

**Annual Parish Meeting 15 May 2017**  
**Combroke Parish Council**  
**2016-17 Annual Report of the Chairman**

**Meetings and Administration**

We held 6 scheduled meetings of the Parish Council in 2016-17. We also called 1 extra-ordinary meeting in 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 high and especially welcome when the agenda has included planning matters of particular interest.

We also included for the first time displays in the Village Hall to coincide with key planning consultation meetings. This has enabled interested residents to view plans, details and make their views known if they have been unable to attend our meetings.

**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 kindly met with some of us in November for a thorough tour of the village which was really useful. We have already seen some outcomes: -Spring Lane residents have benefitted from an extra careful flushing of the gullies and a problematic drain and we must all have noted how the steep road edges on the lane to Kineton have been infilled and make a real difference now on that stretch of lane.

Similarly, thanks to the District Teams... *The Streetscene Team* for the grass cut around the village verges; the leaf and debris kerb sweeper -who makes a special effort with all the leaf fall at the bottom end of the village; and *the very 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 - the hedge on the lane from Kineton was well shaped with particular care in the 2016-17 season and has been a source of pleasure to at least *one* regular walker!

On the subject of our lanes, we started during last summer looking at what might be done to unravel the way digital mapping and navigation systems have played havoc with those parts of our lanes that *have* names. On digital maps, Spring Lane and Church Hill have morphed across nearly all the lanes in Combrook. OS mapping promised last autumn to delete the incorrectly named segments on their underlying map, but we are still waiting to see the fruits of this on navigation devices .....watch this space! We know there is probably more to be done once we can get this first stage achieved.

**Communications**

The CSW Rural Broadband Project confirmed towards the end 2016 that we are due to have a fibre cabinet installed - hopefully during 2017. And the Project went that extra mile and kindly made it possible for our 'team' to meet with the contractor to discuss the best location for the cabinet within the BT design parameters. All fingers crossed we shall **have a fibre offer** before the end 2017!

We have continued throughout the year with our website : <http://combroke.co.uk> and hope during the coming year to enhance its provision including much needed speed of loading. It would be good to involve more groups in developing and keeping special interest pages up to date.

## Planning

The Parish Council has responded to consultations on 10 planning application and noted 7 Tree felling/pruning applications during 2016-17. In the nearly all new planning applications, we have been in agreement with the Planning Authority on the outcome.

I am pleased to report that we had a particularly successful experience with *one* key planning application during 2016-17. The Planning Officer was first rate -giving prompt helpful advice at the early stages. And it was confirmation that we *do understand how to apply policy*, that she was in complete agreement with the detailed policy issues that we had identified in our final representation.

However there have been several *other* significant planning /enforcement / building control matters requiring much time and ongoing engagement over the year.

For the third year running I must again remark: 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 matters over this last year about which the Parish Council and the Planning Authority have been poles apart.

## Finance

Spending this year has included a grant to the Church to support grass cutting and we also needed to pay for the Leys to be cut and bales removed in the late summer -a task we have previously managed through voluntary assistance. Otherwise we have kept largely within our planned budget. We have raised the precept for next year (the money allocated from Council Tax ) by just close to 2% -this is to keep pace with the inflation and 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 ..... but this coming year if the weather is kind we might just make it ..... We enjoyed having another resident in our owl box in 2016-17 -it had been a chick in a Kineton nest the previous year. Many thanks to the South Warwickshire Barn Owl Survey team who come over to check out our box. Recently we have been working with a local artist to create a "welcome" signage with some of our fabulous flora and fauna depicted.... so, watch this space! Many thanks 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.

## And 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.

The Parish Council wouldn't survive without the ongoing hard work of our Clerk, Gina Lowe. And **Special Congratulations** go to Gina who became joint runner up in the national Clerk of the Year Award last autumn. Thank you Kineton PC for following through her nomination! and *Well Done Gina!* we are very proud!

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 - there when needed makes for a great team.

And many thanks also to those many residents who have encouraged us to keep doing what we do. Thanks.

Brenda Rayson  
Chairman (May 2016-17)