

Minutes of Combs Parish Council Meeting
Monday 9th May 2023 at 7.30pm, Battisford Cricket Club

Present: T Kitson (chair); S Ottewell (vice chair); T Betchley (councillor); A Tomlinson (councillor); K Oakes (county councillor) (arrived 8:30); T Bamber (clerk)

1. Election of Chairman

The chair for 2022/23, Cllr Kitson, took the chair and invited nominations for chair. The clerk reported that he had received a nomination for Cllr Kitson as chairman, and no other nominations were put forward. Cllr Kitson confirmed he would be willing to stand. Cllr Tomlinson proposed that Cllr Kitson be appointed chairman for the coming year and this was seconded by Cllr Betchley. It was AGREED unanimously that Cllr Kitson be appointed chair and Cllr Kitson confirmed that he would sign the Declaration of office.

2. Election of Vice-Chairman

Cllr Kitson asked for nominations for vice chair. Cllr Tomlinson proposed that Cllr Ottewell be elected vice chair. This was seconded by Cllr Betchley and this was AGREED unanimously. There were no other nominations.

The clerk then procured signatures to the acceptance of office forms.

3. Apologies for Absence

J Matthissen (district councillor)

4. Declarations of Interest/Lobbying

Cllr Betchley – non-pecuniary interest in respect of Oaks Meadow (item 14)

5. Public Forum

No members of the public were present.

6. Minutes of Meeting held on Monday 17 April 2023

Minutes for Monday 17 April 2023 were reviewed and it was agreed that they be signed as a true and accurate record of the meeting by the chairman.

7. Matters arising from the Minutes

The clerk confirmed that the finance items needing action had been dealt with

Other matters are covered elsewhere

8. County Councillor's Report

The County Councillor had sent her report, and this is attached as appendix 1.

9. District Councillor's Report

The District Councillor was not present but had sent his report, which is attached as appendix 2.

10. Parish Council Chairman's Report

The chair referred to his annual report, given at the Parish Meeting prior to this meeting and reiterated his appreciation of the work done by the councillors over the last year.



11. Planning

a. Applications received for consideration:

- i. DC/23/01974 The Appleyard, Bildeston Road: request for extension of time.

Councillors were content to support the request for an extension of the time limit. However, on review of the application papers, councillors wished to clarify the plans for the garage: from the drawing it would seem very difficult for any vehicle to reverse into the bay as the proposed new doorway appears to be offset from the old garage.

The clerk will lodge the comment/request for clarification

- ii. DC/23/ 02079 – Holy Oak Barn, Church Road – Listed building consent for log burner

Councillors had no objection to the application.

12. Finance

a. Accounts review to date

The clerk reported that no bank statement had yet arrived, but by calculation, the Current Account balance as of 30 April 2023 should have been £60,036.58 and the savings account balance was £1,927.96.

The Budget analysis and financial summary were reviewed, and these were accepted.

b. Payments received

(i) Precept 1st instalment	£ 4,500.00
(ii) CIL payment	£20,240.97

c. Payments to hand

(i) Npower electricity for streetlights (direct debit) £94.51: This was approved by all councillors (*Parish Councils Act 1957, S.3; Highways Act 1980 s.301*)

(ii) MSDC dog bin emptying £597.88 This was approved by all councillors and cheque no. 22321 was written and the clerk will arrange for its signature (*Litter Act 1983, s5,6*)

d. Approval of annual figures and AGAR Accounting Statement

The clerk had circulated the draft of these and all councillors approved the figures as presented and authorised the chair to sign the Accounting Statement.

e. Internal Audit Report

The internal audit report was not yet available so this item will be deferred until the June meeting.

f. Approval of publication period for annual reporting

As with item (e) above, this matter must be deferred until the June meeting

g. Application to Unity Trust Bank

The clerk had circulated the draft of this and all councillors agreed that the clerk be authorised to proceed.

Action: Clerk to submit application

13. Review of Council Policies:

a. Review of Standing Orders

The standing orders had been circulated prior to the meeting for review. It was AGREED that these were still valid and were approved by the Council.

b. Review of Financial Regulations

The Financial Regulations had been circulated prior to the meeting for review. It was AGREED that these were still valid and were approved by the Council.

c. Review of Asset Register and Risk Assessment

The Risk assessment was reviewed and accepted as before, and the Asset Register was reviewed and confirmed correct. It was then AGREED that these be approved.

d. Review of Internal Control Policy

The Internal Control Policy was reviewed and accepted as before. It was then AGREED that this be approved.

e. Review of Data policies

The Data Protection policy, data breach and subject access policies were reviewed. It was AGREED that, with one minor error that the clerk will correct, these were still valid and were approved by the Council.

14. Oaks Meadow

CLlr Betchley had circulated a formal request for CIL funds from the Oaks Meadow Project to help with the cost of constructing a parking area in the sum of £4,500. All were supportive of this application and the clerk was instructed to arrange payment (Open Spaces Act 1906 ss9-10).

15. PIIP

The chair elected to defer this until the next meeting.

16. Correspondence/Any Other Business

- The chairman referred to a previous discussion about a 'meet and greet' morning, where councillors would be available to meet and chat with residents. It was agreed, subject to weather, that this would take place on 24th June from 10AM at the junction of Park Road and Jacks Lane.
- The clerk had received confirmation that the road in the new development is to be called 'Hubbard's Close', as suggested by the council, after Vic Hubbard, the village milkman who used to own the field.
- Some residents have expressed concerns that the new development may have no adequate plans for the drainage of surface water. There is no longer a drainage ditch running beside the road but there is clearly a large pipe at the East end of the site that is not taking water away. Unless this is addressed before the builders depart it could well become a problem for residents, neighbours and highway users. Councillor Oakes asked the clerk to send her details and councillors asked him to also send them to the district councillor.

Action: Clerk to send details of drainage issue to county and district councillors.

17. Date and time of next meeting –Monday 12th June 2023 at 7.30pm in Battisford and District Cricket Club.

The Meeting closed at 8.45 pm

Appendix 1

County Council report – May 2023

Princes Street's police and fire station receives royal seal of approval

Suffolk's largest joint emergency services hub was officially opened by HRH The Princess Royal today (Tuesday, 28 March), with the new facility in Ipswich marking the latest milestone in a highly successful collaborative scheme.

The Princess Royal was joined by local dignitaries, including Suffolk's High Sheriff, the county's Police and Crime Commissioner, Deputy Chief Constable and Chief Fire Officer, councillors from Suffolk County Council and the Mayor of Ipswich for the grand opening of the shared site earlier this afternoon (Tuesday, 28 March).

During her time at the new station, HRH The Princess Royal spoke to staff from Suffolk Constabulary and Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service who have already begun to benefit from using the state-of-the-art facility.

Demonstrations of some of the fire service's work, including water and animal rescues, also formed part of the visit, along with a tour of the building, which has undergone extensive renovations since work started on the project in December 2020.

Situated in the heart of Suffolk's county town, the facility will help maintain public safety, ensure a swift response to incidents, and promote partnership working.

Councillor Andrew Reid, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member for Public Health and Public Protection, commented:

"It was an honour to welcome HRH, The Princess Royal, for the opening of the largest combined police and fire facility in Suffolk today, cementing the station's status as the jewel in our county's crown and celebrating the latest in a long line of hugely successful collaborations with our emergency services partners.

He added: "We have already started to see the vast benefits of this shared site, which enables the efficient and cost-effective delivery of response activity in an environmentally responsible manner, ensuring continued value for money for our residents whilst supporting our council's net-zero ambitions.

"I would like to thank everyone involved in delivering the new building; their attention to detail has resulted in a modern, fit-for-purpose station we can all be proud of, not just locally but on a national level, with Suffolk's integrated blue light hub scheme heralded as an exemplar by central government."

Tim Passmore, Suffolk's Police and Crime Commissioner, added:

"Our county was very privileged to welcome the Princess Royal for the official opening of the new joint Police and Fire Station in the centre of Ipswich.

He added: "Our joint estates programme is one of the most important and significant examples of joint working nationally and is an excellent example of what can be achieved by pooling resources and working together. A great result for Suffolk."

The multi-million-pound project has also boosted the local economy, following the use of Suffolk-based companies Concertus and RG Carter for the station's design and construction.

99% of pupils receive a preferred primary school place on National Offer Day

99.18% of children were offered a place on National Offer Day at one of their three preferred primary schools and 95.78% were offered a place at their first preference school.

Suffolk County Council received 7,056 applications from parents and carers indicating which primary school they would prefer their child to join in September 2023.

Families who applied online can log on to the Admissions Portal from today to see the school their child has been offered. They will also receive an email to confirm this offer. Letters will be sent to parents who made a paper application by second-class post today (17 April 2023).

Allan Cadzow, Director of Children's, and Young People Services for Suffolk County Council said:

"It is great news that the majority of families have once again been offered a place at one of their preferred schools, especially with so many being offered a place at their first preference school."

"We appreciate that not all families may have received a place at their preferred school. If a parents' preference for a Suffolk school is refused, we will automatically add their child's name to the waiting list for that school. Parents and carers will also be advised about how to lodge an appeal should they wish to do so."

Once school places have been confirmed, parents need to consider how their child will get to and from school. If their child is eligible for Suffolk County Council funded school travel, they will receive an email by 12 May 2023 with details of how to opt in.

Any parents or carers with a child born between 1 September 2018 and 31 August 2019 who have not yet applied for a school place should make an application immediately.

Information on how to make an application can be found on the [School admission pages](#) or by contacting Suffolk County Council on **0345 600 0981**.

Suffolk to mark Dementia Action Week with event

A drop-in event for people with dementia, their families, and carers, will be held next month at Trinity Park in Ipswich.

Representatives from more than 34 care organisations across Suffolk will host stalls at the event, which will showcase the wide range of information, advice, and support available to people living

with dementia and their carers, to help them to get the right support from the right providers, at the right time.

Running alongside the marketplace will be keynote sessions on a range of topics including how to live well with dementia from those with lived experience, memory assessment and the importance of a timely diagnosis.

There will also be the opportunity for people with the condition and their carers to hear about the development of a countywide dementia strategy for Suffolk, and provide feedback on their experiences, needs and priorities for support.

The event, which is being facilitated by the Suffolk Dementia Action Partnership and Care Development East, will be held on **Tuesday 16 May from 10 am**, during Dementia Action Week.

Dr Ros Tandy, Mental Health Clinical Lead for the NHS Suffolk & Northeast Essex Integrated Care Board, said:

"Dementia and Alzheimer's Disease are the leading causes of death in England and there are around 15,000 people in Suffolk living with the condition, so it is essential that those who care for them have a full picture of the support available to them.

"I am really looking forward to attending this event and hearing from members of our community about their experiences of our local dementia services. It's great that there will be activities for people with dementia to take part in at the event so their carers are able to look around and learn more about what support is available from all the different stalls."

Georgia Chimbani, Director of Adult Services at Suffolk County Council said:

"I hope that this event will give people the opportunity to explore the wide range of dementia support which is available in Suffolk. I am also pleased that Suffolk Dementia Action Partnership, with support from Care Development East, intend to follow this event with smaller locality-based roadshows across Suffolk, to help as many people as possible access this information."

The event will feature a designated 'Quiet Room' with activities for people with dementia to allow their carers time to look at the stalls and attend the presentations.

Tea and coffee will be available throughout the day, and other drinks and food can be purchased from the onsite bar.

To book your ticket please visit the Eventbrite website.

Appendix 2 – District Councillor's Report

John Matthissen - Mid Suffolk District Councillor Annual Report for 2022/23

- **Budget**

In the 2022/23 budget a scheme to provide two electric buses, proposed by our group, was agreed. This scheme was put on hold by the Cabinet and it is hoped to get this going in 2023.

The budget for 2023/24 was approved for approximately £15.5 million on core services (up from £13 million the year before, mainly due to inflation) with no increase in council tax. Council home rents increased by 7% (against 4.1% last year) and a 7% increase in sheltered housing service charges (against no increase last year) as well as increase in utility charges. All these increases are due to inflation, costs of energy and other cost increases.

Our group put forward budget proposals for a £2 million investment in energy efficiency measures for housing in the district and this was agreed. We hope to see this implemented in the next six months or so.

The Council has reserves of over £21 million as at the end of the financial year. This is expected to increase to nearly £23 million over 2023/24. We hope this funding can be allocated to projects across the district.

- **Investments**

The Council has continued with local projects and after some delays the café at Needham Lakes opened in 2022 and the solar car port at Stowmarket Leisure Centre came into use.

Work continue on Gateway 14 and a first contract was signed with The Range for the company to move to the site. Discussions continue with other potential companies to be located here.

In Stowmarket, investment for a new Sports, Health, Education and Leisure facility was agreed and also funding to develop a new site for a depot for Mid Suffolk and Babergh districts.

Mid Suffolk District Council continues to hold investments in commercial property, outside the district, via its company CIFCO. This property, all outside of the Mid Suffolk area, ranges from gyms to car showrooms, in places including Epsom, Harlow, Lincoln, Peterborough, Norwich and Milton Keynes. Approximately £1-1.5 million is earned each year via rents however the overall value of this property portfolio has fallen.

- **Economy**

The Council continues to support the development of Gateway 14 which is now part of Freeport East. The Council is investing in an "innovation hub" specifically to support businesses in the Mid Suffolk area.

A new partnership with the University of Essex was set up to provide innovation opportunities for businesses.

The Women's Cycle Tour was calculated to have brought about £1 million of economic benefits to the region. There is unlikely to be a Women's Tour in 2023 due to a lack of funding nationally.

- **Climate Change**

The Council invested in new environmentally-friendly bin lorries – 22 out of a fleet of 35 across Babergh and Mid Suffolk. They are fuelled by HVO (Hydrogenated Vegetable Oil) produced from waste cooking oil and will reduce the carbon footprint of this service by 90%.

There was continued support for parishes with advice from the new post of biodiversity manager.

The Council encourages local groups to improve areas for wildlife and continues with the Tree for Life scheme as well as tree-planting across the district.

- Cost of living

In conjunction with the County Council, Mid Suffolk provided a number of initiatives to help with the cost of living crisis. This included an increase in the amount of funding available for those in hardship, community funding for “warm rooms” and a change to council tax for those on very low incomes. A team at the Council worked to encourage groups and individuals to apply for funding.

- Planning and Housing

For most of the year, the Council’s planning policy team continued to work on the Joint Local Plan following the Plan having been spilt into two parts as agreed with the Planning Inspectors last year. Part 1 covers all the social, environmental and economic policies and Part 2 covers those relating to housing numbers, distribution etc. Part 1 was progressed and is currently out at consultation. It is expected that, if agreed, this might be adopted in late summer / early autumn of 2023.

With regards to Part 2, the Inspector had acknowledged that 90% of Mid Suffolk’s housing target is already allocated (either via existing permissions or sites allocated via Neighbourhood Plans) and that this is central to future policies. It is expected that work will commence on this during 2023 but that full adoption of a Part 2 would not take place until 2025.

Mid Suffolk’s annual monitoring report showed that 862 new dwellings were built in the district in 2021/22 - 168% of the current annual target (513 dwellings) set by the national standard methodology. There are 7,929 outstanding planning permissions (as at 01/04/22) which are either not started or under construction. Separately, it was confirmed that Mid Suffolk now has 10.88 years of housing land supply, well above the Government target of five years.

Over £2 million was provided to parish and town councils in the form of the Community Infrastructure Levy.

A number of significant planning applications and housing developments have progressed during the year:

- Tannery Road – although the house designs were modified after some pressure, the effect on the trees and hedge within the site was greater than anticipated, and we can hope the new planting will gradually heal the landscape
- The site in Bildeston Road has commenced with general disregard for planning conditions and the local community, but repeated visits by the enforcement team has brought the development into line.
- I have opposed some proposals in Moats Tye by intervening with the planning officers, but earlier precedents have been set and it is hard to find policies which would justify refusal.

- Supporting the community

Almost £400,000 was allocated by Mid Suffolk District Council to communities across the district.

My locality fund benefitted the following schemes:

- Bench for Paupers Graves
- Speeding Gates for Finborough
- Street lights replacement for Finborough
- Jubilee event in Onehouse
- Plants for Oaks Meadow – Combs & Little Finborough
- Trinity Hall floor – Onehouse, Harleston, Shelland
- John Peel Centre – sound system
- Tree work - Harleston

I would like to thank the Parish Council for all their work done throughout the year.

John Matthissen councillor@matthissen.net

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