

Minutes of the Meeting of Belbroughton Parish Council held in Fairfield School, Fairfield on Monday 14th May 2012

Present: Cllrs K Green (Chair), J Bradley, I Dalziel, N Hartill, C Hine, A Hood, A Ince, T Jones, J Kitson, S MacDonald, D Roberts, C Scurrall, and P Shotton

In attendance: Mrs C Limm, Clerk. District Cllr Janice Boswell and six residents also attended.

128/12 Election of Chairman and Chairman's Declaration of acceptance of office

Cllr Karen Green was re-elected as Chairman of the Council and signed the declaration of acceptance of office.

129/12 Election of Vice Chairman and Declaration of acceptance of office

Cllr Dave Roberts was elected as Vice-Chairman and signed the declaration of acceptance of office. The Council thanked Cllr Shotton for serving as Vice Chairman for 2011-12.

130/12 Apologies

Apologies were received from County Councillors Sheila Blagg and Ed Moore and from District Councillor Brian Lewis.

131/12 Declarations of interest

No interests were declared.

132/12 Minutes of the meeting on 2nd April 2012

The Minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

133/12 Membership of Committees and appointment of members to outside bodies

The membership of Committees and nomination of Council representatives to other bodies were agreed as set out in the schedule attached to these Minutes. The Council noted that appointments to Committees had traditionally been by asking for volunteers but that this did not always ensure a balanced membership or the opportunity for new Councillors to gain experience of serving on different Committees. It was agreed to review the membership of Committees and the Council's arrangements for appointing members in six months time.

134/12 Co-option of Councillor for Fairfield Ward

There were two candidates for the vacancy in Fairfield Ward- Mr Alan Mabbett and Mr Sean Phelan. A paper ballot was held and Mr Mabbett was elected.

135/12 Reports

Chairman's report

Cllr Green commented that the new flower beds at the Hartle Lane entrance to Belbroughton looked good and she thanked Cllr Roberts for organising this planting scheme.

Planning meeting on 16th April

Cllr Ince reported briefly on the Planning meeting. Minutes had been circulated.

Finance meeting on 16th April

Cllr Kitson reported briefly on the Finance meeting. Minutes had been circulated.

Clerk's report

Nash Works planning application – the application had not yet been determined. The Environment Agency had asked for more modelling work to be done on flood risk.

Bus shelter Top Road, Wildmoor- the repaired shelter had been re-instated.

Church Green, Belbroughton- the wall had been repaired.

Trees - two trees had come down at Fairfield Recreation Ground in recent high winds - both had been removed. Discussions had been held with the District Council tree officer about the offer by the owners of Springfields, Dark Lane, Belbroughton to plant some trees in the parish to replace those felled without permission by their house's previous owner. Proposals for planting in the parish should be available for consideration by the Council at its July meeting.

Grit bins – the County Council had agreed to replace the three bins in Fairfield and deliver 2 to Madeley Road. The lengthsman was preparing the Fairfield sites.

136/12 Proposed parking restrictions on Stourbridge Road, Fairfield

Detailed proposals had been received from the County Council for parking restrictions on Stourbridge Road, Fairfield. The Council was unanimously opposed to them for the following reasons:

1. Whilst parking near the school has been a problem, exacerbated by the decision to close the village hall car park to parents dropping off and picking up children, the problems are reducing as people get used to the new situation and make alternative arrangements
2. Parking restrictions outside the post office and shop are likely to have a detrimental impact on its trade. Residents value the shop highly and the Parish Council could not support a measure that could affect its viability. The post office's owners commented that passing motorists were unlikely to stop to read the details of the parking restrictions – they were likely to see that there were restrictions and move on.
3. Restrictions would not in themselves prevent obstructive parking. Restrictions in the area proposed would simply displace parking outside other properties along the Stourbridge Road.

It was agreed that the County Council should be asked to provide the background information and evidence to support their proposals. Road safety and obstructive parking had been cited as the reasons. Information about the extent and nature of these problems should be provided. The Parish Council was also very disappointed that a local consultation meeting was not being arranged as requested at the meeting that Cllr Sheila Blagg attended in February. A further meeting should be sought with Cllr Blagg to discuss these concerns.

Whilst being opposed to the proposals in principle, the Council also had specific concerns about the details of the proposals:

1. The proposed restriction times were inconsistent. The County's Email cited the no waiting times as 8.30 am to 9.30 am and 3.30 pm to 4.30 pm whereas the drawing said 8.30 to 9.30 and 3.00 to 4.00.
2. The times proposed were excessive- restrictions were unnecessary after 9.00 in the morning or 3.30 in the afternoon. Consideration should also be given to term-time only restrictions and alternative signage (which some authorities adopt) which makes clear to passing motorists that these are not permanent restrictions.

3. The length of the no parking restriction is excessive- a line parallel with the red line on the other side of the Stourbridge Road would be adequate to protect the school crossing patrol.
4. The County should put in place monitoring arrangements to evaluate the impact of the restrictions on the village shop and on households outside the restricted area. The operation and impact of the restrictions should be reviewed after they have been in operation for a few months.

137/12 Annual Parish Meeting and Council's Annual Report

The Council reviewed the format and arrangements for the recent Annual Parish Meeting. In general it was agreed that the meeting had gone very well and that it had been a positive community event. Points to note for future meetings were improving the acoustics by having microphones set up in advance if available, allowing more time for questions on Parish Council and general matters, and avoiding putting too much emphasis on time pressures since this might deter people from contributing.

It was agreed that the Clerk should finalise the Annual Report and arrange for it to be printed.

138/12 Annual Risk Assessment

A completed risk assessment for the Council's activities had been considered and approved by the Finance Committee for the Council's consideration. The Council formally approved the risk assessment schedule.

139/12 Email re Vehicle Activated Sign in Hackman's Gate Lane

The Council discussed an Email by a Belbroughton resident which had implied that inappropriate influence had been brought to bear by the Council and its former Chairman on the siting of a new Vehicle Activated Sign in Belbroughton. Worcestershire County Council had already refuted this suggestion. The Parish Council agreed that the Clerk should write to the resident to indicate that it took exception to the implication of wrong doing by Councillors and that such comments were not a helpful contribution to local debate. The matter should then be regarded as closed.

140/12 Footpath maintenance

The Council had received a number of complaints about the poor state of the path from the Recreation Ground to Belbroughton School. Worcestershire County Council Countryside Service had been consulted and their Email had been circulated to Councillors. The main points were that the path was a rural sunken footpath and as such was in an acceptable state. Since neither the County nor Parish Council owned the land the Parish Council should be wary of taking on landowners' responsibilities. In any event work to shore up the bank would be costly and might not fully solve the problem since drainage holes would be necessary. However, the County had asked the Community Payback team to clear the mud and debris from the path and would be willing to do this on a reasonably regular basis.

The Council noted these points but also that this path was one of the best used routes in Belbroughton, particularly to enable children to walk to school. The Council therefore asked the Clerk to continue to explore what might be done, including planting and netting on the bank to help secure the soil. The Council did not rule out taking some responsibility for maintenance in the future. The Clerk was also asked to find out whether there was any scope to have the path redesignated as footway (which would be maintained to a higher standard) and also when the Community Payback team would be clearing the path.

141/12 Worcestershire County Council Consultation

The Council noted the additional policy 'Presumption in favour of sustainable development' proposed for the Waste Core Strategy but had no further comments.

The County was consulting on proposals to switch off its street lights at night (between midnight and 5.30 am) and wanted to know if the Council would be willing to be involved in a trial of any WCC lights in the parish later this year. The Parish Council agreed to support this trial provided that safety issues were fully assessed and monitored. It was agreed that the lighting working group should consider options for the Council's own lights.

142/12 Accounts for payment

Two urgent payments required before the next Finance meeting were approved.

143/12 Councillors' Items

Cllr Janice Boswell welcomed the installation of the new bus shelter in Hartle Lane, Belbroughton. She invited all Councillors to attend the District Council meeting and reception on 16th May at which she was being nominated as the new Civic Head for the District Council.

Cllr Hood requested a full discussion of the future of the Council's meeting room when other venues had been tried. The Chairman said that this was planned for the autumn.

Cllr Scurrrell outlined the current financial issues facing CALC (the County Association of Local Councils) and suggested that all Councillors should receive the CALC weekly update to see what CALC offered.

Cllr Ince suggested that the Council should write to Veolia about the rooks roosting there- the allotment tenants were being very troubled by the birds this year. Agreed.

Cllr Shotton asked the Clerk to report slurry/waste draining from Brookfield Farm onto Hackman's Gate Lane.

Cllr Roberts asked if Bromsgrove District Council could be asked for information about their road sweeping programme.

Cllr Kitson mentioned a request for the Council to adopt a telephone kiosk on behalf of a resident. A formal letter had been requested with a view to discussing this at the next Finance meeting. He also asked for a discussion about improving the parish infrastructure- agreed for the July meeting.

Cllr Dalziel requested a future discussion about pressing the County to install a cycle lane from the Stoneybridge roundabout to the traffic lights on the A491. Agreed for a future agenda.

The meeting closed at 9.45 pm.

Signed.....(Chairman)