

## **Minutes of the Meeting of Belbroughton Parish Council held in the meeting room Belbroughton on Monday 5<sup>th</sup> December 2011**

**Present :** Cllrs K Green (Chair), J Bradley, N Hartill, L Harvey, C Hine, A Hood, A Ince, T Jones, J Kitson, S MacDonald, C Scurrall, and P Shotton.

In attendance: Mrs C Limm, Clerk. County Cllr Ed Moore, District Cllr Janice Boswell, and one resident also attended.

**364/11 Apologies:** Apologies were received and accepted from Cllrs Roberts and Wright.

**365/11 Declarations of interest** – None.

### **366/11 Minutes of the meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2011**

The Minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.

### **367/11 Reports**

#### ***Chairman's report***

Cllr Green said that she was aware that the agenda for the previous Council meeting had been a heavy one and that some items had been dealt with briskly. She suggested that the Council should discuss in the New Year whether it would ease the time pressure on Council meetings if the planning meeting which normally took place after main Council meetings was rescheduled.

#### ***Planning***

The Minutes of the meetings on 7<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> November were noted.

#### ***Finance***

The Minutes of the meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> November were noted.

#### ***Clerk's report***

The new multi-goal was being installed at Fairfield Recreation Ground later in the week- the school, football club, and near neighbours had been informed; the new bus shelter in Hartle Lane was due to be installed before Christmas; a tree inspection had been carried out on trees on Council land- the report was awaited. Fairfield Villa football club had now signed all the necessary documents relating to the new lease on the Recreation Ground.

### **368/11 Street lights**

Cllr Kitson outlined the working group's recommendations relating to the Council's street lighting policy and future maintenance work:

1. the policy of having a maintenance programme to replace a significant number of lights over a number of years should be abandoned in favour of a policy of leaving lights in place until they needed attention; this would require an active inspection programme

2. lights already identified for attention by the working group, including lights on wooden poles for which the Parish Council was responsible, should be replaced using the funds already set aside for this work; the Clerk should ask the County Council whether the electricity board would be replacing the wooden poles for which they were responsible.
3. the working group should meet again consider the position of the additional lights identified by Cllr MacDonald and to make recommendations to the Finance Committee as appropriate
4. the working group should also consider whether any additional lighting improvements should be made, including possibly reducing the times that lights are illuminated.
5. a fixed amount should be included in the budget each year for lighting repairs and replacements as they arose, but a large sum should not be carried forward for this. Any major costs falling in a particular year could be funded from the reserves and recouped over a number of years from the precept.

The Council agreed these recommendations with the caveat that, if a number of street lights failed at the same time, the funding of repairs and whether capital reserves should be replenished from the precept, should be considered as and when the need arose. The Finance Committee was given delegated responsibility to agree further spending on street lights within the overall policy agreed by the Council.

### **369/11 Council Budget for 2012/13**

The Finance Committee had recommended a draft budget which would maintain the precept at £55,000 - the same level as in 10/11 and 11/12. Increased expenditure had been provided for only if additional costs were anticipated, for example legal costs connected with the potential Council split, but there was no general provision for inflation. In order to balance the budget the Committee had recommended that the Council should no longer provide for village tidying, especially since litter picking was a service which the District Council had a statutory duty to provide. The Parish Council provided a top-up to this service which could not be justified in current circumstances.

In relation to 'Other' income and spending, the Committee had suggested that income from the Council's investments should be reinvested to maintain the value of the capital fund. This would reduce the income available for projects to £4,000. Provision for grants to parish bodies would be £5,000 - the same amount as in the current year.

The Council agreed the budget proposed by the Finance Committee and that the precept for 2012/13 should be £55,000.

### **370/11 Communications**

Cllr Green said that a key objective for the Council was to communicate effectively with residents – this was a two way process of giving good information to residents and getting effective feedback. Some draft guidelines about communication by Councillors had been circulated and the Council's views were sought on whether these would be helpful as a voluntary code for Councillors to follow.

It was agreed that guidelines would be helpful. The guidelines were discussed and the Clerk was asked to make some amendments to the draft for endorsement at the next meeting. It was agreed that the Council should give further consideration to how best to canvass residents' views on particular issues. However, it was agreed that it was desirable for systematic information to be disseminated and collected by the Council as a whole rather than by individual councillors, although Councillors had an important role in communicating with individual residents. The guidelines should try to clarify respective roles relating to information gathering and feedback.

The draft of the Council's next newsletter was discussed and some amendments suggested. It was agreed that the newsletter should highlight the fact that residents were encouraged to come to Council meetings to give their views.

**371/11 Hartle Lane housing development, Belbroughton** – planning ref 11/0936

The Council had no objections to the revised application to demolish Units 1-3 as approved in scheme 11/0345 and re-build in them in the same form and footprint.

**372/11 Councillors items**

Cllr MacDonald said that the police (PC Lord) had provided very helpful follow up to the vandalism at the telephone box library in Belbroughton that had occurred at Hallowe'en. A letter of apology from the culprits was anticipated.

Cllr Bradley said that he had contacted Belbroughton Horticultural Society about planting at the village entrance and hoped to have firm proposals shortly.

Cllr Kitson suggested that one of the dog bins at Belbroughton Rec. should be moved to the path leading to the school – by the entrance from the Glebe.

**373/11 Parish Council New Year dinner**

It was agreed that the Council's New Year dinner should be held at the Swan in Fairfield on Monday 16<sup>th</sup> January. District and County Councillors to be invited on the same basis as in previous years.

**374/11 Village tidying**

*The Council resolved to exclude the public and the press from this item by virtue of the confidential nature of the business to be discussed.*

In the light of the decision not to make provision for village tidying in the 2012/13 budget, the Council agreed that it could not continue to employ the tidier in that capacity from April 2012. The Clerk was asked to explore the implications and provide further advice to the Council.

The meeting closed at 9.20 pm.

Signed.....Chairman

