

**Minutes of Combs Parish Council Meeting**  
**Monday 14<sup>th</sup> April 2025 @ 7.30 pm, Battisford Cricket Club**

**Present:** A Tomlinson (councillor); K Archer (councillor); T Bamber (councillor); H Larsen (councillor); C Ratcliffe (councillor); T Betchley (councillor); S Ottewell (clerk); K Oakes (County councillor) J Mattissen (District councillor)

**042501 Apologies for absence**

Cllr T Kitson (Chair) – due to family emergency and accepted by all councillors. In Cllr Kitson absence, the Clerk proposed that Cllr Bamber should step in as acting Chair for the meeting, which was agreed by all councillors

**042502 Declaration of Interest/Declaration of lobbying**

None

**042503 Public Forum**

None

**042504 Minutes of meeting held on Monday 9<sup>th</sup> March**

The Minutes for Monday 10<sup>th</sup> March were reviewed. It was agreed they be signed as a true and accurate record of the meeting by the chairman.

**042505 Clerk's Report**

The Clerk sent out the report prior to the meeting to allow the councillors time to read. No questions were raised (Appendix 1)

**042506 Action Points review**

The action points summary was reviewed, and the clerk was updated on progress on outstanding items.

**Action Point – Clerk to update summary. All Cllrs to check their outstanding items.**

**042507 Chairman's Report**

No report was issued

**042508 County Councillor's Report**

The county councillor had sent in the report prior to the meeting. (Appendix 2)

**042509 District Councillor's Report**

Cllr Matthissen sent in the report prior to the meeting (Appendix 3)

Cllr Matthissen spoke about the issues surrounding the new houses at Hubbard's Close. He reported that the Enforcement Office agrees that their complaints are valid and has written to Chatsworth Homes requesting that the issues be resolved. If the situation continues, the next step would be to issue an enforcement notice. The enforcement officer is happy for residents to contact her directly and Cllr Tomlinson will get in touch with each of them with her details.

Cllr Mattisen then spoke about the District Council housing requirements. The indicative requirement minus those already permitted is 94 dwellings over the next 20 years. This was not greeted favorably by the councillors. Cllr Matthissen pointed out that the figures are indicative and therefore very likely to change.

Cllr Matthissen then left the meeting to attend other Parish council meetings

**042510 Planning applications**

i) DC/25/01202 – Listed Building Consent

Moat Farm Bildeston Road – demolition of existing barn and erection of 1 dwelling

ii) DC/25/1201 – Full Planning Consent

Moat Farm Bildeston Road – demolition of existing barn and erection of 1 dwelling

The Councillors all approve and support both applications

**Action Point: Clerk to submit response**

 12-5-25

**iii) Accounts review to date and finance approval**

All councillors agreed with both the budget analysis/ variance report and the predicted income/expenditure report.

The Clerk also reported that the £5,000 PIYP grant was received from Mid Suffolk at the end of March.

- iv) The Clerk reported that on reviewing the CIL Expenditure Report, it was noticed that in July 2024, the purchase of a new laptop had been allocated against CIL receipts and not reported against the budget. It is believed that this is incorrect, and an adjustment may be required to rectify the budget analysis and variance reports.

**Action Point: The Clerk to confirm and include on May agenda if necessary**

**v) Payments to hand**

- a) Electricity for streetlights – March (April direct debit) – Invoice not yet received. Clerk has requested a copy invoice from NPower

- b) Monthly bank service charge - £6.00  
Approved – Local Government Act 1972, s111

- c) Cemetery grounds maintenance - £300.00 (a further invoice was received for £175.00 but the contractor advised not to pay as he was reissuing)  
Approved to be paid – Local Government Act 1972 s214

- d) ICO – Data Protection fee (paid by direct debit March 2025) - £47.00  
Approved – Local Government Act 1972 s143

- e) Replacement post for dog bin by bus shelter - £11.14  
Approved to be paid – Litter Act 1983 s5 & s6

- f) Newsletter printing costs £390.00  
Approved to be paid – LGA 1972, s142

- g) Street furniture license fee (PiYP project) - £160.00  
Approved to be paid– Road Traffic Regulation Act, 1984, section 72 and Parish Councils Act 1957, section 1

- h) SALC annual membership subscription - £352.02  
Approved to be paid – LGA 1972 s143

**042512 To review internal audit requirement**

- i) SALC Internal Audit Service Letter of Engagement  
ii) Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2024/25  
iii) Section 2 – Accounting Statement 2024/25

All the above documents were reviewed and accepted by the councillors. SALC were approved as internal auditors.

**042513 To update progress on residents "Pride in Your Place initiative**

Cllr Larsen circulated a copy of the minutes (Appendix 4) from their latest meeting on the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025 and updated the councillors on further progress. They have contacted a contractor to install the village gates, picnic table and sign board as required by the Street Furniture License and have a meeting arranged to discuss requirements and costs.

**042514 To review the cemetery fees / charges**

Combs Cemetery fees were last reviewed and updated in 2023. It was proposed that the clerk should review our charges, comparing them to local cemeteries and report back on any suggestions at the May meeting.

**Action Point: Clerk to review cemetery fees and report back to the councillors**

**042515 To consider Oaks Meadow funding requests for insurance £145.60 and playground equipment £431.88**

A lengthy discussion was held with councillors having many different viewpoints on funding Oaks Meadow for running/fixed costs. It was suggested that Cllr Kitson had previously requested a financial plan from Oaks Meadow so no decision was reached as it was unclear if this had been requested or received.

**Action Point: Clerk to notify Oaks Meadow that decision is being deferred and to speak to Cllr Kitson.**

**042516 To agree the next step for the Neighbourhood Plan project**

It was agreed at the March meeting that a letter would be written to all Combs residents explaining what a Neighbourhood Plan is and the benefits it would bring. This would also include an invitation to a presentation giving more details. The letter has been drafted; dates and venue of presentations need to be arranged

**Action Point – Clerk to contact St Mary's Church Hall to check availability**

**042517 To consider if we wish to submit an opinion to the Planning Statement of community Involvement Consultation**

The Parish Council have been invited to submit their views to a consultation on the proposed changes to the Planning Statement of Community Involvement. This concerns a proposal to stop sending neighbour letters for certain types of planning applications, as most comments are received electronically. There is a statutory requirement to notify neighbouring residents about a planning application by sending a letter, or by placing a site notice on display in the relevant location. Currently both are done. The councillors are opposed to this idea and feel that both types of communication have benefits.

**Action Point – Clerk to complete consultation questionnaire**

**042518 Cllrs Ratcliffe and Archer to report on Neighbourhood Development Plan meeting.**

In March Cllrs Ratcliffe and Archer attended a Neighbourhood Development Plan meeting run by Mid Suffolk District Council. They were going to talk through the housing figures expected for Combs, but Cllr Mattissen had already done this (see item 09)

**042519 To consider formulating a policy regarding resident/community engagement with PC**

Cllr Archer brought it to our attention that early in 2024 a resident had been in touch regarding a street lighting issue and although a decision had been reached, the resident had not been notified that the issue had been closed. This was discussed and it was agreed that for the small amount of correspondence we receive a formal policy is unnecessary, but more vigilance is required when dealing with resident issues.

**Action Point – Cllr Archer to contact resident regarding closure of issue.**

**042520 Correspondence / Items for inclusion on the next agenda**

The Clerk reported that she had received an email from Battisford Cricket regarding funding for a wicket green cover.

**Action Point: to be added to May agenda.**

The councillors have received an invitation from the Trustees of Oaks Meadow to get an understanding of the project and what their plan are for the future.

**Action Point: Clerk to arrange suitable date.**

Cllr Ratcliffe informed the councillors that St Mary's Church Combs are launching "Friends of Combs Church" on the 7<sup>th</sup> June with the purpose of fund raising for the fabric of the grade 1 listed building. More details will be made available for the notice boards in due course. Cllr Ratcliffe suggested it would be good for as many of the councillors to attend the event as possible to show support for the church.

May agenda to include Oaks Meadow funding; Cricket Club funding; Tannery Road pond issue; cemetery fees; CIL return; PiYP update, Neighbourhood Plan, Audit update.

**Date and time of next meeting: Monday 12<sup>th</sup> May 2025**

**Annual Parish Meeting @ 7pm**

**Immediately followed by the Annual Parish Council Meeting  
@ Battisford Cricket Club**

**Meeting closed at 21:30**

# Appendix 1

## Clerk's Report – April 2025

### Planning Decisions Approved

None

### Finance

**Total balance as at 28<sup>th</sup> February 2025 £81,537.71**

#### **Plus Receipts March 2025**

|                                    |           |
|------------------------------------|-----------|
| Savings Accounts Interest Received | £521.67   |
| PiYP Grant                         | £5,000.00 |

#### **Less Payments March 2025**

|                           |         |
|---------------------------|---------|
| Streetlights, energy      | £213.91 |
| Bank charges              | £6.00   |
| ICO (Data Protection Fee) | £47.00  |

**Balance as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025 £86,792.47**

|                          |                   |
|--------------------------|-------------------|
| Current account          | £8,805.89         |
| General savings account  | £77,479.35        |
| Cemetery savings account | £507.23           |
| <b>Total in Bank</b>     | <b>£86,792.47</b> |

### Newsletter

The Spring edition of the Community Newsletter were distributed in the middle of March by our wonderful team of volunteers in both Combs and Battisford. With the number of articles received there is the possibility of increasing the number of pages going forward. The number of houses has also increased (Hubbards Close) and therefore the number of copies printed will also need increasing. This is something I will look at more thoroughly over the next few weeks to review the costs.

### Audit

The internal audit has been booked for w/c 12<sup>th</sup> May. I am working my way through the list of information they initially require as it needs to be uploaded up to their portal by the 5<sup>th</sup> May.

### Pride in Your Place Grant

We were all delighted when our application for a PiYP grant was successful, and we have received £5000 towards making Combs beautiful! Our thanks to Anna James and her team for all their hard work in obtaining the grant. We have received our Planting and Cultivation Licence so the planting can commence at a suitable time; our Street Furniture Licence, which is required for the village gates and signboard, is pending subject to us finding a qualified/authorised contractor.

The project team will now be concentrating on the following work to be carried out across Combs over the coming months

- Spring Bulb Planting in various locations around the village, including around village sign, PC noticeboards, grass triangles & verges
- White Picket "Gates" to enhance the entrance to the village.
- Signboard showing footpaths, benches, amenities, historic interest
- Picnic table and bench on Moats Tye/ Tannery Road Triangle

### County Council report – April 2025

#### Council continues to oppose pylons in final round of consultations

Suffolk County Council maintains that more can, and should, be done to improve National Grid's plans for their Norwich to Tilbury pylon project.

A final round of consultation for the project in Suffolk has now been completed (3 March 2025), ahead of an expected Development Consent Order application later this year.

The county council has welcomed a series of changes to the latest set of plans, evidence that National Grid has listened to some of the council's concerns and those of local communities.

However fundamental differences remain, with the council clear that offshore and undergrounding solutions should be priorities for the scheme.

One blow came at the beginning of this latest consultation, with National Grid writing to local leaders in Norfolk and Suffolk saying that there would be no undergrounding in the Waveney Valley.

**Councillor Richard Rout, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member for Devolution, Local Government Reform and Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects, said:**

"We are bitterly disappointed that pylons are still the go-to solution for this project, and particularly those destined to cut across the Waveney Valley's valued landscape, rather than going underground, or ideally offshore. We still firmly contend that less damaging alternatives to the project have not been properly considered.

"Despite making clear our overall opposition to the scheme, we have influenced some alterations proposed by National Grid, such as the undergrounding of smaller pylons, owned by UK Power Networks in some places, such as the Burgate area, which will reduce the visual and landscape impact and protect the operations of local airfields.

"At the next stage of the process, when the Planning Inspectorate is presented with the plans, we will continue to pursue our preferences for no pylons at all, to make the scheme better and safer for our communities.

"But should pylons ultimately be given the go-ahead across Suffolk, Norfolk and Essex, despite our opposition, we will continue to work with National Grid to make sure communities are fairly treated and compensated – something which has not yet been evident."

One of the considerable changes that the county council believes is possible in the current set of plans, is the option to remove some existing powerlines between Bramford and Lawford.

The county council believes that National Grid, UK Power Networks and the regulator, Ofgem, should work together to investigate removing this line, which goes through two National Landscapes and passes close by the iconic Willy Lott's cottage at Flatford.

Suffolk County Council's response to the latest, and previous, consultations can be found at [suffolk.gov.uk](https://www.suffolk.gov.uk)

According to [National Grid's website](#), they intend to submit a Development Consent Order application to the Planning Inspectorate for the Norwich to Tilbury project some time in 2025.

## Council fears pace of decision for large solar farm in north Suffolk

Suffolk County Council is calling on communities impacted by the proposed EcoPower solar farm, to act with urgency, and join the council in opposing the scheme.

- Unprecedented pace of planning application
- Inappropriate proposal which could take out quality farmland
- Serious concerns for welfare of local communities

The 250-megawatt solar farm and battery energy storage system will be spread out over 1,500 acres at multiple sites around Yaxley, Brome, Gislingham, Mellis, Eye and Occold.

EcoPower is proposing the bare minimum of engagement and is likely to submit its application to the Planning Inspectorate in around 12 months from now.

This means, unusually, that residents will have just two opportunities in the coming months to have their say. The first of these two is a non-statutory consultation, launched on 10 March. A statutory consultation will follow.

The council fears that communities won't have enough time to familiarise themselves with the planning process, understand the potential impacts of the project, do their research, and make their points – unfortunately, it is not enough to simply state opposition to the project in a consultation response.

The county council is formally opposed solar farm proposals that remove the top grades of agricultural land.

Independently conducted assessments will be required to provide reassurance that Suffolk's best farmland will not be used and put food security at risk.

The council also prefers rooftop-before-rural solar development and expects that solar developers should rule out any links to forced labour in their supply chains.

There are also serious concerns for the welfare of those in the communities affected by the proposed scheme. Such projects can change ways of life forever for those living near the proposed sites.

Councillors have seen first-hand, the stress and worry brought by the sudden announcement of a huge infrastructure projects. This is something that should not be underestimated and should be recognised by a project promoter.

Suffolk County Council has created several online resources to support communities who are facing planning proposals for these nationally significant infrastructure projects. These are available at [www.suffolk.gov.uk](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk)

The EcoPower Suffolk consultation is available at [www.ecopowersuffolk.com](http://www.ecopowersuffolk.com)

## 200 new specialist SEND places for Suffolk

The creation of 200 new specialist places across the county for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) is set to be considered by Suffolk County Council's cabinet.

An extra 100 places could open this year, and another 100 new places by September 2026, with plans being drawn up. These places will be spread across Suffolk and tailored to meet need and demand.

The plan to be presented to cabinet next Tuesday April 1 outlines how £18.6million could best be spent to support the growing population of SEND children and young people who need specialist education. Over the last five years, Suffolk pupils accessing special schools and units attached to mainstream schools has increased by over 40%.

The proposal includes £3million to be spent on small groups and units in mainstream schools from September 2025 and £12million to be spent on developing satellite units linked to existing special schools across Suffolk from September 2026. The remaining £3.6million is earmarked for further SEND provision.

In the past five years, 1,025 new specialist SEND places across Suffolk have been agreed.

On top of these new 200 places, plans will continue to be drawn up. Using the recently published Joint SEND Needs Assessment report, work is underway to create a Joint SEND Sufficiency Plan, written in conjunction with health, social care, inclusion and transport. This will establish how future Department for Education SEND capital money should be spent.

## Appendix 3

### District Councillors Report – Onehouse Ward – April 2025

|                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Death of Cllr Rachel Eburne</b>                            | It was with great sadness we announced that the Deputy Leader of Mid Suffolk Council, cabinet member for finances and resources, and Councillor for Haughley, Stowupland & Wetherden, Rachel Eburne, sadly passed away on the 14 <sup>th</sup> March after a long illness. Since being elected as a councillor back in 2010, Rachel was a key champion within her local community and was deeply committed to Mid Suffolk. She will be missed by us all, and for me after 15 years working with a dear friend and colleague. |
| <b>Devolution - Mayor</b>                                     | Councillors had a lively debate regarding the government proposal for a mayor for Suffolk and Norfolk. Notable concerns were that local voices would not be heard, and that powers might be concentrated rather than devolved from Government. <a href="https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/w/new-regional-mayor-can-bring-benefits-but-local-views-must-be-heard-councils-say">https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/w/new-regional-mayor-can-bring-benefits-but-local-views-must-be-heard-councils-say</a>                               |
| <b>Local government re-organisation</b>                       | All District and Borough Councils in Suffolk have published their joint proposals on how local government in Suffolk should be re-organised. This proposal is for two or three unitary authorities across the county, but the exact boundaries for these authorities are yet to be determined. Letters to this effect have now been sent and acknowledged by the Secretary of State. Now more detailed business plans for the proposed new authorities will need to be finalised and agreed by September.                    |
| <b>Planning Policy updates</b>                                | As the work begins to review the Joint Local Plan to achieve compliance with Government's new housing targets, each parish has now been given a guide to the scale of the challenge to allocate sufficient land to meet the increased numbers to the end of a new plan period – 2024 to 2044. It is emphasised that this is just an indication, and that the eventual numbers may well be less or more.                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Community infrastructure levy (CIL) charging structure</b> | Both Babergh and Mid Suffolk agreed for updated CIL charging structure proposals to go out for 6-week public consultation. The CIL charging rates had not been changed since the Councils brought in CIL back in 2018. It is proposed that these are now increased and have been viability tested before going out to consultation. Details of the proposed new charging structure can be found on the website in due course.                                                                                                |
| <b>Planning and Housing debate</b>                            | At its April meeting council discussed and approved a motion to tell Government that their misunderstanding of how the planning system and housing markets interact stood in the way of delivery of their aim to see 1.5 million homes delivered over the parliament term.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Locality budget 2025/26</b>                                | The next round of locality funding is now live so parishes and groups are welcome to discuss project ideas with me. The total amount per councillor has increased to £10,000. Full details available on the website <a href="https://midsuffolk.gov.uk/w/locality-awards">https://midsuffolk.gov.uk/w/locality-awards</a> .                                                                                                                                                                                                  |

## Appendix 4

Pride in Combs Sub-Committee Meeting

31<sup>st</sup> March 2025 19:30

In attendance:

Hannah Larsen

Alan Tomlinson

Cliff Ratcliffe

Anna James

Mike James

Sue Hendry

1. Congratulations and thank you from Anna for the success in our PiyP Grant Application.

2. Suzanne Ottewell is awaiting response from SCC regarding the Planting and Cultivation Licence.

3. Suzanne Ottewell is also checking with SCC and Hartleys to see if they have a Streetworks Qualification to erect street furniture.

We will also need to apply for a Street Furniture Licence. We do not know how long the lead-time is with this.

4. MSDC would like us to monitor the project. It is compulsory for us to complete the PiyP Monitoring Form on completion of the project so we will keep photos as the project progresses.

We have also agreed to complete the optional case study for MSDC within a year. We will update Combs residents on the progress of the project via the newsletter, noticeboards and the website.

5. We will liaise with and keep Stuart Scarff updated when the bulbs are planted around the village sign area (October time). We would be grateful if Tony Bamber would continue to keep contact with Stuart and ask permission/keep him informed of progress and requirements.

6. SCC has advised that planters are not allowed to be hung on village entrance gates. The committee had an idea that a 3-tier planter could be erected near the village sign but this would need to have permission granted by Stuart Scarff.

If Street Furniture licence is granted, the village entrance gates would be placed on Poplar Hill (exact location to be determined) and on Tannery Road near the 30mph signs. Cliff Ratcliffe will focus on this part of the project.

7. Hannah Larsen will focus on the Moats Tye triangle area. Hannah will email Kay Oakes regarding the broken signpost and the general upkeep of the area (overgrown etc.). Hannah did request the signpost be fixed by Highways but it was denied.

Hannah will ask for Suzanne to add the existing bench repair to the Parish Council agenda (14<sup>th</sup> April).

When a contractor has been agreed with a Streetworks qualification, she will attend a site visit to discuss the picnic bench.

Spring bulbs will be planted in the autumn.

8. Anna James will focus on the village signboard. We will position it close to the bus stop. We discussed that the design should include:

- points of interest/historical areas/buildings
- footpaths, including circular walks with distances and difficulty
- Combs and the surrounding areas
- benches
- You Are Here point
- a QR code linking to the village website with map

Anna will liaise with the design team.

8. The ground will be prepared and spring bulbs will be planted in the following areas:

- Mill Lane triangle (Sue Hendry to focus on this)
- PC Noticeboard areas
- Village entrance gates
- Jack's Corner

9. MSDC are looking at the resident comments from Hubbards Close.

10. Alan Tomlinson offered to help manage the finances (as the Parish Council have now received the £5000 grant in their bank account) and will discuss this at the next Parish Council meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> April.

Next actions to be taken:

Find a contractor with a Streetworks qualification

Get a planting and cultivation licence from SCC

Get a street furniture licence from SCC

Anna to update Combs residents on progress with a noticeboard sign

Hannah to email Kay regarding Moats Tye triangle

Next meeting: 22<sup>nd</sup> April 19:30