

## **BELBROUGHTON PARISH COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT 2010-11**

### **Chairman's overview of achievements**

This report covers the activities of the Council to March 2011. The election in May 2011 led to the formation of a new Council, which will report on its activities next year.

Our activities centred on two big (for the Parish Council) but rather inward-looking issues, but we have also carried out many day to day activities which benefit residents.

Firstly, we took a decision in principle as a Council that it would be desirable to split ourselves in two – Belbroughton and Fairfield. The main reason is “sense of community”, which is important for a very local council. To us, and we believe to many residents, we seem to be two separate villages with different communities, although there are common interests. Our reasoning was set out in more detail in our last Newsletter. A split requires quite a complicated process, including a “petition” by at least 250 residents and a “Governance Review” by Bromsgrove District Council. It will be for the new Council to pursue this, including ensuring that the practicalities can be made to work, and there will need to be significant public consultation. So watch this space.

Secondly, we discussed improving the Parish Room, especially to meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act. This proved much more complicated than expected. Last autumn we consulted all households on the options, which then included improvements costing around £25-30,000 to provide a good building for the Council and other users. 64 responses were received with a narrow majority (55%) in favour of the room's retention and improvement.

The Council subsequently decided that £25-30 k was too much to spend on improvements and possible cheaper options have been identified as well as alternative venues. But our future needs could be substantially changed by any decision to split the Council. We therefore concluded that we had to leave decisions to the new Council.

Our other activities included:

- improvements to green spaces, including new trees at Sylvesters Corner, Queens Hill, Belbroughton and planting in the

Millennium garden in Fairfield Recreation Ground

- resurfacing work to the car park at Fairfield Rec.
- our comments, and those of many others, have limited cuts to bus services, but the County's proposals have led us to hold up a bus shelter that would have been installed near Woodgate Way
- numerous meetings about speeding and other highways issues. The County is now planning reductions to speed limits on the B4188 both sides of Belbroughton
- the first stage of a programme to improve footway lighting by replacing around 30 of our 78 lamps over the next few years- but we also want to review whether lamps are in the right places as we do this
- continuing discussions about a new footpath along Hackman's Gate Lane to improve safety for pedestrians- but progress is frustratingly slow
- significant changes to the way we invest our reserves, in the current difficult climate for savings.

We said farewell to Pam and Pete Bridge as Footpath Wardens at the end of 2010. They have done an exceptional job in maintaining our many local footpaths. Lynne and Paul Hardcastle have kindly taken over from them and their report is included below.

I would like to thank all our outgoing Parish Councillors – Linda Deeley, Ian Hadley, Lynne Hardcastle, and especially Tim Cherry and John Westley who had both put in many years valuable service for our parish. I also welcome new members to the new Council which is now chaired by Karen Green.

**James Bradley**  
**Chairman 2010-11**

### **Finance**

The Council's total income for 2010-11 was just over £71,500. Of this, £55,000 came from the parish precept with the other major elements coming from rents from the Council's allotments and Fairfield Villa Football club (£7,900), interest on the Council's investments (£5,500), and £2,600

from the County Council for the lengthsman scheme. The Parish Council also received some other smaller items of income, including rent for use of the meeting room in Hartle Lane.

Investment income was lower than in previous years because of the economic situation. This led the Council to undertake a review of its approach to investments with the aim of improving our return relative to inflation thus preserving the capital value of the fund. This included taking professional investment advice and investing about 50% of our cash fund in two stock market products which we hope will increase our financial return whilst minimising any investment risk. The income over inflation is used to fund grants and parish projects.

Spending in 10/11 on 'Ordinary' items amounted to just over £57,000. The table below indicates the main areas of spending.

<b>Ordinary spending</b>	<b>2010-2011</b>
	<b>£</b>
<b>Administration, including running the meeting room, Clerk's salary and expenses, insurance, and audit costs</b>	<b>22,800</b>
<b>Communication, including newsletters</b>	<b>1,600</b>
<b>Councillors' expenses</b>	<b>150</b>
<b>General maintenance</b>	<b>720</b>
<b>Maintenance grants to parish bodies</b>	<b>4,400</b>
<b>Open spaces, including lengthsman, grass cutting, village tidying, emptying dog bins and improvements</b>	<b>15,100</b>
<b>Lighting</b>	<b>8,300</b>
<b>Contingency items (inc. new fence + resurfacing work at Fairfield Rec. &amp; new bench in Belbroughton )</b>	<b>3,900</b>
<b>Other misc. items</b>	<b>190</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>57,160</b>

Spending on street lighting is relatively high because of the Council's current improvement programme mentioned above.

Maintenance grants given to parish bodies were as follows: £600 each to Belbroughton Recreation Centre, Belbroughton Church Hall and Fairfield Village Hall for hall maintenance; £800 to Belbroughton Recreation Centre for external maintenance; and £1,800 to Belbroughton

Parochial Church Council for maintenance of the churchyards and of the Belbroughton Church clock.

The Council's 'Other' income amounted to around £13,500. Only one parish project was completed during the year - the installation of new gates on Fairfield footpaths costing £600. Money has also been earmarked for a new piece of play equipment for older children at Fairfield Recreation ground and for a new bus shelter in Hartle Lane, Belbroughton subject to the final outcome of the County bus service review.

Just under £5,000 was offered in capital grants to parish bodies or organisations offering a service to residents of the parish. Grants are generally offered for up to 50% of the total cost of the item or project. For 2010-11 these were:

- Belbroughton Recreation Ground - £750 (replacement septic tank)
- Belbroughton Church Hall - £1,600 (work on exterior beams and window frames)
- Belbroughton United Charities - £120 (strimming Jubilee Orchard)
- Belbroughton Cricket Club - £1,200 (refurbishing cricket roller)
- Fairfield Village Hall - £793 (new fascias and guttering)
- Belbroughton History Society - £150 (research re Fairfield War Memorial –the report is being made available on the [belbroughton.com](http://belbroughton.com) website or a hard copy may be borrowed by contacting Cllr Chris Scurrall)
- Bromsgrove Citizens Advice Bureau - £200

Overall, taking account of outstanding commitments, the Council had a surplus of income over expenditure for 2010/11 of about £4,500.

The Council's precept for 2011/12 has been held at the same level as in the previous year at £55,000.

## **Planning**

The Planning Committee meets twice a month to consider planning applications for the parish. The Committee considered 68 applications in 10/11.

Most applications are for fairly minor developments like extensions, new windows, or garages, and changes affecting listed buildings. The most significant development considered during the year

was to convert the jewellery factory in Hartle Lane to housing. The Council did not object to this change of use for the site, but has wanted to ensure that the houses built are in keeping with the village and if possible improve the village green. The Council has been consulted by the developers both about the design of the development facing the green and about improvements to the village green itself, for example new planting.

At the time of writing this report a revised scheme for 12 houses with frontages onto the village green is under consideration by the District Council. The Parish Council has commented that this would result in a very dense development and that it would like to see just 10 dwellings with adequate parking for residents and visitors. The Council has also suggested restrictions on construction traffic movements at peak times whilst work is being done.

The Council has also been consulted informally by the developers about the possible change of use of the Nash works site from commercial to residential. If this proposal is pursued there will be further consultation with the Parish Council and with residents.

L

The Council also regularly receives consultation documents about planning and environmental matters from the District and County Councils, and others. These documents cover a much wider area but the Council tries to identify the local impact of proposals and to make representations on behalf of the parish. In 2010/11 the Council commented on the District's draft core strategy and the County Council's strategy for managing waste.

### **Belbroughton Parish Footpaths**

Lynne and Paul Hardcastle have provided the following report.

During the winter we had a relatively intensive induction period including walking all the parish paths (33.9 miles), attending various Worcestershire County Council (WCC) courses and joining working groups with other Parish Path Wardens (PPWs).

During the past year, in addition to the general maintenance activities there have been a number of new installations on the footpaths. 4 new gates were provided by WCC and installed by the Parish

Council on local paths around Fairfield. New ditch crossings and waymarker posts were installed in Nutnells Wood and Belbroughton.

The Council was asked by WCC to undertake a prioritisation exercise on all the footpaths and bridleways which was completed by the PPWs. This will determine the priority of any ongoing projects and maintenance which we may request from the County.

The PC agreed to a free trial day offered by the Probation Service under the Community Payback Scheme during which offenders worked under supervision on a specific task. This involved the levelling of a dangerous section of path between Chapel Lane and the A491. WCC provided the materials and the work was completed in May.

In 2011-12 we plan to make proposals to the PC regarding further use of the Community Payback Scheme; investigate various methods of reducing contractor costs by using own strimming and work parties; continue with regular maintenance; and pursue the new footpath around Brookfield Farm in Belbroughton.

Lynne and Paul can be contacted about footpath matters on 01562 730511.

### **Council meetings**

Council meetings are generally held on the first Monday of each month – except in August when there is no meeting. Finance Committee meetings are held on the third Monday each month. Planning meetings are held twice a month on the same two evenings. A notice for each meeting along with the agenda is posted on the Parish Council notice boards in Belbroughton, Fairfield, and at Fiveways, Quantry Lane.

Residents are welcome at all meetings and have an opportunity to speak during the meeting about items on the agenda or to raise issues for future discussion. Residents can also contact any of the Parish Councillors whose contact details are given below if they would like to discuss parish matters.

Finally, although this is the Annual Report for the outgoing Council, we thought that it would be more helpful for residents to include a picture of the current Council so that you can see who your new Councillors are.



### Councillors contact details

#### Councillors

#### Belbroughton Ward

James Bradley 11 Drayton Rd, Belbroughton,  
DY9 0DX  
01562 731025  
[jmbradley10@btinternet.com](mailto:jmbradley10@btinternet.com)

Nick Hartill 33, Woodhouse Orchard, Belbroughton  
DY9 9TQ  
01562 731938  
[nickhartill@aol.com](mailto:nickhartill@aol.com)

Lyz Harvey 3 Woodhouse Orchard, Belbroughton  
DY9 9TQ  
01562 731922  
[lyz.harvey@btinternet.com](mailto:lyz.harvey@btinternet.com)

Allan Hood Fiveways, Quantry Lane, Belbroughton  
DY9 9UY  
01562 710755  
[a.t.hood@btinternet.com](mailto:a.t.hood@btinternet.com)

John Kitson 39 Holy Cross Lane, Belbroughton,  
DY9 9SH  
01562 730273  
[john@jkitson.me.uk](mailto:john@jkitson.me.uk)

Scott MacDonald 33 Nash Lane, Belbroughton  
DY9 9SW  
07872 607391  
[scott4belbroughton@gmail.com](mailto:scott4belbroughton@gmail.com)

Dave Roberts 43, Holy Cross Lane, Belbroughton  
DY9 9SH  
01562 730518  
[Davelindaroberts@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:Davelindaroberts@tiscali.co.uk)

Paul Shotton (Vice Chair) 19 Woodgate Way,  
Belbroughton, DY9 9TL  
01562 730846  
[paulrbshotton@btinternet.com](mailto:paulrbshotton@btinternet.com)

#### Councillors

#### Fairfield Ward

Karen Green (Chair) 99 Stourbridge Rd, Fairfield,  
B61 9LY  
01527 875967  
[krgrn5@aol.com](mailto:krgrn5@aol.com)

Carol Hine 28, Stourbridge Road, Fairfield  
B61 9LS  
01527 873072  
[carol.hine1@btinternet.com](mailto:carol.hine1@btinternet.com)

Ann Ince, Orchard Farm, Stourbridge Road,  
Fairfield, B61 9NQ  
01527 874715  
[richard.ince@btconnect.com](mailto:richard.ince@btconnect.com)

Trevor Jones 42 Mount Rd, Fairfield,  
B61 9LW  
01527 833774  
[tpajones@aol.com](mailto:tpajones@aol.com)

Chris Scurrall 16 Yew Tree Lane, Fairfield,  
B61 9LT  
01527 876485  
[c.scurrall@bromsgrove.gov.uk](mailto:c.scurrall@bromsgrove.gov.uk)

Sue Wright, Fairfield Court, Fairfield,  
B61 9NJ  
01527 872844

#### Clerk to the Council

Katie Limm, 5 Whitford Gardens, Bromsgrove B61  
7LE 01527 871411  
[k.limm@btinternet.com](mailto:k.limm@btinternet.com)