

Annual Parish Meeting 8 May 2018
Combroke Parish Council
2017-18 Annual Report of the Chairman

Meetings and Administration

We held 6 scheduled meetings of the Parish Council in 2017-18. We also called 1 extra-ordinary meeting in order to respond to a planning consultation 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 have continued the practice of sharing displays in the Village Hall to coincide with key planning consultation meetings, enabling interested residents to find out about matters even if they cannot attend meetings.

Environs

As in previous years we have been well supported by *Patch Byrne and County Highways Teams* who attend highways maintenance 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..

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 have had some problems this year with some reversing accidents ~in particular the damage to the Village Hall gateway during a refuse collection. Our claim on insurance was promptly accepted and we know that accidents can happen at the best of times. We have suggested it might be easier if the village was served by a smaller refuse truck. We are told that the problem is that it would involve more than one truck journey... and up until this year there had been no reported accidents - so this year is seen as a one off. So we will continue to monitor the situation .

Thanks must also be recorded to our local landowners who keep their paths open, and accessible; and hedges trimmed. 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.

This time last year we reported that we had been having a conversation with OS mapping to try and unravel the way digital mapping and navigation systems have played havoc with those parts of our lanes that *have* names. We seem to have had some success on *some* maps Spring Lane is now nearly back to its rightful place as too is Church Hill. In the process we were *given* 'Combrook Road', we were not quite expecting that. But it seems to have slipped into place quietly.

Communications

Last year we were hopeful that we may see fibre by the end of 2017. It was not to be. But our patience was rewarded this March when we put up with road closures and *the cabinet* arrived. And at a well chosen site, it already begins to feel if it has long been there. However the frustration is waiting for the 'green light' to order our lines with 30 + or 70+ Mbps. The CSW Rural Broadband Project is still now confirming completion in May - so all fingers crossed

Planning

The majority of residents' planning applications have been thoughtful and appropriately managed. However there have been several *other* significant planning /enforcement / building control matters requiring much time and ongoing engagement over the year.

It is now the fourth year of my saying: 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 substantial matters over this last year.

Finance

Spending this year has included some reorganising between the Parish Council and Village Hall Committee so that instead of a grant to the Village Hall Committee, the Parish Council has taken over the direct payment of the Village Hall rent as well as the insurance. This was at the request of the Diocesan Authority, apparently they thought the deeds required it that way. With prudent management we have kept our spend largely within the expected income. With new property in the village we have raised the precept for 2018-19 (the money allocated from Council Tax) by 4%, other households might have seen a small downward adjustment in the Combroom element of their council tax.

The Leys - Fostering Our Heritage

With a brilliant sunny start to May the Leys has been looking splendid after much rain in April. And to add to it the completion of the east side "village gateway" - providing a back drop to the entrance at the village name plate. We now have some very fine estate railings and gates bordering that SE corner of the Leys. We hope residents will enjoy using the new pedestrian gate from the top. A newly formed Leys Management Group will be looking to define and establish some mown pathways to step along from the new gate. Please enjoy!

At the same time we also received a grant from the County to fix the drainage on the path down at south west bottom gate. So water is no longer gushing onto the lane in heavy rainfall.

Many thanks to the South Warwickshire Barn Owl Survey team who come over to check out our box and lets hope we attract a nesting pair this year. Many thanks to everyone who has contributed or got involved with the Leys in one way or another.

And 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.

As always, as Chairman I have been grateful for the unfailing support I have received from the whole Parish Council Team -they are great! -thank you! And many thanks also to those many residents who have encouraged us to keep doing what we do. Thanks.

Brenda Rayson
Chairman (May 2017-18)