

## 2 Introduction and Background

In the millennium year of 2000 Comberton Parish Council decided that it needed to refocus its vision for the future of the village. So much was going on that it was easy to concentrate on all the routine tasks demanding immediate attention rather than stepping back and planning a clear way ahead with a focus on those tasks that were important to the whole community.

Many factors were at play that affected the village including:

- The publication of a new rural white paper aiming to give more power back to village communities but whose path to implementation was not mapped out.
- Structure plans that were being put in place by Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) and South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC).
- Developments at Comberton Village College (CVC), especially those that were happening as a result of the building of the new settlement at Cambourne.
- Plans from central government for increased housing and employment in the region.
- Concerns in the village over problems with traffic, transport and policing.
- Attempts to bring younger people into the decision making process.
- Enhancements to the appearance of the village and its activities.
- Increasing pressure on recreation and sports facilities within the village.
- The possibility of the construction of a new village hall.
- Pressure for better access to outside spaces and general concerns over the environment.
- The effect of new technologies and improved access to communications.
- Engendering a full sense of community spirit and involvement within the village.

In an environment where pressure was coming from many sources and Parish Councillors were very busy reacting to the immediate needs raised on a monthly basis, it was difficult to stand back, take stock of the needs of the community and plan ahead on a more pro-active basis.

It was thus agreed that the Parish Council (PC) should develop what it then called a 'village action plan' in order to:

- Allow the village to proceed in a focused direction.
- Eradicate surprises in actions taken within the village.

- Allow the village to fit in closely with other areas of development taking place around about it.
- Increase the involvement of the community in Parish Council decisions.
- Generate a greater community spirit.
- Give justification for the Council precept.
- Fit in with the new Government white paper on rural development and allow the Parish Council to become a 'quality' council.
- Increase the sense of democracy.
- Save the village from seeing its future as being determined by 'outsiders'.
- Enables the Council to be pro-active rather than reactive.

Over the next year a village appraisal was undertaken, starting by involving key stakeholders and then designing and administering a questionnaire which went out to every household to be responded to by the whole population. The excellent team of volunteers involved ensured that a return rate of 80% was achieved, giving real weight to the results produced. These results were then professionally compiled and presented to the village.

In the six months following the publication teams of volunteers were brought together to concentrate thought on the five main areas of the results and draw up the core of the now renamed 'Parish Plan' which forms the document you are now reading. This plan concentrates in particular on:

- Physical Village Structure
- Transport
- Recreation, Sport and Community
- Public Services
- The Environment

In each area separate plans are laid out for action over both the short term and medium to long term. Short term projects aim to be carried out as 'immediate wins' over the next one year so that it is clear that the whole process has resulted in concrete actions and that people's concerns have been heard. Projects that need to fit in with wider objectives or that require more sustained funding form part of the longer term plans.

In either case the Parish Council, as well as the village as a whole, now has a set of laid down budgeted plans to work to in a pro-active fashion and which will form the core of their agenda as time goes on, in the hope that reactive decisions will become less as the village develops in the way that it has now planned for the next ten years of its own future.