ideas.

14. Speed Signs

Cllr Todhunter had drafted a letter to be sent to adjacent landowners to seek their approval for the siting of the requisite posts. Following further advice from the County Councillor it was agreed that the proposed locations be submitted first to the council and only upon receipt of their approval should landowners be contacted.

Action: Cllr Todhunter to write to County Council with proposed locations.

15. Street Lighting

The cost for upgrading the remaining four streetlights has been quoted at £2040 plus VAT. It was AGREED to implement the upgrades.

Action: Cllr Thorpe to instruct Folley Electrical Services to proceed with upgrades.

16. Neighbourhood Plan

Cllr Chaplin reported on the meeting that she and Cllr Whitehead had with the Planning Department. It was established that there is no Stowmarket Action Plan. Furthermore, Combs had been categorised as a 'core' village based solely on a measurement of its proximity to key amenities: there had been no site visit but now the planning department intends to look thoroughly into the village's categorisation. The councillors felt the council was being encouraged to await the outcome of the Joint Local Plan before taking any action.

It was agreed that councillors give thought to ways in which residents' views on the future development of the village might be gathered (while discouraging views that there be a blanket ban on any new houses, as such was not an option that planning departments would consider valid).

17. Litter Pick

It was noted that due to bad weather the litter pick had been postponed and will take place on 17 March commencing 9.00 at the Tannery.

Cllr Oakes was thanked for arranging funding of the pickers, hoops and hi-vis vests.

18. Parish Newsletter

All agreed the first edition of the newsletter was very well received and Cllr Chaplin's work was congratulated. The future publication dates are to be circulated.

19. Combs Cemetery

The beacon basket has been treated and is now ready for any future use. This was carried out at no charge by Derek Groom of G & G Repairs and the Clerk will write a letter of thanks.

Action: Clerk to write letter of thanks.

20. St Mary's Churchyard

Nothing to report

21. Correspondence

The Council has received a request for a contribution from Suffolk Accident Rescue Service (SARS). This is to be discussed at the next meeting.

22. Any other business – potentially for inclusion on the next agenda

Nothing to report.

23. Date and time of next meeting – Monday 8 April 2019 at 7.30pm

The Meeting closed at 9.45pm

County Council report March 2019

Suffolk County Council 2019/20 budget approved

On 14 February, Suffolk County Council concluded its budget setting process for this coming financial year (2019/2020).

From 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020, Suffolk County Council will spend almost £10 million a week across all its services following approval of this budget of £519.3 million.

Over the period 2011-12 to 2018-19 the Council has made over £260 million of savings in response to reductions in funding from Central Government and increasing demand for services. For 2019/20 the Council has proposed a range of savings totalling around £13 million. These savings are required to help balance the budget - something that the Council must do by law.

Recognising the unrelenting rise in demand and the complexity of support required by vulnerable children and adults in Suffolk, the Council are significantly increasing spending in these two top priority areas.

The net budget for Adult and Community Services (ACS) will rise to £243m and the net budget for Health, Wellbeing and Children's Services (HWCS) will rise to £147m. This is an increase of just over £14 million for ACS and HWCS. ACS and HWCS will account for 75% of the total spend in 2019/2020 – three in every four pounds the Council spends.

General council tax will rise by 2.99% this year. The Council are also applying the final 1% of the six per cent Social Care precept allowed over the years 2017/18 to 2019/20. The overall increase in council tax is one per cent less than for 2018/19.

The four-year investment in surface-dressing our roads continues into its third year and the Council will treat 1,000 miles of Suffolk's roads by the end of 2020 as promised. The Council has also maintained Suffolk Fire and Rescue's budget and protected Suffolk's Library services.

The Council is looking to maximise the financial contribution from its medium-term programmes, which focus on transforming how the Council delivers its services and works with other authorities and public sector partners. The Council's transformation programmes have saved over £12 million in 2018/19 and £12-£13 million of savings are planned for 2019/20.

Funding agreed for Citizens Advice in Suffolk

On 11 February, it was reported that Citizens Advice in Suffolk will no longer see any difference in their funding for 2019/20. This is due to a collaboration between Suffolk County Council, NHS Ipswich and East Suffolk Clinical Commissioning Group and NHS West Suffolk Clinical Commissioning Group,

Suffolk County Council proposes to reduce the funding given to Citizens Advice by 50% (£187k), in 2019/20. Under the joint agreement now in place with the CCGs, a total of £187k will be provided by NHS Ipswich and East Suffolk and NHS West Suffolk CCGs. So, funding for Citizens Advice in 2019/20 will remain the same as the previous year (£374k).

Doctor Ed Garratt, Chief Officer for Ipswich and East Suffolk CCG and West Suffolk CCG, said:

"By working together with our colleagues at the Council, we have been able to identify future funding for Citizens Advice. This is a great example of Suffolk's authorities supporting each other to find solutions.

“We are delighted that we have been able to make this joint announcement before the Council approves its budget for this coming financial year, as all parties recognise the positive contributions made by our local Citizens Advice, including to the health and wellbeing of people across Suffolk.”

The Council has continued to work with Citizens Advice representatives throughout this process, most recently carrying out a public consultation to understand the equality impacts there may be as a result of proposed funding changes, and how these might be mitigated.

This consultation recognised that the Council has been supporting Citizens Advice to mitigate the funding reduction, whilst also facing its own financial constraints and increasing pressures to provide social care and many other services to vulnerable people.

Important Information: Suffolk School Travel Changes from September 2019

Suffolk County Council (SCC) is implementing changes to its School Travel Policy from September 2019. The Council has already written to all schools and Town and Parish Councils with information about the policy changes and how they may affect families in their area.

Statutory School Age School Travel Policy

Children living in Suffolk who will be starting at a new school in September 2019 will be eligible for SCC funded school travel when they are over 2 miles (under 8 years old) or 3 miles (aged 8 or over) walking distance from their nearest suitable school that would have had a place available for them. This would be whether or not an application was made for a place at that school. Full details about SCC funded school travel, including additional arrangements for low income families and those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), can be found at www.suffolkonboard.com/schooltravel

New pupils

In the first year of change the new school travel policy will only impact on those starting or moving school with effect from September 2019.

- For those starting at secondary/upper schools, parents will be informed if their child is eligible by 30 April 2019.
- For those starting at primary/middle schools in September 2019, parents will be informed if their child is eligible for SCC funded travel by 14 May 2019.
- If parents do not hear from the Council by the date shown above and believe their child is eligible for SCC funded school travel, they should contact the Customer Service Team on 0345 606 6173 or email them at customer.services@suffolk.gov.uk. Information about those who are eligible to SCC funded travel will be provided to the child's current and receiving school.

Returning pupils

The new policy is being phased in. This means that children who receive SCC funded school travel in the 2018/2019 school year will continue to receive this whilst they continue to attend the same school, unless they turn 8 years of age and live between 2 and 3 miles from their current school, or move house - at which time eligibility would be reassessed.

To opt-in (apply) for SCC funded school travel

For transport in September 2019 and all future years, families whose child/ren are eligible for SCC funded school travel will need to opt-in to receive their transport. This is a change from previous years.

The opt-in process for those pupils who are eligible for SCC funded school travel for the 2019/2020 school year opens on **1 March 2019** with a deadline of **31 May 2019**. SCC will be using various communications channels to cascade the opt-in message to parents/families.

This important change means that parents whose children are eligible will have to opt-in by 31 May **each year** for school travel to be provided in the following school year as this will no longer be provided automatically.

This includes:

- Those currently eligible and who have SCC funded school travel under the old policy arrangements because they will be in Year 1 to Year 6, or Year 8 to Year 11 in September 2019 (and have not moved address) or
- are eligible under the new travel policy.

Recent research has shown that some families, although eligible to SCC funded school travel, do not use their seat(s). Suffolk County Council consequently is funding seats which are unused and therefore, SCC are asking families to opt-in.

Post-16 Travel Policy Statement for September 2019:

The Post-16 Policy has not changed other than agreed increases to the cost of a seat until the charge equals the average cost. For September 2019/2020 school year the charge will be £750 per annum.

The financial contribution for students with SEND for 2019/2020 school year will be £690.

Suffolk Brokerage Service:

If any school or local community would like to access capacity building support to assist them in running travel arrangements themselves, they can contact customer.services@suffolk.gov.uk.

For more information on how Town and Parish Councils can get involved see the Sustainable Modes of Travel Strategy at www.suffolkonboard.com/smot