

DRAFT

**Minutes of the Meeting of Belbroughton Parish Council held in the meeting room
Belbroughton on Monday 7th February 2011**

Present : Cllrs J Bradley, T Cherry, K Green, I Hadley, L Hardcastle, A Ince, T Jones, J Kitson, P Shotton, C Scurrall, J Westley and S Wright.

In attendance: Mrs C Limm, Clerk. District Cllr B Lewis attended for the first 3 items; County Cllr E Moore and 5 residents also attended.

037/11 Apologies : Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr Deeley.

038/11 Declarations of interest : Cllr Bradley declared a personal interest in relation to decisions concerning Prosperity since he used the company for financial advice; Cllr Kitson declared a prejudicial interest in the same since he was associated with the company.

039/11 Police Matters

PC Lord had sent a written report on recent incidents, which had been circulated to Councillors.

040/11 Minutes of the meeting on 10th January 2011

The Minutes of the previous meeting were approved and the minute book was signed by the Chairman.

041/11 Reports

Chairman's remarks

The Chairman had attended a recent meeting of the Parish Council forum which had stressed the importance of the District's draft core strategy for future developments in the District. This would be on the agenda for discussion at the next Council meeting. He suggested that in considering its response the Council should give some thought to its attitude to the construction of more affordable housing in the parish. A discussion with Bromsgrove District Housing Trust about this might be useful for the new Council after the May elections.

Planning meetings on 10th and 24th January

The Minutes of the planning meetings had been circulated and were noted by the Council.

Finance meeting on 24th January

The Finance Minutes had also been circulated and were noted by the Council.

Clerk's report

The County Council's bus service review would be on the agenda for discussion in March.

The Clerk and Cllr Ince were meeting a representative of Worcestershire County Council on the following day to discuss a request from the County to move a small section of fence along the access road at Fairfield Recreation Ground (adjacent to the Parish Council's land) to widen the access for farm vehicles. It was agreed that a decision could be taken by the Finance Committee if an urgent response was required.

042/11 Co-option of Councillor for Fairfield ward

One application had been received for the vacancy for Fairfield ward – from Mr Kevin Nind.

Mr Nind was duly co-opted to the Council.

043/11 Parish Council investments

Cllr Bradley said that three options had been identified for investment of the remaining £50,000 tranche of the Council's capital.

1. To leave this in the short term notice account with Scottish Widows - currently paying 1.75% interest;
2. To invest in a Royal Bank of Scotland 3 year fixed rate account paying 4.1%
3. To invest in the Gartmore multimanager fund recommended by Prosperity.

Mr Mark Pritchard of Prosperity financial advisers had briefed the Council before the meeting began about the Gartmore investment.

The Council noted that the Gartmore investment had relatively high service charges but that this reflected the fact that it was actively managed. The fund manager's aims were to beat cash returns whilst maintaining low volatility. Other considerations were that, although there was no penalty for encashment of the investment, it should be viewed as a five year investment to yield worthwhile returns. The RBS return was a fixed rate of 4.1% which was quite attractive- but would be less so if inflation continued to rise. Mark Pritchard had indicated that nearly 70% of the Gartmore fund was invested in cash deposits so if interest rates rose then the fund would reap the benefit of this.

The Council considered that the arguments were fairly evenly balanced between the Gartmore and the RBS investments, but decided by a narrow margin to invest in the Gartmore fund. Cllr Kitson left the meeting whilst this decision was taken.

044/11 Parish Council meeting room

Two papers had been circulated as background for the discussion- one from the Chairman about decision making in the light of the Council's decision in principle that a split into two Councils was desirable and the second paper specifically about the meeting room decisions.

The decision making paper was discussed first. Cllr Bradley suggested that it was desirable that agreement should be reached about how the Council would handle decisions affecting only one part of the parish in the period when the potential split was pending. This would prevent uncertainties later on about the consequences of decisions taken now. The prime example of this was the decision about whether to improve the meeting room. In the long run, if the split occurred, it was likely that only the new Belbroughton Parish Council would use the room. This raised questions about whether the whole Council should decide about the improvement and whether the whole Council should bear the costs of any work. The general view was that the Council should continue to operate in the normal way with decisions considered by the full Council. The Council would need to consider how to treat the meeting room in the division of the assets if and when the split occurred.

In relation to the decision about whether to improve the meeting room, it was agreed that a decision not to improve it was separate from a decision about whether to sell the site. A decision not to improve would mean moving out of the room and using other venues. Other venues would be available including the schools, Fairfield Village Hall (for Committee meetings), and Belbroughton Recreation Centre. The Rec. Committee had written to the

Clerk to outline their thinking on improving one of the rooms at the Rec. for Council meetings.

It was agreed that the Council should not spend £24,000 plus to improve the room. This would not improve the value of the site – which, if sold, would be attractive only as a building plot. However, improvements would increase the room's attractiveness as a venue for small groups and therefore rental income could be increased. There was support from a minority of councillors for spending about £10k on the room if this expenditure would improve it sufficiently to meet legislative requirements. The Clerk had arranged meetings with disabled service users and with an officer from the District's building control team to have an access assessment carried out and to discuss the options for alterations to the room. It was agreed that these meetings should explore what changes would be required to make the room fully compliant for permanent use and whether any temporary measures would improve access sufficiently to enable the Council to continue to use the room for a limited period until the Council's future was clear. The Council would consider this issue again at its March meeting when the results of these meetings were available.

045/11 Parish Council elections

The Clerk circulated a note about the timetable and arrangements for the May parish council elections. In view of the fact that election results might not be notified to the Clerk until Monday 9th May it was agreed to defer the Council's May meeting (the Annual meeting of the Council) until Monday 16th May.

046/11 Parish Council spring newsletter

A draft of the spring newsletter had been circulated. Councillors were asked to let the Clerk have any comments by 18 February so that the newsletter could be distributed in early March.

047/11 Standing Orders

The Clerk explained that when the Council's new standing orders had been agreed the provision for Councillors to receive the summons to the meeting electronically had been inadvertently omitted. The Council agreed that this provision should be included provided that Councillors could receive the agenda by post if they preferred.

048/11 Correspondence receive

Correspondence received since the last meeting was noted.

049/11 Councillors Items

No items were raised on this occasion.

050/11 Fairfield Villa lease

The Council resolved to exclude the public and the press for this item because of the confidential nature of the business to be discussed.

The Council agreed to accept the rent offered by Fairfield Villa Football Club from September 2011. The Council also agreed to extend the length of the lease offered to Fairfield Villa from 10 to 11 years.

The meeting closed at 10.10 pm. Signed.....Chairman