

**Minutes of the BELBROUGHTON ANNUAL PARISH MEETING held on Monday 23rd
April 2012**

Present :

Parish Councillors Karen Green (Chairman), James Bradley, Ian Dalziel, Nick Hartill, Carol Hine, Allan Hood, Ann Ince, Trevor Jones, John Kitson, Scott MacDonald, Dave Roberts, Chris Scurrrell, and Paul Shotton

Clerk: Katie Limm

District Councillors Janice Boswell, Brian Lewis, Margaret Sherrey

Residents/other attendees Paul and Lynn Hardcastle (Parish footpaths wardens); Richard Deeming Chairman of Bromsgrove District Council Planning Committee, and 98 members of the public who recorded their names on the attendance list.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from County Councillors Sheila Blagg and Ed Moore who both had County engagements. Mr David Slann (Belbroughton Tennis Club) also sent his apologies.

2. Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Monday 11th April 2011

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

3. Parish Council Annual Report 2011-12

The Parish Council Chairman, Karen Green, said that copies of the Council's draft Annual Report were available at the meeting. The final report would be sent to every household in the parish in June. She did not therefore outline all the Council's activities during the year but gave a brief summary of the Council's main functions

- representing the local community
- delivering services to meet local needs
- striving to improve the quality of life in the local area

Cllr Green explained what these meant in practice with some examples from the Council's activities over the previous year.

A brief report was also presented by Cllr Kitson, Chairman of the Finance Committee. He gave an overview of the Council's finances, its sources of income, capital and other assets, and its investment strategy. Cllr Kitson explained that successive Councils had taken the view that the Council's capital reserves (currently about £235,000) should be held for the current and future residents of the parish. The Council's objective had been to get as much return from investment of the capital as possible and to spend this on projects and grants. At the moment the Council's investment strategy was designed to preserve and if possible increase the value of the capital in a very difficult environment. However this year the

Council had agreed special Jubilee grants of £10,000 each to Belbroughton Recreation Centre and Fairfield Village Hall for projects of long term benefit to the parish.

Cllr Green explained the format for the Annual Parish Meeting which would include short presentations by a number of parish organisations about their activities. She thanked them for attending and agreeing to provide a speaker and also thanked Belbroughton WI for providing refreshments before the start of the meeting.

4. Footpaths – report by the Parish Footpath wardens

Paul Hardcastle presented a report on the footpath wardens' activities during the previous year. He said that it had been an interesting first year in the role which had given them a good working knowledge of the footpath network and the issues involved. Throughout the year they had received 15 contacts from residents and councillors reporting various issues and had responded to all of these. In addition to the normal cutting back and maintenance activities (including the removal of ten fallen trees over the winter) some new waymarker posts had been installed.

Larger projects undertaken included the clearance of the steps between Fairfield Rec and Swan Lane and the building up of a dangerously slipped section on the path from Belbroughton to Drayton.

The major development was use of the Community Payback Scheme. Following a free trial day, the Parish Council paid for 2 days work which was used on the footpath linking Chapel Lane to the A491 through Castlebourne grounds. Labour was provided by the Probation Service and materials by the County Council. A pathway was created across a dangerous sloped area and 2 flights of steps were reconstructed.

The Parish Council had purchased a strimmer/brushcutter for the footpath wardens' use. This would enable a number of paths which become seriously overgrown in late spring/early summer to be dealt with.

Cllr Green thanked the footpath wardens for the many hours voluntary work they put in on behalf of the parish.

5. Reports by District and County Councillors

District Councillors commented briefly on issues arising during the year. Cllr Boswell stressed the importance of volunteers as illustrated by the footpath wardens. Cllr Lewis said that major issues for the parish were planning enforcement, the proliferation of uncontrolled developments along Sandy Lane, and the neglect of the footpaths alongside the A491 and Heath End Road. Cllr Sherrey said that another good example of a service run by volunteers was the BURT bus service which could collect residents from Clent, Belbroughton and Fairfield if needed. She also mentioned the significant savings being achieved by the sharing of services with Redditch which helped keep Council Tax bills down.

A written report from Cllr Sheila Blagg was available. A brief report from Cllr Ed Moore was read by the Clerk to the Council.

6. Parish Organisations

Representatives of the following parish organisations then spoke and answered questions about their organisation's activities and plans for the coming year.

- Belbroughton History Society
- Fairfield Village Hall
- Belbroughton Jubilee Committee
- Belbroughton Recreation Centre
- Fairfield Villa Football Club
- Belbroughton Scarecrow Committee

A handout with contact details for all the organisations attending the meeting was available.

7. Open Forum

Residents raised concerns about the planning application for a wind turbine at Hayes Farm, Farley Lane. John Lloyd and Michael Buckley spoke to summarise the concerns. The main points made were that this would be an inappropriate development in the Green Belt, the information provided in the application was confusing and misleading (for example the illustrative picture did not show a structure as large as the one sought in the application), and that approval of this application would set an unwelcome precedent. Other residents spoke to raise concerns about the detrimental impact on the local environment both visually and from noise levels. Cllr Deeming from Bromsgrove District Council said that he was pleased to have heard these concerns first hand.

The Clerk to the Council outlined the arrangements for consultation and the timetable for consideration of the application by the District Council. A handout was available with the details.

Other issues raised were:

The proposal to split the Council into separate councils for Belbroughton and Fairfield- Cllr Green said that this was being pursued but it was a complicated process. The Council was taking it forward and would need to explore public opinion.

Mr Westley informed the meeting that the rector had retired and that it was unlikely that a replacement would be appointed for some time. Church finances were a continuing problem and the church might need to ask for more help from the Council in the future.

The meeting closed at 9.20 pm