

**Minutes of the BELBROUGHTON ANNUAL PARISH MEETING held on Monday 11th
April 2011 in Fairfield Village Hall**

Present :

Parish Councillors James Bradley, Tim Cherry, Ian Hadley, Lynn Hardcastle, Ann Ince, Trevor Jones, K Nind, Chris Scurrell, Paul Shotton, John Westley and Sue Wright.

Clerk: Katie Limm

District Councillors Janice Boswell, Brian Lewis, Margaret Sherrey

County Councillors Ed Moore

Residents/other attendees Paul Hardcastle (Parish footpaths warden); and 21 other members of the public who recorded their names on the attendance list.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Parish Councillors Linda Deeley and Karen Green and County Councillor Sheila Blagg.

2. Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 29 March 2010

The Minutes of the previous Annual Parish Meeting were agreed as a fair record.

3. Parish Council Annual Report 2010-11

The Parish Council Chairman, James Bradley, said that copies of the Council's Annual Report would be sent to every household in the parish in June. He highlighted the main events of the year. One of the most significant issues considered by the Council was the issue of whether to seek a split into two Councils, one for Belbroughton and one for Fairfield. This was an item for discussion later in the meeting.

Brief reports were also presented by Cllr Kitson, Vice-Chairman of the Finance Committee, Cllr Hadley, Chairman of the Planning Committee, and Cllr Ince, Chairman of the Allotments Committee on the Committees work during the year and the main issues arising.

Cllr Bradley thanked members of the Council for their contributions to the parish over the last 4 years. Special thanks were due to Tim Cherry and John Westley who were standing down as Councillors after serving for 24 and 16 years respectively. Cllr Bradley also thanked Pam and Peter Bridge for their many years hard work as footpath wardens and Lynne and Paul Hardcastle for volunteering to take on this vital role.

4. Footpaths – report by the Parish Footpath wardens

Paul Hardcastle presented a report on the footpath wardens' activities during the previous year. As new wardens he and Lynne had undertaken an intensive induction and training period, including walking all the parish paths. Maintenance and improvements had continued throughout the year- including the installation of 4 new gates on the footpath from

the side of the Swan in Fairfield to Pepperwood Close. The footpath wardens had also prepared the Parish Council's input to a prioritisation exercise by the County Council to help determine future work on the local footpaths and bridleways. A free trial of the Community Payback Scheme whereby offenders work under supervision had been used to level a section of path between Chapel Lane and the A491. It was hoped to make more use of this scheme in the coming year.

5. Comments/reports by District and County Councillors

County and District Councillors commented briefly on issues arising during the year. A written report from Cllr Sheila Blagg was also available.

Cllr Boswell mentioned that proposals were being developed for use of part of the Nash Works site in Belbroughton for housing. Cllr Sherrey said that Bromsgrove District Council's development of shared services with Redditch was going well and producing savings, especially in relation to procurement. Cllr Lewis said that he had asked for action to be taken to secure removal of the unauthorised signs along Sandy Lane. He also mentioned concerns about the speed limit proposals for the A491. Cllr Moore said that the speed limit on the A491 was still under review. There were proposals to reduce the limits for Hackman's Gate Lane and Hartle Lane, Belbroughton. The need for repair of the poor road surface in Fairfield from the top of Bournheath Road down the hill towards Bromsgrove had been noted by the County Council and would be considered alongside other priorities.

6. Parish Council elections on 5th May

The closing date for nominations to the Council had been reached. There would be an election for Fairfield ward since there were 7 candidates for 6 places. In Belbroughton ward there were seven candidates for 8 places so these candidates would be elected unopposed. The vacancy for Belbroughton would be filled by co-option.

7. Splitting the Council

Councillor Bradley said that the proposal to create two Councils, one for Belbroughton and one for Fairfield, recognised that they were two distinct communities with their own identities. The idea had been discussed by previous Councils but had not been taken forward. Cllr Cherry said that treatment of the agricultural land owned by the Council had been a major factor in the previous decision not to pursue the idea. Cllr Bradley explained that the current Council had reached agreement in principle about sharing the assets, but this would be part of the consultation process if the new Council elected in May 2011 decided to take this forward. The process was a complicated one. The Parish Council would have to present a petition to the District Council with 250 signatures in order to trigger a Community Governance Review. The District would then have up to a year to undertake this review.

Residents asked how long the whole process would take. Cllr Bradley said that this was difficult to assess precisely but probably at least 2 years. Other questions concerned the allotments and whether it would be preferable to have a clean split by dividing the land between the two new Parish Councils or by one buying out the other. The point was also made that residents would need to be fully informed about the proposals and their

implications in order to reach a view. Parish Councillors stressed that there would have to be full consultation on proposals for a split including public meetings. It would be for the next Council to decide whether to take this forward after the May elections.

8. Question time on matters of interest to parishioners

The following issues were raised:

- i. Why had Parish Council 'surgeries' for residents to raise issues with Councillors been discontinued?
Parish Councillors explained that surgeries had been held on a trial basis for 6 months but had been very poorly attended. The Council had decided not to continue with these, but to hold meetings as necessary on significant issues. All Council meetings were open to the public.
- ii. Dangerous dogs at Coalyard Farm, Bell Heath were affecting the right of way nearby. The police and Worcestershire County Council had been informed.
- iii. Did the village tidier visit Fairfield every week?
The Parish Council confirmed that he spent an average 8 hours every week divided between the 2 villages.
- iv. Could the lengthsman clear the footway along the A491 from the Stoneybridge roundabout to the service station? The Parish Council undertook to ask him to look at this, but explained that the lengthsman's limited time (average 4.5 hours per week) had to be used across the whole parish.
- v. Why did the Parish Council not spend some of its capital for the benefit of the parish?
Councillors explained that the Council's policy was to spend the income from its reserves but to maintain the capital so that it continued to generate sufficient income every year to be spent on parish projects and grants.
- vi. What funding did Fairfield Villa Football Club receive from the Parish Council and why were the football rails left up between matches?
The Parish Council did not provide funding for the Club. The Football Club paid rent to the Council for use of the Recreation Ground and also maintained a section of the ground, including the pitch. The Parish Council maintained the areas not leased by the Club.
In relation to the rails the Parish Council had agreed that these need not be removed between matches from the beginning of October to end of April provided the corners were removed to allow access to the grass.

The meeting closed at 9.55 pm.