

OTTERHAMPTON PARISH ASSEMBLY AND ANNUAL PARISH COUNCIL ANNUAL MEETING

Chair's Report May 2016

This is a summary of the council's activities over the last 12 months – it is brief because full details of our activities are published on the Combwich website www.combwich.org.uk in the form of minutes and other documents including financial reports. There are also detailed reports in the by-monthly Otter Tales.

One year ago, five of the seven parish councillors resigned and were replaced by a new team, all of whom have fitted in well and are playing a significant role in the work of the council. The fact that we are an almost new council does not mean the work of the council has slowed, each year brings its own challenges and this year has been no exception. I am grateful for the support of all my colleagues on the council and the exceptional work of our clerk Aly Prowse. I would also like to thank County Councillor John Edney and District Councillors Mike Caswell and July Pay for their support throughout the year.

Thanks also to our gardener Keith Preston for keeping the village tidy.

We are fortunate to live in a lovely area with a vibrant community with many active organisation, Amongst those organisation the council has an important role to play. We are the lowest tier of local government and as such are the closest to the people we represent, and we try hard to deliver what we can with the limited resources we have.

A year ago we thought that Hinkley Point C development was imminent and with it the £500,000 allocated to the parish, unfortunately there is still a lot of uncertainty about that. However together with the Otterhampton Parish Project Team (OPPT) we decided to go ahead with a project to renew the children's play area and a great deal of time and effort has gone into making that a reality.

The funding has been secured from a variety of sources including Viridor Credits, CIM Fund, Sedgemoor District Council, OPRA, local children and of course this parish council. In a couple of weeks' time the building work should begin and before the end of June the work will be complete. Our thanks should go to all those who contributed to this project which from conception to completion will have taken less than 12 months.

Another important development is the forthcoming launch on 1st June of 'Otter Wheels' a volunteer car scheme which will provide a service for people who are unable to use, or have difficulty with access to public transport by reason of their age, physical or mental disability, ill health, isolation or other factors. The aim is to help local people within the parish of Otterhampton and Stockland Bristol with journeys which they might otherwise be unable to make.

In July last year Otter Tales was launched by bringing together the newsletters of the parish council and OPRA. Otter Tales has gone from 4 to 8 pages and is kindly produced by EDF Hinkley B without cost to the parish. Thanks to all those who made this possible.

The Combwich Buoy has at last been returned to the village although it still needs painting and the steel frame replacing.

We have successfully curtailed parking on the track but that has had the effect of increasing parking on Riverside. Two disabled spaces have been provided, but probably one is enough. We have made some effort to help those in the parish with limited mobility and who are in possession of a 'Blue Badge' to park on the track – 2 permits have been issued.

The shipping container which was dumped on area adjacent to the Pill by the Boat Club created much concern and it took a very determine effort by the council to have it removed. The club will have to demonstrate a real 'safety' need if they wish to replace it with any other structure in what is an important amenity area.

Two new benches have been installed at no cost to the parish, one on the Pill in memory of Colin Borseley and one on the track celebrating Sedgemoor Rambler's 40th Anniversary.

We have been concerned with the inadequacy of the bus service and particularly the fact that passengers were being dropped off on the other side of the C182. A number of meetings, many emails and phone calls later we are in sight of resolving this latter problem.

Though much has been achieved, there is much that remains to be done. We need street lights at the C182 junction with Comwich which may be possible when we have access to the money allocated to the village when HPC is given the go ahead.

The owners of dogs who allow them to defecate without picking up after them are not only a nuisance, but also present a health hazard. Let us hope that the new bins and the provision of bags will encourage people to be more responsible. It only takes a few irresponsible residents to make life unpleasant for the rest of us.

Barry Leathwood

3rd May 2016