

**Minutes of Combs Parish Council Meeting  
Monday 13 July 2020 at 7.30pm, via Zoom remote meetings**

(DRAFT UNTIL SIGNED)

**Present:** S Scarff (Chairman); V Whitehead (Councillor); T Chaplin (Councillor); I Walker (Councillor); D Thorpe (Councillor); K Oakes (County Councillor); J Matthissen (District Councillor)(arrived 8.10); T Bamber (Clerk).

**Attending** Two members of the public were present

**1. Apologies for absence**

None

**2. Declarations of interest**

Cllr Chaplin in respect of 10(c) (ii).

**3. Public Forum**

The members of public were attending in respect of planning applications 9 (a) (i) and (iii).

**4. Minutes of meeting held on Monday 10 June 2020**

Minutes for 10 June 2020 were reviewed and were to be signed as a true and accurate copy of the meeting by the Chairman.

**Action:** Clerk to arrange signature

**5. Matters arising from the minutes**

There were no matters arising that are not dealt with elsewhere.

**6. County Councillor's Report**

Cllr Oakes referred the councillors to her report (appendix i), which had been circulated in advance of the meeting. Two items on which she was going to comment are agenda items here so will be brought up then.

**7. District Councillor's Report**

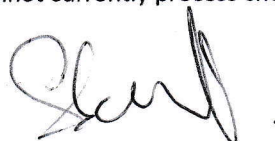
*(this item had been deferred until later in the meeting but is reported here for consistency with the agenda)*

District Cllr. Matthissen referred the councillors to his report (appendix ii), which had been circulated in advance of the meeting. In response to a question regarding the reference to facilities grants Cllr Matthissen confirmed he would send details to Cllr Chaplin for inclusion in the newsletter.

**8. Parish Council Chairman's Report**

The Chairman reported the sad loss of Cllr Chris Todhunter, who died on 19<sup>th</sup> June. In a moving tribute to him, the Chairman noted that despite his relatively short time on the Council, Cllr Todhunter had made a great impact, both in terms of contribution to the Council's work on large projects and also in his good-natured humour and helpful approach at the meetings. As was his wish, the Chairman confirmed, glasses would be raised in the Councillor's memory when the time was right.

It was AGREED that a donation of £100 be made in the name of Cllr Todhunter to his chosen charity, the Euan MacDonald Centre for MND Research. As the charity cannot currently process cheques, the Chairman will make the donation by card and be reimbursed by the Council.



## 9. Planning

### a. Applications received for consideration:

- i. DC/20/02197 – Pole Barn, Church Road – *erection of 1 dwelling and linked annex.*

Mr Farnan, the applicant, made a short presentation, explaining that at the time he acquired the land it had already been the subject of planning permission in an outline form. There was some discussion about the discrepancy between the comments by Heritage at that time and those made in respect of this latest application. It was noted that the existing construction was to be demolished to make way for the new dwelling on the same footprint and it was generally agreed that this could only be an improvement.

Councillors agreed unanimously to support this application

- ii. DC/20/02346 – Land at Moats Tye – *change of use/erection of one dwelling.*

It was noted that there was very little detail in the submission.

Following a discussion it was unanimously agreed that the Council object to the application, and the clerk was to note in the response to the planning department the following:

- a) In view of the paucity of detail in the application there is concern that any new building might be as out of keeping with the neighbourhood as the other building already on the plot;
- b) In the area that would comprise the entrance to the property there used to be a deep pond and there are serious concerns as to the potentially hazardous nature of the material that was used to fill it in

- iii. DC/20/02630 – Snowdrop Cottage, Park Road – *erection of extensions.*

Mrs New, the resident of the neighbouring property, made a short presentation setting out her concerns, including the fact that the size of the proposed extension would overshadow a lot of her house and garden, and that there seemed to be no acknowledgement of the fact that her property was a grade II listed building.

Councillors noted that the building was ready for improvement, and also that the use of the description 'garden store' was possibly a means to greater enlargement of the property.

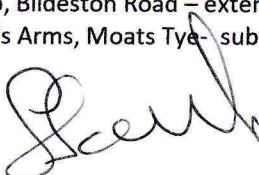
It was agreed that the Council object to the application, and the clerk was to note in the response to the planning department the following:

- a) The sizes of the proposed extensions are disproportionate to the surrounding area;
- b) The close proximity of a grade II listed building should be taken into account and the views of the Heritage Team should be sought;
- c) The Council does not object to the notion of improvement to the property and would be more supportive if the side extension were limited to one storey, with a width that left greater space between it and the neighbouring property.

**Action: Clerk to post Councillors' views on planning website**

### b. Decisions received from MSDC:

- i. DC/20/01674 – 1 Model Farm – replace windows and doors (listed building) *Granted. Noted*
- ii. DC/20/01750 – The Workshop, Bildeston Road – extension to workshops – *Granted. Noted*
- iii. DC/20/01822 – The Gardener's Arms, Moats Tye – sub-division to two dwellings – *Granted. Noted*





- iv. DC/20/02088 – Land North of Park Road – erection of one dwelling – *Refused*. Noted

## 10. Finance

- a. **Accounts review to date** – Current Account balance as of 26 June 2020 was £18,986.01 and the savings account balance as of 30 June 2020 was £1,920.79 .

The budget analysis and financial summary were reviewed and accepted, as was the asset statement that had also been circulated previously.

The clerk reported that he had received a phone call from the bank, apologising for the fact that they had entered the value of cheque number 22230 wrongly. Instead of £73.49 they had debited the account and credited the payee with £73.19. The bank would have had significant problems correcting what they admitted was their error but as the payee for this cheque was the clerk he was able to agree with the bank that they could leave it as is, and the clerk nobly agreed to forego the missing 30 pence. The incident is recorded here in case a future audit queries the discrepancy.

b. **Payments received**

- i. None received

c. **Payments to hand**

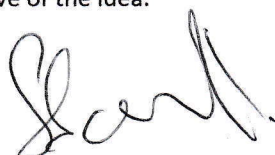
- i. EON Electricity for streetlights (direct debit) -£ 76.39). Approved by all councillors (*Parish Councils Act 1957, S.3; Highways Act 1980 S.301*)
- ii. T Chaplin – printing costs for newsletter -£70.00. Payment was AGREED by all councillors (Cllr Chaplin abstaining). Cheque number 22233 was written, and the clerk will arrange for it to be signed. (*Local Government Act 1972, s142*)
- iii. D Windle – grass cutting - £792.50. . Payment was AGREED by all councillors. Cheque number 22234 was written, and the clerk will arrange for it to be signed. (*Local Government Act 1972, s214(2)*)
- iv. S Scarff – donation in memory of Cllr Todhunter to Euan MacDonald Centre for MND Research - £100.00. Payment was AGREED by all councillors. Cheque number 22235 was written, and the clerk will arrange for it to be signed . (*Local Government Act 1972, s137*)

**Action: Clerk to arrange signatures and send**

## 11. Cycle Paths

Cllr Chaplin reported that she had discussed the possibility of cycle paths between Stowmarket and the village with the County Councillor, and also with the footpath officer. It was established that there are two options when looking to convert a footpath into use for bicycles: to seek to change a footpath to a bridleway or to seek to change the footpath to a cycle path. Both options would have to be three metres wide and would permit cyclists but there would be no responsibility for maintenance in the case of a bridleway.

Possible routes were discussed and the Chairman confirmed that he would have informal chats with the relevant landowners to see if they were supportive of the idea.



## **12. Traffic speed Moats Tye**

The Council had received two letters from residents of Moats Tye expressing concern that there were increasing incidences of vehicles speeding through the area by the cricket ground. Cllr Whitehead confirmed that this was her experience too.

The possibility of seeking to get the speed limit reduced from 30 to 20 MPH was discussed but the County Councillor advised that it was notoriously difficult to achieve such a change, irrespective of the likely cost. In this particular case the nature of the problem would seem to preclude the possibility of a successful reduction in speed limits as the process would require a survey to demonstrate that the average speed through the area was around 24 MPH.

Cllr Oakes has again chased the Highways department for the cleaning/replacement of faded and dirty speed signs, as it is nearly a year since she authorised the work.

Speed limit reminder stickers are available for wheelie bins and Cllr Oakes will seek to obtain some. In the meantime it was agreed that Cllr Whitehead and the clerk should meet to seek a suitable location for a Speed Indicator Device in the vicinity. Once a location has been selected the clerk was instructed to apply to Highways for permission and the erection of a suitable pole.

***Action: Clerk to apply for new SID location in Moats Tye and to update residents.***

## **13. Coronavirus Response/ Newsletter**

The latest edition of the newsletter included a request for residents to tell the Council how they would like to receive their newsletter, in an attempt to save paper. The clerk reported that the Council has received six responses to the request for views. Four residents said they would like to receive the newsletter by email; one wrote in to remind the Council of its duty in respect of privacy and data protection, and another resident sent an email to tell the council that she did not want to receive the newsletter by email.

Only one of the respondents expressed appreciation for the newsletter and the clerk will seek further feedback.

A discussion ensued on the future of the newsletter, with the possibility of less frequent editions and the use of weatherproof collection boxes around the village so that the true level of interest might be assessed.

## **14. Future use of Village Hall**

In light of a questionnaire from Battsford Village Hall Management Committee, the future use of the hall for meetings was considered. There was no great enthusiasm to return to face to face meetings in the near future and it was pointed out that the Cricket Club, being located in Combs, might be a valid alternative when the circumstances permit.

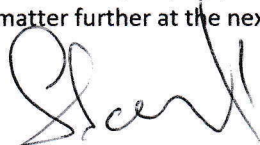
***Action: Clerk to respond to questionnaire.***

## **15. GDPR**

In light of the recommendation made by the internal auditor, the clerk has been searching for suitable templates for Subject Access Request policies and Data Breach policies. Cllr Walker kindly agreed to assist in this and they will report back at the next meeting.

## **16. Code of Conduct Review**

Since this was put on the agenda there has been an update from NALC on the recommended code of conduct. The clerk will circulate this, and the survey request, so that councillors might submit their own comments and be ready to discuss the matter further at the next meeting.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'S. Carter', is written over the bottom of the text in the 16th section.

**Action: Clerk to circulate new draft Code of Conduct and Survey request.**

#### **17. Street Lights**

Cllr Thorpe has received a formal quotation from FES, the lighting contractor, for various work, including replacement of the lamp that had been the subject of an insurance claim.

The costs were found to be acceptable and it was AGREED that FES be instructed to undertake the work. Cllr Thorpe will convey this to them.

Recognising there are some residents who do not like the idea of street lights, the lights will be fitted with timers to go off around midnight and the backs of the lamp units, facing the houses, will be painted black.

#### **18. Correspondence**

The clerk had received several items:

- a) Consultation document in respect of a new joint police and fire station in Stowmarket. The clerk was instructed to respond expressing the council's disappointment that the project does not include a provision for ambulance services to be involved.

**Action: Clerk to respond.**

- b) A resident had asked about the possibility of starting a speedwatch group in the village. This has been considered by the council several times and each time there was insufficient support for it. Following a further discussion it was agreed that this was still the case.

**Action: Clerk to respond to the resident.**

#### **19. Any Other Business**

- Cllr Thorpe and Cllr Scarff have dismantled the table tomb in the churchyard  
**Action: Clerk to inform the family and the diocesan registrar.**
- There is a collapsed manhole in the driveway of the churchyard and the clerk was asked to ascertain the responsibility for maintaining this.  
**Action: Clerk to investigate and report at the next meeting.**

#### **20. Date and time of next meeting – Monday 14 September 2020 at 7.30pm**

The Meeting closed at 9.45 pm

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'S. Scarff', is written over the text 'The Meeting closed at 9.45 pm'.





# July 2020 Monthly Parish Newsletter



Visit [suffolk.gov.uk/coronavirus](https://suffolk.gov.uk/coronavirus) for health advice, service changes, business support and schools' guidance.

Keep up to date on the latest guidance on COVID-19 from central government here: [www.gov.uk/coronavirus](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus)

## COVID-19 related news

### **New plan sets out how Suffolk will prevent and respond to COVID-19 outbreak**

A plan which sets out how Suffolk would prevent and respond to a localised outbreak of COVID-19 was published on 30 June.

Suffolk's Local Outbreak Control Plan will be triggered where there are suspected or confirmed COVID-19 outbreaks in any setting or community within the county.

The plan, a requirement of Government of all local authorities, outlines measures to prevent, manage, and contain outbreaks of Coronavirus and protect the public's health. It builds on existing relationships and processes in place with partner agencies across Suffolk.

The plan outlines how complex cases will be managed in more than 30 high-risk places, locations, and communities, particularly care homes and schools. It also outlines local testing capacity, use of data to identify and proactively manage outbreaks, and contact tracing in complex settings. An outbreak is defined when there are two or more cases in usual level for a particular place and time.



Suffolk has received £2.79million from a £300million Government fund to support delivery of the Local Outbreak Control Plan.

### **Suffolk's resilience partners continue to provide PPE equipment where most needed**

As Suffolk's response to the Covid-19 pandemic enters its fourth month, the team set up in March to source and distribute personal protective equipment (PPE) to support service providers across the county continues to operate from Suffolk County Council's offices in Ipswich.

To date, this PPE 'cell' of the Suffolk Resilience Forum (SRF) has distributed over 2.3 million items of PPE across Suffolk. Over 1.9 million of these items have been distributed for use in the care sector to support some of Suffolk's most vulnerable residents.

This equipment is directly supporting a range of staff every day, providing them with the masks, gloves and other disposable protective items needed to ensure safe working and effective infection control in care settings, social care, special schools, emergency services, and health organisations.

As service providers increase contact with residents and reopen, or plan for buildings to reopen in weeks to come, Suffolk's PPE team will continue to purchase and distribute equipment where there is a shortfall in supply, or where organisations identify an urgent

### **Looking after the vulnerable is top priority**

**Article by Councillor Beccy Hopfensperger, Cabinet Member for Adult Care.  
Published 23 June 2020.**

Nationally the focus of Covid-19 within the care sector has been on care homes. In Suffolk, we recognise that the experience is the same in all care settings, including extra care housing and supported housing, although the prevalence has not been as great. Care settings have been on the frontline in terms of our local response to Covid-19. News of cases, the need for testing, and sadly people passing away as a result of this virus, has been widely reported.

I want to share what has been happening within homes to protect residents and give an update on the support the county council is continuing to provide care homes as they face this challenge.

While we are seeing a gradual decrease in the number of cases within Suffolk's care homes, and the number of deaths due to Covid-19 appear to be reducing, providers are still in the response phase of this pandemic.

Suffolk's care homes continue to care for residents with the utmost professionalism and kindness. They are following national guidance regarding social distancing, hygiene standards and the correct use of personal protective equipment (PPE). Testing is available for all care homes - for the entire home, including staff and residents who are not displaying any symptoms.

Ahead of a national testing site being available, we started testing residents in care homes. Since testing began in mid-April, over 2,300 people have been tested across all care settings and testing continues.

With more testing taking place, infection control and prevention measures can be more effective.



The county council, with its health partners, continues to have daily contact with care homes to support them and respond to their needs and concerns. This support has included help to source agency staff where there is staff absence, obtaining PPE, a dedicated infection prevention and control enquiry line, and a package of financial support.

While providers are responsible for sourcing their own supply of PPE and financial support has been provided to help meet the additional costs, the Suffolk Resilience Forum has supplied care providers with 1.7 million items of emergency PPE when they have encountered difficulty in sourcing their own supply.

The number of people who have died in care homes in Suffolk due to Covid-19 is decreasing on a weekly basis. However, this doesn't take away from the fact that people have died because of this virus. It is a tragedy that families are losing their much-loved relatives and friends to this virus, and my deepest sympathies and condolences are with those who are grieving during this most difficult time.

In Suffolk, we are continuing to see a higher percentage of Covid-19 related deaths within care homes compared to some other areas. The reasons for this are complex, but factors we think are contributing to this are more people choosing to die in their usual place of residence and the high number of nursing beds that we have within care homes. These provide care for people with complex care needs who may be approaching the end of their life, and I would like to assure people that we have very good practices for providing end of life care in Suffolk.

Dying within a care home setting often reflects a person's wish to remain in their usual place of residence, in comfortable surroundings, with people around them who are familiar, as opposed to being in an unfamiliar hospital setting.

Although we no longer have any council-owned care homes in Suffolk, they are all privately owned and run, the county council still considers looking after the most vulnerable to be its top priority. The council is standing shoulder to shoulder with our care providers as we continue to face this crisis, and I want to take one final moment to praise their monumental efforts and their continued dedication and professionalism. The kindness and warmth that they show our most vulnerable each day, despite the pressures they face, is deeply moving.

I would ask people to please do what they can to protect our most vulnerable by continuing to follow government guidance around social distancing and hygiene to reduce the spread of the virus in our communities. Thank you for doing your bit and, please, Stick With It Suffolk.

## Other news

### **First business benefits from council's free solar panel scheme**

A Lowestoft-based charity is the first organisation to benefit from free solar panels, as part of Suffolk County Council's Renewable Energy Fund.

Nirvana Health and Fitness, on Pinbush Road in Lowestoft, is now hosting a 70kWp solar panel installation and is benefitting from zero-carbon electricity.

The council's £400,000 Renewable Energy Fund is open to eligible businesses looking to reduce their energy costs and carbon footprint through solar power. Successful applicants will have solar panels supplied and installed for free.

Once the panels are installed, the business is sold electricity at a better rate than their existing tariff, so they will see immediate savings.



The Fund itself benefits from income generated by the sale of the solar-generated electricity. This means money goes back into the pot, allowing more solar panel applications to be considered by the Fund and installed across Suffolk.

### **Better Broadband for Suffolk reaches 100,000th customer as third phase contract is agreed**

More than 100,000 households across Suffolk are already using faster broadband, thanks to the council-led Better Broadband for Suffolk programme.

The partnership - between Suffolk County Council, Openreach, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership (NALEP) and local councils – has made faster broadband available to around 150,000 premises since being launched in 2010.

It means the current total superfast broadband coverage in Suffolk stands at more than 96 per cent, with plans currently in place to reach 98 per cent coverage before the end of the year.

The team has plans to go even further, after announcing, on 3 June, an additional phase of work to provide connectivity to approximately 5,000 more premises, including over 550 businesses, in some of the most rural parts of Suffolk.

The work will be carried out by Openreach – operator of the UK's largest phone and broadband network, used by the likes of BT, Sky, Plusnet, and TalkTalk – and is set to start as soon as deployment under the current contract ends. Work will continue until September 2022.

Faster broadband provides many benefits including staying in contact with friends and family through video conferencing services, easier web browsing and online shopping, the ability to stream high definition video, and work from home. Covid-19 has led to many of these benefits becoming even more crucial during times of social distancing and will have a large part to play during the recovery phase.

## District Councillor Report: Onehouse Ward July 2020

Covid-19	Staff are continuing to work from home, making use of Microsoft Teams to hold virtual meetings with colleagues, councillors and residents. Non-urgent site inspections are starting soon. Some officers are beginning to return to their normal jobs having been seconded to different duties arising from the pandemic. The Home but not Alone emergency line continues: 0800 876 6926.
Meetings	All District Council and Committee meetings are now being held as virtual meetings using the Microsoft Teams platform. They can be viewed on YouTube. The next full Council meeting is on 23 July.
Joint Local Plan	We still don't know when the Joint Local Plan will be available and ready to be considered at a meeting of the full Council. We will soon be provided with a timetable for the remaining steps that need to be followed; the JLP timetable is expected to be an item on the Council agenda for 23 July. The next version of the Plan, when we see it, may well be very different from the consultation draft of July 2019. If, and when, Council approves the Plan, it will be subject to further consultation and an Inspector's Examination before it can be formally adopted as planning policy.
Environment and Climate Change Task Force	Proposals from the Cross-Party Task Force of Mid Suffolk and Babergh Councillors were approved by Cabinet on 6 July. They contain a number of environmental measures which could form the councils' first Carbon Reduction Management Plan, setting out how they aim to fulfil their ambitions of becoming carbon neutral within the next ten years. The proposed actions are the first steps in achieving the long term objective to reduce the councils' current emissions of approximately 5,452 tonnes (Mt) of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO2e) per year, looking into how best to invest in order to reduce this to nett zero.
Gateway 14	MSDC and the Greater South East Energy Hub (GSEEH) will be jointly funding a study into low carbon opportunities for Gateway 14, the commercial development site bought by MSDC in 2018. Green Party councillors have been pressing for the site to developed sustainably making use of green energy technology and we welcome this study to look at how low and zero carbon initiatives can be integrated into new developments. It is hoped that the findings of the study can be to be used to share learning and best practice across the region.
Cycling Strategy	Government recently announced both short-term and long-term funding, and MSDC is commencing work on rewriting the Cycling Strategy which is out of date. We have asked for clarification of what provision is proposed for cyclists within the town of Stowmarket and linking neighbouring villages to improve links to schools, local retail outlets etc as well as for leisure.
MSDC out of county investments	Three years ago, MSDC and Babergh set up an investment company (CIFCO) and have so far borrowed around £60 million which they have loaned to CIFCO to buy commercial properties, all of but one of which are outside Suffolk. The scheme was set up to make profits to improve services for residents of the districts. A recent revaluation of the portfolio shows a loss in the last 12 months of around £3 million; with fees of some £500,000. In recent months only 50% or so of the rental due to CIFCO has been paid. A recent scrutiny of the CIFCO Business Plan for 2020/2021 raised many concerns which need to be considered before full Council is asked to approve the Business Plan at the meeting on 23 July.
Business grants	Another round of business grants has just been launched; Early Years Settings will be eligible, amongst others not covered by previous grant schemes.
Locality Awards	A reminder that Locality Awards have been launched for 2020/21. I have £7,350 and hope to make awards to all villages, allocating some money soon and the balance towards the end of 2020. If you know of a community group in need of some funding, please put them in touch with me.
Disabled Facilities Grant	In the recent Performance Reporting we raised concerns, again, that the grant available is not being spent. If you know anyone who needs any kind of adaptation to their home, from a handrail to a wet room, please ask them to get in touch. The application process is very straightforward.