

COMBERTON PARISH COUNCIL Annual Report 2010



Chairman's Report

We have had a few changes on the Parish Council this year. We have welcomed Mr John Cornell, replacing Dr Robert Rintoul, who stood down from the council due to work commitments but remains on the Transport Working Group. Dr Charles Chambers resigned in January but remains on the Recreation Ground Working Group to assist with grant applications.

Planning and conservation matters, affordable housing, exception sites, policing and traffic problems, continue to be areas that have been high on the list of topics for debate and decision this year.

Following a review of the Parish Plan (written in 2003), the Council has been working to revise the questionnaire with a view to it being distributed in May. We are keen to know the views and opinions of the parishioners, so please take a moment to complete the questionnaire when it arrives – thank you.

The Connections Youth Bus continues to visit on a Tuesday and is well received by the youth of the village. The visits have included activities such as sand art, balloon modelling and badge and jewellery making. Discussion topics have included exams and unemployment, parents and families, violence, knives and guns, and college work.

The annual Christmas Lights event took place in December and again was well supported, with around 200 people turning out on a cold evening. The Salvation Army band then played at Nursery Way and enjoyed a cup of coffee in the community room.

The Parish Council continues to support a number of village groups and activities through the S137 grants – St Mary's Church, Scouts, Crusaders Football, The Twinning Association and The Summer Reading Challenge. For a number of years the Council has supported the Mobile Warden Scheme which has operated very successfully in the village. It was therefore with great

disappointment that we learned that the scheme had ceased to operate. This was clearly a difficult decision for the trustees after operating successfully for 15 years, but the number of clients had fallen in recent months to a level that grant applications could not be justified.

It was particularly pleasing to read of the special award for Contact Magazine – well done. Contact Magazine was supported by the Parish Council (through the S137 grants) in its early days but it is great to see the magazine thriving and going from strength to strength – in fact it is now in a position to give donations to other organisations.

As always I am indebted to my fellow councillors, Gail Stoehr, the Clerk, and parishioners who serve on committees and working groups – the Tree Group, Transport Working Group, Recreation Group, Focus and Planning Committee, and you will be able to read of their many and varied activities in this report.

Members' reports

Footpaths – Parish Path Partnership (P3)

Comberton has been a member of The Parish Paths Partnership for ten years. Our aim continues to be that we will work with the County Council to ensure that the footpaths are well maintained and accessible to all. All public rights of way (PROW) have numbers and different definitions – Footpath, Bridleway and Byway. Essential work on the footpath between Swaynes Lane and Barton Road (Footpath 5) has been delayed several times due to planning applications and appeals by an adjacent landowner. It is hoped that this work can be completed on this ancient right of way in the centre of the Conservation Area and protected village amenity. In line with our policy of access for all, we intend to replace the difficult gates with 'mobility' gates. Annual maintenance of The Causeway (Footpath 8), an ancient cobbled causeway that leads to the Church, has taken place. We have surveyed all the

rights of way within the Parish and are working with local landowners to improve access for all and the creation of new linking footpaths.

Tree Group

As a group we have considered a number of applications for tree removal and work. We have overseen one replacement tree in Green End and one additional one too. Our Tree Warden has completed his survey of the village trees so we now are aware of the condition and position of each tree which makes it much easier to monitor them.

We hope to have the display board up in Watts Wood very soon. It will be an excellent additional asset to the area.

Transport Working Group

The Group welcomed Simon Moffat as a new member, the other members being Tom Serby, Robert Rintoul and Amanda Bacon.

Confirmation was received from Cambridgeshire County Council that no speed reduction will be considered on Barton Road in the Horizon Park area until 2012 at the latest.

The Group approved questions for inclusion in the Parish Questionnaire, seeking to gauge the level of support in the village for extra cycle lanes in the village, particularly for the routes taken by local children to the village schools and for the reduction of speed limits in the village.

The Group recommended to the Parish Council that a speed limit of 20 mph be approved through the village. However, this is in the power of the County Council.

Engagement was made with Comberton Village College and Meridian School about safer routes to school, particularly cycling,

Recreation Ground Group

At the beginning of the year it was agreed that the two sections of the recreation group would be combined to handle all recreation ground and pavilion matters. Richard Rowlands and Julie Horne left the group and Tom Serby joined. Although Charles Chambers left the council early this year, he remains as a co-opted member to assist with funding applications. It was also agreed that members should be recruited from outside the Parish Council and Tracy Pemberton was co-opted. Tim Saunders has also attended meetings. Meetings have also taken place with members of the Cricket Club, the Men's Football Club and the Colts.

It was recognised that a single point of co-ordination would be beneficial to the running of the recreation ground and Roger Abraham kindly agreed to fulfil this role, initially on a voluntary basis. He is endeavouring to co-ordinate bookings and attend to day-to-day matters of maintenance, etc.

A number of meetings have taken place to try to formulate policy relating to the development of the recreation ground extension with differing views on the best way forward. It has been agreed that the views of the parishioners will be sought before making any decisions on this matter. The Recreation Group has put considerable effort into preparing suitable questions for inclusion in the forthcoming Parish Questionnaire to help guide them in future decisions.

Concern for the system of charging for use of the sporting facilities has been expressed by the Clubs and by members of the Council. These have been the subject of discussion and proposals have been made by the Recreation Group for change. The Council is concerned that the community shall benefit from the facilities in a fair way so that some users do not benefit at the expense of others.

This is being taken into account in deciding upon a new charging structure.

The costs of running the facilities, including the Pavilion, have been examined. These seem to have identified areas where efficiency improvements may be made. These are being looked into.

Some of the children's play facilities have recently been renovated. It is hoped that the results of the survey of village opinion will facilitate definite policies for the future management of these valuable village amenities.

Planning Committee

This year has seen the departure of Dr Charles Chambers from the Parish Council's Planning Committee and we now have our new member, Amanda Bacon.

We have dealt with two to three applications per month, making strong representations in controversial cases such as proposals at 64 Barton Road and the second application at 36 Barton Road. In both of these cases the Parish Council's views have been upheld. We have also lobbied to have more parking provided for the Village College Sixth Form with some limited success. This is an ongoing concern.

Considerable effort has been given to influencing the South Cambridgeshire District Council Planning Department to reform its procedures, which appeared obscure and had resulted in some controversial decisions seriously at odds with the Parish Council's views. The District Council was lobbied, with letters sent to individual members of the Planning Committee and by speaking at a number of its meetings. The assistance and support of other parish councils was secured with the able help of our Parish Clerk. The outcome has been the abolition of the District Council's "Chairman's Delegation Procedure" and proper representation for the parish councils in the decision process. So far decisions under the new system appear to have been more as the Parish Council would hope for and expect. We will endeavour to ensure that this continues to be the case.

Affordable Housing Working Group

During the year the Working Group met with South Cambridgeshire District Council to review the need for affordable housing in Comberton and also potential sites. SCDC's Housing Register on 5 June 2009 showed 65 applicants with a local connection to Comberton. (A local connection is defined as having lived in the village for five years, working there or having a family member resident).

It was recognised that potential sites within the village are limited; apart from the site off The Valley that has planning permission, the other site identified was that opposite the Village College. Although this is in Toft Parish, Toft Parish Council has expressed a willingness to work together to explore options.

Land off the Valley:

Northern Affordable Homes obtained planning permission for 11 homes in 2008 but then went into receivership. Throughout the year Cambridge Housing Society has been negotiating to take over and develop the site. Its agent, Paul Harney, has attended several meetings with Parish Council and SCDC representatives to discuss its plans to take over the site and change the development to a normal affordable housing project with predominantly social rented housing based on 4 x 3-bedroom and 7 x 2-bedroom homes. Energy efficiency is being improved and garden and parking layout revised. However there are ongoing financial constraints delaying the project which SCDC are attempting to address with bids to the HCA (Homes and Communities Agency).

Bennell Farm proposal:

In March the Parish Council was asked for its comments on the possibility of a development on land opposite the Village College to comprise a car park for CVC, Affordable Housing and Public Open Space subsidised by market housing. At the time of writing a meeting is being arranged to discuss this proposal.

Who and what is the Parish Council?

The Parish Council comprises 13 voluntary councillors who serve for a term of 4 years and represent an electorate of 1763.

The Council meets on the second Wednesday of each month except August with additional Planning Committee meetings being held as necessary. The agenda is displayed on notice board in South Street.

All meetings of the Parish Council are open to the public and at the beginning of the meeting there is a short period on the agenda when residents may speak with the Council. During the rest of the meeting however members of the public may listen to but not take part in the discussion of the Council's business. Meetings take place in the Village Hall on the second Wednesday of each month (except August) usually starting at 7.30 pm and finishing by approximately 9.30 pm. Planning Committee meetings are advertised on the parish notice board.

Anyone wishing to raise a matter for consideration by the Council should write to the Clerk. Any letter received by the day before a Parish Council meeting will be reported to that meeting. If information is readily available the Council may decide its action right away. If not then the item will be dealt with at the next meeting. Members will be available in the Village Hall for a short period before the start of the meetings to talk to residents about any Comberton Parish Council related matters.

The Parish Council has representatives on other bodies outside the Parish Council and Councillors attend meetings on the Council's behalf.

Each member of the Council either serves on a committee or working group or has an area of responsibility. Many members have multiple responsibilities

Following a resignation there is a vacancy on the Parish Council. If you are interested in joining the Council please contact the Clerk.

Budget for the financial years ending 2010 & 2011

| Expenditure | Budget 2010 | Actual Mar-10 | Budget 2011 |
|--------------------------------------------------------|----------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Agency Services (Parish Paths & CCC Verges) | 500 | 556.2 | 560.00 |
| General Admin | 12900 | 12425.69 | 13575.00 |
| Salaries | 1950 | 2138.76 | 2444.00 |
| S137 Grants/Donations | 4710 | | 2000.00 |
| St Mary's Churchyard Maintenance | | 750 | |
| Comberton Warden Scheme | | 1500 | |
| Comberton Reading Challenge | | 30 | |
| 1st Comberton Scouts | | 300 | |
| Comberton Crusaders | | 127.25 | |
| Village Institute | | 1500 | |
| Village & Assets Maint. | 14500 | 13707.81 | 14483.33 |
| Special Projects | | | |
| Additional Litter Bins/Benches | | | 200.00 |
| Village Events (Christmas lights) | | 272.18 | 100.00 |
| Parish Plan Proposals | 3500 | | 596.69 |
| VH Loan Repayment | 13500 | 13500 | 13500.00 |
| Rec. Extension Loan Repayment | 3366 | 3365.4 | 3366.00 |
| Rec. Ground Phase II | | | 10000.00 |
| Youth Projects | 5000 | 2850.65 | 5000.00 |
| Rec. Ground Survey | 1000 | | |
| Village Hall Loan (Air Con.) | 4500 | 4500 | |
| Footway Lighting | 350 | | 500.00 |
| Contingency Fund | 3350 | | 3000.00 |
| TOTAL EXPENDITURE | 69126 | 57523.94 | 69325.02 |

| Income | Budget 2010 | Actual Mar-10 | Approved Budget |
|---------------------------------------------|----------------|------------------|--------------------|
| Precept | 57826 | 57826 | 56987.88 |
| Interest | 2000 | 451.62 | 2000.00 |
| Other Income | | 378.78 | 5000.00 |
| Agency Services (Parish Paths & CCC Verges) | 1100 | 1224.96 | 1225.00 |
| Special Projects & Grants | 500 | | |
| Lands, Rec Ground & Pavilion Income | 3200 | 2160.98 | 3200.00 |
| Reserves Funding | 4500 | | 912.14 |
| Misc | | 1010.5 | |
| TOTAL INCOME | 69126 | 63052.84 | 69325.02 |

Summary income and expenditure accounts

| 2008/2009 | | | 2009/2010 | |
|-------------------------|-----------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------|
| | | Assets | | |
| 100328.83 | | Nat Savings D&M Account | 100780.45 | |
| 20381.91 | | Alliance & Leicester | 28547.43 | |
| <u>0.00</u> | 119893.26 | Cash in hand | <u>0.00</u> | 129327.88 |
| | -817.48 | Outstanding at bank | | -1010.51 |
| | | Debtors | | |
| 2265.75 | | | 8117.47 | |
| <u>0.00</u> | | Payments in advance | <u>0.00</u> | |
| | 2265.75 | | | 8117.47 |
| | 442.75 | VAT recoverable | | 1252.92 |
| 122601.76 | | Total Assets | 137687.76 | |
| -3678.16 | | Liabilities | | -5536.01 |
| 118923.60 | | Total Assets less Liabilities | 132151.75 | |
| 0.00 | | Long term liabilities | | 0.00 |
| 0.00 | | Provision for doubtful debts | | 0.00 |
| <u>118923.60</u> | | Net Assets | <u>132151.75</u> | |

Contact Details

Parish Councillors

| | | |
|----------------------|----------------------------|--------|
| Mrs Amanda Bacon | 92B Swaynes Lane | 264711 |
| Mr John Cornell | 16 Barrons Way | 263566 |
| Mr Ted Halford | 69 Swaynes Lane | 262531 |
| Mr Andrew Hollick | 73 Swaynes Lane | 263089 |
| Mrs Sandra Hyde | 57 Long Road | 262075 |
| Dr Janet McCabe | 3 Westcroft | 263387 |
| Mr Simon Moffat | 86 Swaynes Lane | |
| Mrs Dorothy Morison | 5 The Valley | 263027 |
| Mr Richard Rowlands | 43 West Street | 264508 |
| Mr Tom Serby | Home Farm, 250 Barton Road | 262303 |
| Mr Jock Walsh | 38 Fox's Way | 263225 |
| Miss Chris Westgarth | 85 Barton Road | 263242 |

Email: initial followed by surname @comberton.org.uk, eg
cwestgarth@comberton.org.uk.

Parish Clerk

Mrs Gail Stoehr PO Box 857, Comberton, Cambs, CB23 7DP
Tel: 01954 210241 (home) or 01223 264553 (answerphone)
Email: parishclerk@comberton.org.uk
Website: www.comberton.org.uk