

**Annual Parish Meeting 23 May 2016**  
**Combroke Parish Council**  
**2015-16 Annual Report of the Chairman**

### **Meetings and Administration**

We held 6 scheduled meetings of the Parish Council this year. We also called 2 extra-ordinary meetings in the year to respond to planning consultations on time.

Our meetings are well attended by our Parish Councillors, District and County Councillors. We have been pleased to welcome residents to meetings, to observe, ask questions and make comments. Residents' attendance has been especially welcome when the agenda has included planning matters of particular interest. In March we welcomed Stephanie Connah who responded to our notice of a vacancy and accepted a co-option to become a full member of the Council for the remainder of its term.

### **Environs**

We continue to be grateful to the County Highways Teams for keeping on top of patching our roads over the year and the little things that matter - flushing the gullies, ensuring the grit bins are replenished for winter, and keeping the grass verge at the Fosse well trimmed in the summer. Special mention of Patch Byrne the Locality Officer who supervises our area and arranges for defects to be managed. He is always helpful and quick to reply to matters we raise - and this year we have had several questions requiring detailed response.

Similarly, thanks to the District Teams... The Streetscene Team for the grass cut around the village verges; the leaf and debris kerb sweeper, and the prompt removal of reported fly tipping. Thanks also to the always helpful teams on the refuse/recycle bin collections; ...And many thanks to all those behind the scenes teams whose work involves support to our village.

We continue to be grateful to Stephen Bates for keeping an eye on our network of paths and bridleways. And many thanks to Steve for mowing the paths on the Leys!. Thanks must also be recorded to our local landowners who keep their paths open, and accessible; and hedges trimmed.

### **Communications**

The CSW Rural Broadband Project is making good progress with the next round of grants for the hard-to-reach cases. Combrook is hopeful - All fingers crossed!

Last May we reported work in progress on our new website : <http://combroke.co.uk> . We needed to find a further grant to upgrade our older website with Stratford District Council and it seemed prudent to save the costs of the older more expensive hosting system we were on. And so we made use of a reasonably simple online hosting website to tide us over. We have now found a grant and hope to return to a hosted website with SDC over the course of this year.

### **Planning**

Parish Councils have a unique local insight which can benefit the planning and regulatory process. In the majority of new planning applications, we have been in agreement with the Planning Authority on the outcome.

There have been several significant matters requiring much time and ongoing engagement over the year.

In the 2015 Chairman's Report I suggested that if decisions and regulatory actions are taken in a **coherent manner in the context of clear policies**, then differences between the Parish Council and the Planning Authority should only ever be at the margins. Sadly there continues to have been some significant planning matters over this last year about which the Parish Council and the Planning Authority have been poles apart.

### **Finance**

Spending this year has been kept largely within the budget. Last year the balance carried forward *looked* depleted, because of outstanding Leys Project grant to be claimed and HMRC VAT repayments. The VAT

has come in, the Village Hall Committee have made a generous contribution to the Leys Project and we have received grant for the website. So we are back to a more healthy balance. We have raised the precept for next year (the money allocated from Council Tax ) by 2% this is to keep pace with the increases in our main spending: -the lease on the Village Hall, insurance premiums, and the part-time service of our Clerk.

### **The Leys - Fostering Our Heritage**

It is May and the Leys has been looking particularly lovely. Despite all our efforts we have yet to manage a village picnic on the Leys - picnic plans were rained off again last July; But after the sheep had been grazing during the early autumn, we did manage a stunning village bonfire night in November. A young barn owl stayed the summer but did n't manage to entice a mate. Sadly his ring was found up on one of the lanes this winter. However there are hopeful signs we may have another resident - many thanks to the South Warwickshire Barn Owl Survey team who come over to check out our box. And thanks also to everyone who has contributed or got involved with the Leys in one way or another.

And **huge thanks to Liz Bates** for her ongoing coordination of a biodiversity management plan - and for just keeping on keeping on! Thanks also to Warwickshire Wildlife Trust, Compton Verney and other agencies for their ongoing support and encouragement.

### **Finally**

A big thank you to all the Parish, District and County Councillors, and many others who have given their time and energy so generously to maintain and improve the life of the Parish.

We were sorry when Mycroft Perry decided to stand down from the Parish Council in September - but we understand that transport/ escort duty to junior rugby training *had* to take precedence over our meeting! A huge thanks to Mycroft for all his support for the Council over the last ten years.

We wouldn't survive without the ongoing hard work of our Clerk, Glna Lowe, and **Special Congratulations** go to Gina who has recently been awarded the CiLCA qualification in Local Council Administration. Well done Gina, we are very proud to have become a Council with a fully qualified Clerk!

As always I have been grateful for the unfailing support I have received as Chairman from the whole Parish Council Team during the past year. They are always there when it's needed. Thanks.

Brenda Rayson  
Chairman (May 2015-16)