

Minutes of the Meeting of Belbroughton Parish Council held in the meeting room Belbroughton on Monday 7th March 2011

Present : Cllrs T Jones (Chair), T Cherry, K Green (items 075 and 076), L Hardcastle, A Ince, J Kitson, P Shotton, C Scurrall, and J Westley

In attendance: Mrs C Limm, Clerk. County Cllr E Moore and 9 residents also attended.

069/11 The Chairman welcomed Kevin Nind to the Council as a councillor for Fairfield ward.

070/11 Apologies : Apologies were received and accepted from Cllrs Bradley, Deeley, Hadley and Wright.

071/11 Declarations of interest : Cllr Nind declared a prejudicial interest in relation to decisions concerning Fairfield Villa Football Club since he was vice chairman of the Club.

072/11 Police Matters

PC Lord did not attend on this occasion.

073/11 Minutes of the meeting on 7th February 2011

The Minutes of the previous meeting were approved and the minute book was signed by the Chairman.

074/11 Reports

Chairman's remarks

The Chairman mentioned the importance of the May Council elections and encouraged Councillors and members of the public to consider standing. The Clerk outlined arrangements for nominations and the dates for briefing sessions for candidates being held by the District Council.

Planning meetings on 21st February

The Minutes of the planning meeting had been circulated and were noted by the Council. Cllr Ince gave a brief summary of the main points.

Clerk's report

Splitting the Council

Preliminary discussions with the District Council had indicated that an early meeting with their officers would be crucial. Regulations specified how financial balances should be divided if there is more than one Council after a governance review. The division is in proportion to total population of the area. Estimates obtained from WCC suggested that the population split between Belbroughton and Fairfield is currently 64:36.

The position in relation to land was complicated and the implications for the Council's allotments were not entirely clear.

The Clerk said that if the new Council agreed that a split should be pursued, it would be advisable to obtain legal advice and representation from the start. In presenting the proposals to others, for example at the Annual Parish Meeting it would be important to make clear that this is a complex process and that, whilst the Council has set out how it would like the split to be handled, nothing is cut and dried.

Hartle Lane housing development

The developer wished to discuss the details of a landscaping scheme for the village green as soon as possible. Cllrs Cherry and Hardcastle agreed to meet them

Community Payback scheme

The scheme was offering a free day's work. The footpath wardens (Lynne and Paul Hardcastle) were meeting the probation officer and Countryside service representative on Tuesday 15th March to discuss the work proposed (on the footpath between Chapel Lane and the A491).

Meetings held and arranged

Cllr Jones and the Clerk met the village tidier. His new hours had been agreed

An Allotments Walk would be held on Tuesday 15th March.

Cllrs Kitson, Jones and the Clerk were meeting the WCC lighting engineer on 17th March.

WCC Parish Conference

The next Parish Councils conference would take place on 12th April at County Hall. All Councillors and prospective councillors were welcome. WCC would shortly be sending a new draft agreement setting out the way we will work together – to be circulated by end April. This would be for consideration by the new Council.

075/11 Finance

Cllr Green reported on the Finance meeting held on 21st February. The Committee had recommended that the Parish Council should agree to a request from the County Council to move a small length of hedge at Fairfield Rec. on the access road next to the school, with the proviso that the County should replace the hedge if it died after the work was done. County had agreed to this and the Council therefore endorsed the recommendation.

Cllr Green proposed that Cllr Nind should be appointed to serve on the Finance Committee. This was agreed.

076/11 Parish Council meeting room

The Chairman reminded the Council that at its last meeting it had agreed that it did not want to spend £24,000 plus on improving the room. It had agreed to defer other decisions until further advice had been received. A disability access survey had now been undertaken by service users (the report had been circulated) and a meeting had been held with a member of the District Council's building control team about possible alterations to the room. The access report confirmed the changes required to make the room accessible for disabled people. The building control officer had suggested that it would be possible to install a partition wall across the rear of the room to create a small rear lobby and to access the toilet from this. The potential cost was around £10,000.

Cllr Green registered her view that the Parish Council consulted residents about the future of the room on the basis of inadequate information. The potential costs quoted for improvements could have impacted on residents' responses. Councillors who had considered that the improvements could be done at less cost had been ignored. Cllr Ince registered her agreement with this view. Cllr Scurrall pointed out that, although the view had been expressed that the work could be done more cheaply, there had been no specific proposals put forward for how this could be done.

Cllr Kitson suggested that if work was going to be done on the meeting room it should be done thoroughly, including improvements to heating and insulation. The proposal to develop a room at the Recreation Ground should also be explored so that the two options could be properly compared.

The Council agreed that:

1. Estimates should be obtained for improvements to the room to make it fully compliant with Disability Discrimination legislation as suggested in the disability access report and by the building control officer.
2. Use of alternative venues, including the proposed room at the Rec. Centre, Belbroughton, should be explored further.
3. A portable ramp should be purchased for the front entrance.

Cllr Scurrall registered his dissent from the decision to purchase a portable ramp because this would not make the room compliant with disability access requirements.

077/11 Bus services review

The County Council's proposals included the withdrawal of subsidy from the two services to the parish- the 318 and the 197. Councillors considered that the 318 was an important service, particularly for elderly residents and young people attending college. The 197 was considered of less value. Cllr Westley made the point that this was an opportunity for the County to review the journeys people need to make, including links with rail services. It was agreed that the Council's response should acknowledge the County had to make cuts in spending and that service use was a relevant factor, but argue that the 318 was crucial for certain groups of people and should continue to be supported to enable a service for key journeys to continue.

078/11 BDC Draft Core Strategy

The Council noted the District Council's consultation documents. The Clerk was asked to respond to indicate that the Parish Council supports the approach set out in the Strategy to the preservation of the Green Belt and to affordable housing in rural areas.

079/11 Roads and traffic

The Clerk reported that the County Council had confirmed its proposals regarding speed limits on the A491. Existing limits would remain for the stretches from the Stoneybridge roundabout broadly to the Bell Inn crossroads- further on towards Stourbridge the national speed limit would apply.

A response had been received from the Safer Roads Partnership about various speeding issues in Belbroughton. There was a new proposal to install a Vehicle Activated Sign (VAS) in Hackman's Gate Lane. Susan Jones asked why this new VAS could be installed when a new VAS in Hartle Lane had been refused. The Clerk outlined the advice received from County Highways about Hartle Lane – the County had consistently said that a VAS at the village entrance did not meet their criteria. The County had previously offered to move one of the existing signs in Hartle to the village entrance and to change the sign to indicate a left hand bend. This would be at the Parish Council's expense. Residents present registered their strong feeling that the Parish Council should fund this. Cllr Moore undertook to find out if the County was still prepared to move the sign on this basis and what this would cost.

080/11 Annual Parish Meeting

The suggested agenda for the APM on 11th April was agreed. Arrangements would be the same as in previous years.

081/11 Maintenance items

The Council considered the quotes obtained by the Clerk for tree work at Sylvesters Corner and agreed to give the contract to Reeves Tree Surgery.

The Council agreed to award the contract for resurfacing work at Fairfield Recreation Ground car park to John Cottrill Engineering Ltd. The Clerk was asked to thank Richard Clewer, County Highways, for his help with obtaining the quotes and clarifying the specification.

082/11 Correspondence received

Correspondence received since the last meeting was noted.

083/11 Councillors Items

Re the path from the Recreation Ground to the school in Belbroughton – it was suggested that the path should be resurfaced. The gate near the school also needed some attention. The Clerk would report these items to the County Council. Rails alongside the steps at the doctors surgery on the Glebe needed some attention- these were the responsibility of the housing trust.

084/11 Fairfield Villa lease

The Council resolved to exclude the public and the press for this item because of the confidential nature of the business to be discussed.

The Council considered a request from the football club for the new lease to include a right to renew at the end of the term. The Council considered that this would be a substantial change which, if agreed, would impact on other items which had already been agreed, including the rent. The Council therefore declined this request and confirmed that the terms on offer were an 11 year lease without a right to renew.

The meeting closed at 9.50 pm. Signed.....Chairman