

Minutes of the Meeting of Belbroughton Parish Council held in the meeting room Belbroughton on Monday 4th July 2011

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

In attendance: Mrs C Limm, Clerk. One resident also attended.

210/11 Apologies – Apologies were received and accepted from Cllrs Hood and MacDonald.

211/11 Declarations of interest – Cllr Scurrall declared a personal interest in the discussion about the District's core strategy since he was a councillor for Hagley.

212/11 Minutes of the meeting on 6th June 2011

The Minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.

213/11 Reports

Chairman's report

Cllr Green welcomed Nick Hartill to his first meeting as a member of the Council.

Cllr Green proposed a new arrangement, for a trial period, to keep Council meetings to a reasonable length by setting a deadline of 9.15 pm for meetings to end. Any items not dealt with could be carried forward to the next meeting if necessary. Councillors were asked to help by keeping their contributions short and to the point. The Clerk had also circulated a note about Council procedures and working arrangements. This included plans for the Clerk to work and be available within defined hours. This arrangement would also be reviewed in due course.

Planning meetings on 6th and 20th June

The Minutes of the June Planning meetings were noted.

Finance meeting on 20th June

The Minutes were noted.

Clerk's report

Splitting the Council: The District Council had been asked for a meeting to clarify the arrangements for a governance review and particularly the financial implications of a split. BDC officers wanted to do some homework and would get in touch when they were ready to meet representatives of the Parish Council.

FVFC lease: the draft lease had been sent to the Club. A liaison meeting with the Club's representatives had been arranged for 6th July.

Appointments: James Callaghan had been appointed as meeting room caretaker and booking secretary. He had also been appointed to undertake gardening work on parish green spaces in Belbroughton. Bernard Edwards had been appointed for gardening work in Fairfield. Cllrs Roberts and Green would be liaising for Belbroughton and Fairfield respectively about the work required.

Meeting with planners : the Clerk, with Gill Lungley of Catshill and Bournheath PCs, had recently met District Council planners to discuss working arrangements. Although the IT system for planning consultations was outside their control, the planners were willing to adopt helpful administrative arrangements where possible and had agreed to regular future meetings so that Parish Councils could influence future developments.

Lengthsman : a letter of thanks had been received from the County Council for the Parish lengthsman congratulating him on his contribution to ten successful years of the scheme. The Parish Council asked the Clerk to add their thanks to David Aldridge.

214/11 Membership of Committees

The Chairman said that now the Council was at full strength it would be helpful to review whether membership of Committees should be adjusted. It was agreed that Cllr Hartill would join the Planning Committee; Cllr Hine left the Planning Committee but remained a member of the Finance Committee. The Clerk was asked to establish whether Cllr Wright wished to remain a member of the Planning Committee and to invite Cllr Hood to join the Planning Committee.

215/11 Grants for 2011

The Finance Committee's recommendations for capital and maintenance grants for 2011 were approved (minute reference 205/11).

The Council discussed the application from Belbroughton School for a substantial grant for an outdoor activity area. The potential community benefit was noted, but the plans were at an early stage and left many questions unanswered. It was agreed that the applicants should be told that this project was beyond the scope of the Council's normal capital grants but that the Council would be interested in being kept in touch as the plans developed.

216/11 Capital fund

The Council endorsed the Finance Committee's recommendations concerning the treatment and use of the capital reserves (minute reference 206/11). It was agreed that these principles should be added to the paper prepared previously by the Finance Committee about the Council's investment strategy. The Clerk, in consultation with Cllr Kitson, was asked to prepare a final version for consideration by the Committee.

217/11 Meeting room

The purpose of the discussion was to brief all Councillors on the issues and to identify whether any further information was required to enable the Council to take a decision at its September meeting. Background papers had been circulated to Councillors. Cllr Green outlined the background to the decisions facing the Council- the key issue was that the Council either needed to spend some money to make the meeting room compliant with the DDA or must move out and meet elsewhere. In reaching this decision the Council would need to consider whether suitable alternative venues would be available but it need not necessarily decide where the Council would meet. Cllr Green also suggested that the Council should not be influenced by the issue of whether the Council would split. It could only reach a decision based on current knowledge and the current situation.

Cllr Kitson said that the value of potential spending on the meeting room should be judged against the potential value of spending the same amount of money elsewhere. Cllr Bradley suggested that this must include consideration of alternatives in sufficient depth for an informed judgement to be made. He suggested that, if a Council split subsequently occurred, a consequence of significant spending on the room was likely to be that the spending was only of benefit to Belbroughton. Cllr Green pointed out that this could be dealt with by proportionate spending on a project in Fairfield.

Cllr Scurrrell suggested that an option would be to mothball the meeting room whilst other meeting places were tried. Cllr Harvey pointed out that the meeting room would still need to be maintained at least externally.

The potential costs of improvements were discussed. Two recent quotes had been obtained for making the room DDA compliant by improving the front and rear access and creating access to the toilet from within the room. The Clerk said that the quotes were quite far apart (one at under £10,000 and one over £15,000) but that there were aspects of the two quotes which needed clarification. The Clerk was asked to follow this up and to ask the builders if they could provide a plan showing how the room would be adapted and the size of the room if a partition wall was added.

218/11 Bromsgrove District Core Strategy

Requests had been received from Hagley and Barnt Green parish councils to support their objections to the District's housing plans as set out in the draft core strategy. Hagley PC was seeking support on the basis that the planned new housing for Hagley would have an adverse impact on schools that also served Belbroughton. Barnt Green PC was seeking support for its arguments that the housing proposals were flawed. The Council agreed that it should support Hagley PC's objections on the specific issue of local schools unless the District could point to satisfactory plans to accommodate additional pupils which would not adversely affect the prospects of Belbroughton children. It was agreed not to support Barnt Green's more general objections.

Cllr Scurrrell abstained from these decisions.

219/11 Worcestershire Agreement

The Council agreed that it should sign up to the proposed agreement between the County Council and Parish Councils which set out commitments for each signatory. The Council noted that it could choose which specific commitments to endorse. It considered that all the Parish Council commitments were acceptable in principle with the proviso that some commitments, for example to contribute to local community emergency response plans, would be implemented as and when resources allowed.

220/11 Belbroughton.com

The Council agreed that John Penlington should take over the management of the site by arrangement with Peter Bridge.

221/11 Councillors Items

Items of information/queries

Cllr Roberts said that the sign was falling off the Horseshoes public house on the High Street- he had contacted the owners; the resurfacing of the footway along Hartle Lane appeared to have been completed but was only done part way along - was this all that was planned?

Cllr Hine – an overgrown bank on the east side of Stourbridge Road, Fairfield (just below the Old Post Office) needed to be reported to County Highways.

Cllr Scurrall – there was a case of Japanese knotweed along Yew Tree Lane, Fairfield - the District Council was investigating.

Items for a future agenda

Cllr Kitson requested that the Council should discuss the proposition that if money is spent in one village a proportionate amount should be spent in the other village

222/11 August meetings

The Council agreed that Finance and Planning meetings should be held on Monday 15th August. Any urgent decisions required re the Fairfield Villa lease were delegated to the Finance Committee if necessary.

The meeting closed at 9.02 pm.

Signed.....Chairman