

Minutes of the Meeting of Belbroughton Parish Council held in Belbroughton Recreation Centre on Monday 3rd September 2012

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

In attendance: Mrs C Limm, Clerk; County Councillor Ed Moore and Mr K Nind also attended.

245/12 Apologies

Apologies were received and accepted from Councillors Hine, Hood, and Shotton. District Councillors Boswell and Lewis also sent their apologies.

246/12 Declarations of interest

Cllr Ince declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in item 249/12 concerning her request for a dispensation under the Code of Conduct.

Cllr MacDonald declared an Other Disclosable Interest in the discussion under item 255/12 since he was a member of the Scarecrow Committee.

247/12 Minutes of previous meetings

The Minutes of the meeting held on 2nd July were approved subject to two amendments to paragraph 205/12 – 'Veolia site' to be substituted for 'Chadwich Quarry'; last point to refer to Cllr Kitson rather than Cllr Roberts.

The Minutes of the meeting on 23rd July were approved.

248/12 Reports

Chairman's report

Cllr Green reminded the Council that, following the decision at the meeting on 23rd July not to consult residents about splitting the Council, various suggestions had been made about changes to the way the Council operates, for example different Committees and a change of name to include Fairfield. These suggestions were not on the agenda for this meeting in order to give Councillors time to reflect on what they wanted to achieve. She suggested that key questions for consideration were- what problems is the Council having in achieving its objectives? What can't it do with its present structures that Councillors would like to do? Councillors were asked to consider these issues for discussion at the October meeting.

Planning meeting on 16th July and 20th August

Cllr Ince reported on the two Planning Committee meetings. Minutes had been circulated.

Finance meeting on 16th July and 20th August

Cllr Kitson reported on the Finance meetings. Minutes had been circulated.

Cllr Bradley suggested that the Council should consider at a future meeting the arrangements for reporting back on Committee meetings.

Clerk's report

- Fairfield Villa Football Club had asked the Council for permission to remove the tree adjacent to the Club House at Fairfield Recreation Ground. The request was too late for inclusion on the agenda for this meeting. Mr Nind said that the building inspector required the footings for the Club House extension to be 2-3 metres deep which would increase the Club's costs. They would like to remove the tree and plant a new one elsewhere. In view of the need for an early decision the Clerk said that a Council

meeting to consider this could be arranged for 17th September to take place between the two Committee meetings on that evening.

- The Cala Homes application in Hagley would be on the October Parish Council agenda for consideration. The application would be considered by the District's Planning Committee at its meeting on October 15th or in November.
- Notice had been given to Npower to terminate the annual contract on the power supply to the village green Belbroughton. This could be reversed if necessary before the contract ended in October but would allow time to explore the supply issues.
- Comments on the Tree Preservation Order imposed on Dark Lane, Belbroughton were required by the District Council by 19th September. The additional Council meeting proposed for 17th September could consider this.
- Cllr Lewis had reported the proliferation of signs by the roadside in Fairfield to the County Council.
- Cllr Boswell had asked the Clerk to remind Councillors about her charity concert on 14th September.

249/12 Code of Conduct

Cllr Ince left the meeting for this item.

The Council considered the written request received from Cllr Ince for a dispensation to enable her to remain as a member of the Allotments Committee and to take part in discussions concerning the Council's agricultural land. She was not seeking a dispensation to allow her to vote on decisions concerning the agricultural land. The Council noted Councillor Ince's considerable knowledge and experience of agricultural matters generally and of the Council's own land in particular. It therefore agreed that a dispensation should be granted on the grounds that it would be in the interests of people living in the parish that her expertise could be brought to bear on Council discussions. The dispensation was agreed on the terms requested until the election of a new Council in 2015.

Cllr Bradley had suggested writing to the local MP about the impact of the new Code on Parish Council business. He expressed the view that much of the new Code was inappropriate for Parish Councils and risked excluding from discussions those who had the most knowledge of a subject. It was agreed to defer taking this up with the local MP until the impact of the Code and the use of dispensations in appropriate circumstances could be more fully assessed. It was agreed that the issue should be raised at the next CALC meeting since concerns raised by CALC with the support of other Parish Councils could be more effective.

250/12 Decision making and urgent issues

The Clerk had circulated a note setting out the general legal position concerning decision making by the Council. This explained the circumstances in which decisions could be made between Council meetings. The Clerk confirmed that decisions could not be delegated to an individual Councillor, including the Chairman, or a group of Councillors. In relation to urgent decisions required between meetings the Council had adopted a scheme of delegation which enabled the Clerk to agree expenditure of 'extreme urgency' up to a limit of £500.

The purchase of a strimmer by the footpath warden, underwritten by a group of Councillors, during the Clerk's absence on holiday was discussed. The Clerk said that the main concerns about this arrangement were that it effectively pre-empted Council decision making and potentially put her in a vulnerable position as the Responsible Finance Officer.

251/12 Parish Projects

The Council discussed possible projects for 2012. A number of ideas were identified for further consideration either as projects or as items to be pursued:

- Cllr Green flagged up the probable need for repairs to the playground surface at Fairfield Recreation Ground
- Cllr Hartill asked for a future discussion about preparing a Neighbourhood Plan – Clerk to agenda
- Improvements to Belbroughton Village Green – Cllrs Bradley, Roberts and Dalziel agreed to consider and bring back some proposals to the Council, including proposals for consultation with residents
- Best Kept Village Competition – Cllr Bradley to explore if this competition was still running and what was required
- New footpath Hackman's Gate Lane - Clerk to check position reached re earlier proposals. Cllr Bradley and Cllr Moore would then discuss with landowner to see if there was room for agreement
- Footpath from Belbroughton Recreation Ground to the school - the County Council had ruled out re-designation of this path as a footway. Their main response had been to repeat their suggestion of regular clearance by the lengthsman and one-off work by the Community Payback team. The Clerk was meeting the County liaison engineer the following week to explore whether some improvement work – for example reinforcement of the banks - could be done
- Cllr MacDonald suggested a number of items in Belbroughton
 - 1) metal barrier needed at end of footpath onto Hartle Lane to prevent children and others 'falling' into the road
 - 2) Dark Lane – painting of rails
 - 3) a new area of footway needed near cricket ground to complete a paved walk into the village
 - 4) major repairs needed to raised path in High Street
 - 5) 20 mph sign near Belbroughton school

The Clerk was asked to send these items to Cllr Moore for consideration in the first instance.

252/12 Village tidying and grass cutting

The Council reviewed the operation of the grass cutting contract for the first six months of the year. Although the grass had been untidy on a couple of occasions it was noted that the poor weather had disrupted the cutting programme to some extent. In general the Council had no major concerns. It was agreed that Keith Basketfield should be asked to include fortnightly cutting round the planters at the Hartle Lane village entrance to contract 2.

In relation to village tidying, the Council did not consider that in general the villages were in a worse state than when the tidier was employed. Any specific areas could be dealt with by a litter pick. It was agreed that the gardeners' work contract for 2013 should be reviewed to consider the inclusion of some tidying, for example at Fairfield Rec. and the village green, Belbroughton.

It was agreed that the Council should take up the offer from the District Council of a meeting with them to discuss their litter picking programme. Cllr MacDonald said that it would be helpful if a bigger bin could be installed outside the newsagents in Belbroughton.

253/12 Belbroughton Recreation Ground Skatepark Trial

The Clerk had received an Email from a local resident raising concerns about the noise levels at the skatepark. Cllr MacDonald said that there would be a meeting of the Rec. Committee the following week to review the trial. This was open to the public. The Chairman said that the Council needed to be kept informed and asked for a further report to the next Council meeting.

254/12 Fairfield Recreation Ground Play Area

The Clerk had obtained 2 estimates for repairing the play area surface. The quotes for a contractor to repair the broken surface were £320 and £850. A repair kit for the Council to undertake the repair was under £100. The Council discussed whether it should obtain an independent inspection of the surface to assess what needed to be done and whether the wear was 'normal' for the age of the surface. It was agreed to await the report of the next ROSPA inspection, due later in September, before deciding on what should be done.

The Council agreed in principle to the request from Claire Dunlop to plant a commemorative tree and to scatter her husband's ashes at Fairfield Recreation Ground. The Council would want to agree the species and location.

255/12 Storage of scarecrows in parish meeting room

Cllr MacDonald on behalf of the Scarecrow Committee asked the Council's permission to store scarecrows in the parish room. The Council agreed provided Councillor MacDonald took responsibility for the arrangements, including ensuring that the room was kept secure.

256/12 Local hospital services

Cllr Mabbett outlined the proposals put forward by hospital clinicians for hospital services in the area. A further round of consultation on revised proposals had been planned for the end of the year- but this had been delayed. It was agreed that there was no action for the Council at present. This could be put on a future agenda for discussion if appropriate.

257/12 Councillors' Items

Cllr Moore said that footway resurfacing was being done at Pinchers Close, Belbroughton. He had been approached by the Management Company at Woodfield with a request for double yellow lines at the junction with Nash Lane. Cllr MacDonald thanked him for the £800 funding given for goal posts at Belbroughton Rec.

Parish Councillors raised the following items:

- Cllr Dalziel said that the street name sign in Belbroughton High Street still needed to be repaired. He asked about the overhanging foliage at Springfields. The Clerk said that the householder had explained that this was now covered by the Tree Protection Order. She was awaiting advice from the tree officer before doing any work.
- Cllr Kitson asked for an agenda item on a Councillors' expenses policy.
- Cllr Roberts asked for a Finance Committee item on purchasing bulbs for the villages.
- Cllr MacDonald said that there were new regulations relating to advertising banners- the Belbroughton beer festival banner had had to been removed from the Stoneybridge roundabout.

The meeting closed at 10.00 pm.

Signed.....Chairman