

BELBROUGHTON and FAIRFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

REPORT and Review 2017-18

Chairman Cllr. James Bradley

This is a brief summary of the Council's activities and results in our last financial year, 2017/18. Some of the themes continue and are described further below.

Overall, the progress actually achieved did not match the efforts we put in, partly where we were dependent on the efforts of others. The main points were:-

- i) We carried out an informal survey of Parish opinion to help us to focus our efforts where residents most wanted to see progress, and as a basis for possible action on a Neighbourhood Plan.
- ii) Little Bell Hall Pool was drained in 2016 after a large sinkhole appeared in the dam. After reviewing options we decided the immediate and long-term costs of repair were not justifiable. So at present we have simply made it secure.
- iii) We set aside up to £20,000 to support plans by Belbroughton Recreation Centre to greatly to improve their playground facilities, provided they succeed in their aim of raising other significant funds.
- iv) Efforts were made to improve parking at Fairfield Recreation Ground, but planning permission remains an obstacle.
- v) Planning permission was granted for a development of 9 houses on the land owned by the Diocese of Worcester next to Glebe Field in Belbroughton. The permission reflected comments by the Council and residents.
- vi) Taking account of a number of pluses and minuses compared with our budget we achieved break even.
- vii) Unfortunately both Gez Ingram and Sharon Boss resigned from the council, although Gez happily has since returned following much better news of his wife's health.

Current Activities

Although we have always had an informal plan of future action we decided it would be helpful to formalise that, to help us to decide priorities and to keep track of progress. So we now have an Action Plan which focuses on four main priorities, reflecting the survey of parish opinion:-

- i) Traffic volumes and speeds are a problem in both Fairfield and Belbroughton. The root cause is having 30 million vehicles on the roads nationally, of which we have our share, and any major progress is for others including the County Council as Highways Authority and the police. We continue to press them for action, a sign of which is the dropped kerbs recently installed in Fairfield.

We are also exploring other options to encourage more considerate behaviour by local businesses and drivers.

- ii) The green spaces in and around the villages are a big asset, and we continue our efforts to maintain attractively the land owned by the Council, including the planting etc looked after by our gardeners in each village. We also plan to spend more on footpaths etc in our area, and are very grateful to Paul and Lynne Hardcastle for the hard work they put in to maintain our paths, amidst drought or flood as the case may be. After much pushing the County Council are making an Order to divert the footpath near Brookfield Farm on Hackmans Gate Lane, Belbroughton and we plan an inaugural walk on the new, much safer, route shortly. Efforts continue on improvements to the parking at Fairfield Recreation Ground.
- iii) After long delays we signed the legal agreement with the owner of the former jewellery factory in Belbroughton and developer of planned housing on its site next to Belbroughton Village Green. The Green is owned by the Council and the agreement includes payment for ~~his~~ use of the Green, including running drainage across it. Trees on the boundary have been felled and the Council will be consulting on its re-planting of the Green as a whole. Consultation some years ago at the time of planning permission for the development – yes it was that long ago – revealed a variety of views, and we will seek to maximise agreement.
- iv) Planning issues have made little progress in recent months because we are so dependent on Bromsgrove's Review of its District Plan. That has to reflect the new National Planning Framework, which emphasises strongly the need both for many new houses across the country and for different local authorities, including those in Bromsgrove and Birmingham and the Black Country, to co-operate with one another. We will shortly facilitate consultation meetings in both villages to assist Bromsgrove's Review of its Plan.

Other Activities

We will also continue with our regular activities. Normal planning issues were varied by a request by the owner of the Wildmoor Quarry that land owned by the Council should be included when the County Council updated its Minerals Development Plan. This could have been lucrative but the (Parish) Council turned it down because of the impact locally. We will continue to maintain our agricultural holdings, improve our communications with residents and look after the appearance of the parish.

Thanks We would like, as ever, to thank our clerk John Farrell for all the input he makes to our activities. He continues to go well beyond the call of duty on our behalf.

Council Meetings

Your council meets on the first Monday of the month (except allowing for bank holidays) with Planning and Finance Committee meetings on each third Monday. Meetings are held in the Jubilee Room, Belbroughton Recreation Centre and the Fairfield First School on a 2:1 month rotational basis – Residents are welcome to attend all meetings and to raise issues with their councillors or comment on items on the agenda. The agendas are posted on the notice boards in Belbroughton, Fairfield and Bell Heath. Agendas and minutes of meetings can also be found on the Parish Council website belbroughtonandfairfield-pc.info

Planning Committee – Cllr. Chris Scurrell

The council has an advisory role to the District Council on planning applications and considered 46 planning applications during the year. Of these the council had ‘no objection’.

The Council awaits Bromsgrove District’s criteria for its Green Belt review and will continue to monitor and work to ensure the residents’ best interests are fully represented.

Agricultural Holdings Committee – Cllr. Allan Hood

The Council owns 85 acres of arable farmland in Wildmoor & Stoneybridge. It’s used for various arable cropping types and is let under 13 farm business tenancies at £90 /acre. The income is used to fund the Capital & Minor Grants and Parish Projects.

Council inspects the holdings during the year to ensure they are well maintained which has again proved to be the case. As well as providing a regular income the land is a significant area of ‘Green Belt’ in the Council’s ownership and control.

Finance Committee – Cllr. Alan Mabbett

The Council achieved an overall surplus in 2017/18, of £626 on a budgeted income of around £87,000, the great majority of this (£65,000) from the Precept, our element of your Council Tax. This equates to around £52 for a Band D property.

Spending on ‘Ordinary’ items, is covered by the Precept and covers the Council’s day to day administration, open spaces and footpaths maintenance, street lighting and the maintenance grants made to parish organisations.

The Parish council owns a number of assets and ‘Other’ income derived from these is accounted separately and is available for supporting local capital projects.

Maintenance grants paid out totalled £4,815:

£730 each was paid to Fairfield Village Hall and Belbroughton Church Hall.

£1,155 to Belbroughton Recreation Centre.

The Parochial Church Council received £2,200 for churchyards maintenance and the maintenance of the Holy Trinity church clock.

The Parish Council accrued 'Other' income from the owned assets:

This income, after administration costs, is generally allocated to fund capital and minor grants to parish bodies and local organisations. Capital grants are bid for and if approved are offered towards assisting with one-off costs for up to 50% of the total cost of the item. In addition specific Parish Council projects as in the last year can benefit.

The council had also received £2,350 from the two, now former, County councillors' divisional funds for use on parish projects, notable the footpath diversion work and the new Fairfield notice board.

Payments agreed and accounted for 2017-18:

Capital Grants: Fairfield Village Hall projection equipment £550.

Minor Grants : Fairfield Community Association £350 Belbroughton Lifesavers £250.

Parish Projects: Belbroughton Recreation Ground Play area improvements £20,000.

New noticeboard located outside Fairfield V.Hall £1,740.

First World War Commemorations in both wards £1,000.

Footpath diversion – Nr. Beckett's Farm £706.

Stourbridge Rd. Fairfield – B.T. box removal to enable W.C.C. to install a dropped kerb £576.

The full accounts are scheduled below:-

Apr '17 - Mar 18

Ordinary Income/Expense	
Income	
Lengthsman Scheme	3,148.00
Meeting Room Rent	1,200.00
Precept (Council Tax)	65,000.00
Uncategorized Income	625.06
VAT refund	0.00
Total Income	69,973.06
Gross Profit	69,973.06
Expense	
Administration	
Audit Fee	415.00
Clerk's Expenses	
Postage	227.69
Storage	360.00
Telephone	1,033.25
Travelling	995.40
Total Clerk's Expenses	2,616.34
Computer Supplies	218.46
Council Insurance	1,436.43
Rent	912.50
Stationery	23.36
Training	369.00
Total Administration	5,991.09
Clerk's salary	
Employer's NI	1,386.50
Employer's pension cont	5,043.41
Salary	18,207.28
Clerk's salary - Other	(6,400.00)
Total Clerk's salary	18,237.19
Communication	
CALC	828.02
Newsletters and Annual report	369.85
Parish Magazine	275.00
Website	140.86
Total Communication	1,613.73
Contingency	2,488.20
Footway Lighting	
Energy & routine maintenance	4,921.37
Village Green Belbroughton	301.33
Total Footway Lighting	5,222.70
Legal and Professional	35.00
Maintenance	
Fairfield Rec Insp of playequip	330.50
Maintenance- other	521.02
Total Maintenance	851.52
Maintenance Grants	
Belbroughton Church Hall Manage	730.00
Belbroughton PCC	2,200.00
Belbroughton Recreation Ground	1,155.00
Fairfield Village Hall	730.00
Total Maintenance Grants	4,815.00

Apr '17 - Mar 18

Open Spaces & Footpaths	
Belbroughton green spaces	2,144.41
Emptying Poop-a-scoop & Litter	3,473.98
Fairfield Green Spaces	1,093.15
Footpaths Maintenance	576.88
Grass Mowing	5,875.00
Grit for bins	590.00
Lengthsman	3,870.09
Little Bell Hall pool	350.00
Maintenance of Badgers Copse	420.00
Tree work	3,040.00
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Total Open Spaces & Footpaths	21,433.51
Section 137 Expense	
Bromsgrove CAB	300.00
Miscellaneous	
Membership Fees & Donations	
CPRE	36.00
Open Spaces Soc	45.00
Royal British Legion (Wreaths)	100.00
SLCC Membership	157.00
Woodland Trust	33.00
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Total Membership Fees & Donat...	371.00
Miscellaneous - Other	50.00
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Total Miscellaneous	421.00
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Total Section 137 Expense	721.00
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Total Expense	61,408.94
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Net Ordinary Income	8,564.12
Other Income/Expense	
Other Income	
Agriculture Holdings FBT Rents	7,767.13
F'field Villa F C Rent	2,626.74
Investment Income	4,543.01
Other Income	
Parish Meeting Room Rent	4,800.00
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Total Other Income	4,800.00
Ward Members Funds	2,350.00
Wayleaves	520.70
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Total Other Income	22,607.58
Other Expense	
Clerk 25% allocation	6,000.00
Grants to Parish Bodies	500.00
Minor Grants	600.00
Parish Project Expenditure	23,445.58
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Total Other Expense	30,545.58
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Net Other Income	(7,938.00)
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Profit for the Year	626.12

Neighbourhood Planning - Cllr. Bob Morgan

Back in 2009, the 'Cameron led' coalition government proposed a "bonfire" of planning regulations. The aim was to deliver an increased supply of new homes for an increasing population. The enabling legislation was the 2011 Localities Act.

It's generally accepted that not enough homes are being built. The reasons are complex, multifactorial and subject to much political debate.

Belbroughton and Fairfield Parish Council wishes to support sympathetic and appropriate community development. Some funds have been allocated in the Parish Council budgets to support these aspirations.

A Neighbourhood Planning group was set up in 2017. This group is supported by, but separate, from the Parish Council. Three public meetings have been held, and a Steering Group with an executive committee set up with agreed terms of reference.

The Steering Group was tasked with investigating the appropriateness of the development of a neighbourhood plan. Two key factors have caused this process to be placed on hold:

Firstly, the National Government announced a review of planning laws and secondly, in the West Midlands, The Herne report was published.

The Herne report was about the chronic lack of new housing, together with proposed solutions. The government's review of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was much delayed but this has now been published.

Details on the new NPPF can be found here;

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/revised-national-planning-policy-framework>

Bromsgrove District Council is now mandated to review its own Local Plan against this newly published national strategy. B.D.C. must consult with the community via an

'Issues and options consultation'

The revised (NPPF) sets out the Government's planning policies for England and provides a framework within which locally-prepared plans for housing and other development can be produced.

The Bromsgrove District Plan (adopted January 2017) is at the start of a review process and will provide a long-term vision and strategy to meet the future needs for homes and employment across the District. It is important for everyone to have the opportunity to get involved and have their say on local issues that affect or interest them.

The first stage of their consultation will be to seek your views on the '**Issues & Options**' that you feel need addressing for the Plan. The consultation commenced towards the end of September and will run for 8 weeks from the 24th September 2018 until the 19th November 2018.

Details of the Local Plan Review can be found here;

<http://www.bromsgrove.gov.uk/media/2433162/SCI-low-res-11-07-16.pdf>

The Parish Council is to host public meetings locally on 1st October in Fairfield and 29th October in Belbroughton. Each consultation will involve a presentation from the District Council's strategic planners, a focus group discussion plus a Q. and A. session. This form of meetings and consultation is in line with BDC's policy on 'Community involvement'.

The consultation will be important in defining the shape of our communities in the next several years. Your Parish Council will endeavour to keep residents updated on developments. It will enhance the process with further public meetings and help communicate these views in an effective and positive way.

We would urge residents to be active, aware, and become involved thus helping to shape your community for the generations to come.

The PC's own website will keep you informed:

<http://www.belbroughtonandfairfield-pc.info/home-and-news.html>

Along with other local media sources:

Local Facebook page 'All About Belbroughton' -

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1775876519091339/>

Fairfield Village Community Association -

<http://fvcaorg.uk/neighbourhood-plan/>

Belbroughton and Fairfield Neighbourhood Plan -

<https://b-m.facebook.com/BelbroughtonFairfieldNeighbourhoodPlan/>

Neighbourhood planning is about so much more than housing, but this is an important step in the process.

Please get involved, find out some facts, develop opinions and help shape our community for the years to come.

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