

BELBROUGHTON PARISH COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT 2013-14



Chairman Karen Green's overview of achievements and activities

It has been another very busy year for the Council - with the additional challenges in Belbroughton of the final repair of the wall in Queens Hill and the future of The Green. Your Council objected to and mobilised public interest in the proposed County Council cuts to bus subsidies. It has also kept a mindful eye on the Veolia site in Sandy Lane, sending a strong objection to the County Council to the planning application to operate an Incinerator Bottom Ash facility. Following on from this it has similarly objected to the permit application on the same site submitted to the Environment Agency by Ballast Phoenix Ltd.

Activities have included:

- 10 additional grit bins were installed across the parish in readiness for future cold spells.
- Maintaining parish green areas - including grass cutting, gardening and bulb planting.
- The parish lengthsmen has continued his excellent work on checking road drains and preventing flooding, cleaning and clearing road signs and siding out footways.
- The Meeting Room in Belbroughton has been rented on a three year lease to 'Crafterie' which brings more activity into the village as well as additional income for your Council to re-invest back into parish bodies.
- Assessing and issuing grant monies for maintenance and capital projects.
- Road name signs in Belbroughton have been repainted along with new name signs being supplied on Waystone Way.

- Providing and emptying dog waste bins..
- A 30 mph speed limit has been achieved for an extended area close to Belbroughton primary school and final consultation is in progress on reduced limits on Quantry Lane and Heath End Lane, Bell Heath.
- Referring residents issues on highways and to the District and County Councils for timely action.
- Tidying up the woodland and wildlife area at Badger's Copse, Third Rd, Wildmoor. Residents are welcome to visit the site access is adjacent to a footpath running alongside Badgers Cottage.
- Four place name signs were installed in Bell Heath.



- Meetings continued to be held in both Belbroughton and Fairfield during the year and the Council has been happy to welcome residents in both venues

Major issues

Two major challenges have also been dealt with:

The collapsed wall on Queens Hill in Belbroughton was repaired in November and December 2013 following the initial repairs in December 2012. Because the site is in the Conservation Area the repairs required planning approval. As it's obliged to do, the Council went to tender and received 4 quotes. The least expensive contractor was used with the total cost of the final repairs being £26k. The Council was able to pay this sum temporarily from its capital reserves and approved the recovery of the costs via a short term precept increase.

An area of land in Hartle Lane Belbroughton adjacent to The Green has had planning

permission since October 2011 for the demolition of factory premises and the building of residential properties. However to enable the project to take place the developer requires the Parish Council's consent to changes on The Green close to the northern boundary. The developer supplied a suggested plan of changes he would carry out to the Green if consent was given. These were made available to the public and open to consultation.

The Council noted the public comments and was not minded to accept the developer's plan or offer of changes carried out by him and would seek a cash settlement should it in due course consent to any changes. A professional valuation is awaited to assess the worth to the Council of giving such consent. A further consultation with residents will be held on 10th Sept in Belbroughton Church Hall, and a decision on whether or not to give consent and on what terms is expected later this year.

The Council also dealt with a boundary trespass on its land by the developer. Following the intervention of the Council's legal team this has been resolved with the correct boundary now clearly marked out.

Communications

Please see our separate sheet regarding the future receipt of information. The Parish Council wishes to move towards electronic communications to improve both the regularity and speed of releasing information.

Council changes

Paul Margetts joined the Council in September following the sad death of Nick Hartill in April last year. Three further councillors left us during the year, John Kitson, Carol Hine and, Scott MacDonald. The Council thanks them for their contributions to the community. We have been joined by new councillors: Dr Bob Morgan in February, Conrad Palmer in June and, Sue Pawley in July.

In May 2014 Cllr. Dave Roberts was elected Chairman of the Council and Cllr. Karen Green was elected Vice Chairman.

Change of Parish Clerk

Katie Limm left us last August, having been our Parish Clerk for six and a half years. She left with our warm wishes for a long and happy retirement, and was replaced by our new clerk, John Farrell. John comes from a background in the financial and

third sector worlds. We are delighted to have been able to secure his services, and we look forward to a long association with him.

Apart from the Lengthsman, the Clerk is the Parish Council's only paid employee. Your Clerk also holds the post of Responsible Financial Officer which entails important legal and financial responsibilities.

Belbroughton, Bell Heath and Fairfield together comprise Belbroughton Parish Council's area. The Council's business is comparatively complicated, with significant tenanted land assets and large cash investments as well as much day to day business to manage (both planned and unplanned). Under the broad descriptive accounting heading of "Administration", the Clerk prepares for all meetings, and this often means writing papers on quite complicated and sometimes contentious issues and keeping Councillors on the straight and narrow when decisions are then to be taken. The Clerk is responsible for ensuring that the follow-up happens, with other councils and bodies, contractors, local residents and Parish Councillors.

Finances

The Council's 'Ordinary Income' for 2013-14 was £64,057. Of this £55,000 came from the parish precept, £3,148 from the County Council to fund the lengthsman scheme. £2,109 was received from the renting out of the Parish Meeting Room in Belbroughton. In January 2014 the District Council finally paid across £3,800 Tax Support Grant. For the year 2014/15 BDC has currently decided not to pay this sum over but instead to allocate the funds across individual District Councillors.



Hackmans Gate Lane new footway

Spending on 'Ordinary' items covers the Council's day to day administration, open spaces and footpaths maintenance, street lighting and maintenance grants to parish organisations. Maintenance grants totalled £4,100:- £600 each was paid to Fairfield Village Hall and Belbroughton Church Hall, £1,000 to Belbroughton Recreation Centre and £1,800 to the Parochial Church Council for churchyards maintenance and the maintenance of the Holy Trinity church clock. Along with £100 to the Fairfield Social club.

- Belbroughton Recreation Ground- £1,000 for electrics improvements.
- Belbroughton Church Hall - £1,500 for replacement flooring.
- Fairfield Village Hall - £1,542 for new chairs, £1,400 for disabled facilities, and £516 outstanding from the 2012/13 Jubilee grant.
- Belbroughton Cricket Club £1,500 for property improvements.
- Fairfield Village Hall - £2,441 a parish project towards new kitchens and flooring.

The table below indicates the main areas of spending.

Ordinary spending	£
Administration, including the Clerk, rents for meetings, insurance, and audit costs	27,200
Communication, including newsletters & memberships	1,400
Councillors' expenses	65
General Maintenance items	400
Maintenance grants to parish bodies	4,100
Meeting room costs	280
Open spaces, including grass cutting, lengthsman, emptying dog bins and improvements	9,800
Street Lighting*	130
Queens Hill Wall repairs.	25,925
Other contingency items	1,700
Donations and memberships	960
Legal & Professional fees	2,540
Total	74,500

*The County Council did not bill the Parish Council for electricity this year because of a build up of an accrued credit position with the County over prior years. The costs are normally about £5,000 p.a.

The Parish Council's 'Other Income' totalled £14,775 achieved from the capital assets of its tenanted agricultural land, and other investments. The 86 acres of agricultural land and lease of part of Fairfield Recreation Ground to Fairfield Villa Football Club (£8,412) interest and up lift on the Council's investments (£5,885). Wayleaves (£478). Income from the rents and investments is used mainly to fund capital grants to parish bodies and parish projects. Capital grants are generally offered towards one-off costs and for up to 50% of the total cost of the item or project. Those paid in 2013-14 were:

A grant of £500 has been carried forward for Belbroughton Cricket Club until their plans come to fruition.



Fairfield Village Hall kitchens

The above kitchen has now been completed and the balance of the parish project grant of £3,972 was paid over in the new financial year.

The new footway at Hackmans Gate Lane Belbroughton is also finished with £3,250 also being paid over in 2014/15 financial year. This project was part funded from £1,500 by former County Cllr. Ed Moore's divisional fund. The Council's capital fund reserves at the end of March 2014 stood at circa £220,000.

Planning

The Planning Committee considered 51 applications during the year, recommending approval for 16, approval with conditions for 21 and, refusal for 14. The Parish Council does not have statutory powers to insist the District and County Councils planning committees implement such decisions however they do heed the comments made and are obliged to seek its input.

Belbroughton Parish Footpaths

Your footpath wardens, Lynne and Paul Hardcastle give their time on a volunteer basis and the Parish Council is very grateful to them for all the hard work they do. If anyone would like to join them to assist on projects or if you have a problem to report with footpaths please contact them on 01562 730511.

Their maintenance programme took up 67 hours, with links to Duke of Edinburgh scheme involving replacing and extending steps plus general repairs to stiles and additional waymarker posts. The Community Payback scheme, operated in conjunction with the County Council and the landowner, worked on the path to Hurst Farm and pavement clearance from Bradford House to the school. The step flight between Hill Farm and Hockley Brook Lane has been improved. In 2014 along with general maintenance the extension to the path and drainage on Hurst Farm Path is planned with further assistance from Community Payback. Also planned is an 'Improvement Programme Status' for the Breach House to Cricket Club path – with WCC Contractors

Council Meetings

The Council meets on the first Monday of the month (except in August and allowing for bank holidays) with Planning and Finance Committee meetings on each third Monday. Meetings are held in the Jubilee Room, Belbroughton Recreation Centre and the Barton Room at Fairfield Village Hall on a 2:1 month basis – the 1st and 15th September meetings will be in Fairfield and the October and November meetings in Belbroughton.

Residents are welcome to attend all meetings and to raise issues with the Council or comment on items on the agenda. The agendas are posted on the notice boards in Belbroughton, Fairfield and Bell Heath. Agendas and minutes of meetings can be found on the Parish Council website.

www.worcestershire.gov.uk/MyParish

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