

Minutes of the Meeting of Belbroughton and Fairfield Parish Council held at the Fairfield First School on 2nd October 2017.

Present: Cllrs. J Bradley (Chairman), S Boss, J Boswell, A Hood, T Jones, A Mabbett, S MacDonald, P Margetts, Dr R Morgan, G Parsons, S Pawley and, C Scurrrell.

Clerk: J Farrell.

County Cllr. K May and 9 members of the public.

291/17 Apologies – Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr. S Nock.

Apologies were also received from County Cllr. Shirley Webb, District Cllrs. C Allen-Jones and M Sherrey.

The meeting adjourned, with Standing Orders suspended, for the ‘Open Surgery’ and also to listen to members of the public identifying matters of concern relating to the evening’s agenda.

The meeting re-opened.

292/17 Declarations of Interest - Cllr. Margetts declared an Other disclosable Interest in agenda item 6 as he had taken part in the Velo Birmingham event and had pre-registered for 2018.

293/17 Dispensations - Council agreed to the dispensation request from Cllr. Margetts to remain in the meeting, to speak and to vote during agenda item 6 Velo Birmingham.

294/17 Minutes

Council approved the minutes of the Council Meeting of 4th September 2017 and the Chairman signed the minute book.

295/17 Reports

Chairman’s report: Cllr. Bradley advised Council that he had received earlier in the day the resignation of Cllr. Ingram from the Council, due regrettably to him not being able to devote sufficient time to the role in view of health issues arising within his family. The Council recorded its warm thanks for his contribution to the Council, and noted that he hoped to return in the future.

The Scarecrow Weekend: due to the inclement weather takings will be down and profit much reduced. As a result there will be reduced funds available for distribution. He felt there may be therefore a greater call on the Parish Council grants next year.

Planning Committee report: Council noted the minutes of the Committee meeting held 4th September 2017. Cllr. Scurrrell advised that a meeting had been held with the District Council Planning Dept. officers for them to assist the members with clarity on Green Belt and Permitted Development regulations. He further advised that Mr Dale Birch, planning officer had offered to attend a future committee meeting. It was noted however that this meeting at Parkside commencing at 5.30pm was lightly attended and any future sessions with the District Council would be requested to have a later starting time to enable more members, especially those working full time, to attend.

Financial Committee report: Council noted the minutes of the Committee held 18th September 2017.

Clerk's Report:

1. E mail received from Fairfield Village Hall Committee thanking the Council for approving a capital grant of £500 towards a projector.
2. The Green Belbroughton - Cllrs Bradley, Morgan, and Nock will meet with the Council's lawyers MFG on 18th October to assess the formal agreement with the Developer of the adjacent land and the request for drainage access and tree removal. There is a 'final' draft from the Developer's lawyers for consideration. Provided there are no significant charges from the 'Heads of Terms' previously agreed then the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Parish Council are authorised to sign the agreement.
3. Cllr. Gez Ingram has resigned from the Parish Council today, the notice of casual vacancy will be sent to the District Council.
4. Cllr. Boswell volunteered to join the Fairfield Villa F.C. liaison group which is meeting the club officials on 9th Oct. 7.00pm .
5. Bench request by bus shelter by the Fairfield church. The W.C.C. rules remain the same - i.e. there needs to be a 1.8 mtrs space between the wall and road. This is why there has never been a bench placed here in the past and can't be now.
6. Dog bin replacement corner of Wood Lane / Stourbridge Rd. We will be removing the 2 bins from Bel Rec - replacing them with one larger bin at that site. Of the 2 to be taken out one will go to Wood Lane, the other to Hartle Lane, Belbroughton.

County Cllr. Karen May: Report -

Open for Business:

Worcestershire Parkway: Work starting this Autumn

Preparation work to the foundations for the new Worcestershire Parkway railway station is expected to begin this month. The main structural work will then get underway next year.

Completion is due in the winter of 2018/19.

Located just east of M5 J7 Worcestershire Parkway will forge better links between Worcester and London and also access to the South West, the South East and the North. It is part of the £50million plus investment by the County Council into Worcestershire's rail network.

Supporting Children and Families

Essex County Council appointed as Improvement Partner, approved by Trevor Doughty the Dept for Education's Commissioner for Children's Services in Worcester. Experts from Essex will work alongside the County's Children's Services Team to improve the lives of children and young people in Worcestershire.

As a part of the Council's improvement journey a recommendation to voluntarily place Children's Services into a different form was discussed at last week's Cabinet meeting.

John Edwards has left WCC after seven years at the County Council. Nick Wilson has taken over as interim Assistant Director for Education and Skills.

Promoting Health and Wellbeing.

Roll out of Three Conversations Model

Worcestershire County council is taking a new approach to working with vulnerable adults. The three conversations approach moves us away from formal assessments and bureaucracy towards a swifter, personal, conversation led approach that focusses on the needs and strengths of the individual and their community. Early observations from the pilot areas are finding that it is offering people quicker solutions. The roll out of this approach across the county will be completed by April 2018.

Protecting the Environment

Action to Tackle Congestion

Following the cabinet decision earlier this year to commit an additional £5million towards improving congestion in Worcestershire, work has been underway to identify locations where a difference can be made. Officers are working to develop a list of priority sites across the county where changes can be made to improve traffic flow. Examples will include pinch points, traffic signal junctions and stand alone pedestrian crossings. These sites will be prioritized and a list of recommendations will be developed shortly. If you have any areas in your divisions where you think that this work is required e mail Jon Fraser on jfraser@worcestershire.gov.uk

County Council News

Budget update

The September report to Cabinet last week highlighted that after the first four months of 2017/18 there is an anticipated financial pressure of £7.5 million for the year. This is 2.3% of the Council's budget.

The three main factors for this pressure are:

- a. An overspend pressure due to increased demand within our Children's Services Safeguarding and Placements of £6million.
- b. Forecast slippage on the Council's Transformation Programme.
- c. Additional costs of around £1million being experienced in the waste budget.

The County council is working hard across all services to identify ways in which further efficiencies can be achieved in 2017/18 to ensure where possible, this financial pressure can be supported and offset by compensating reductions in expenditure elsewhere. However given the scale of the overspend due to the increasing demand particularly in Children's Services Safeguarding and Placements it is likely that the County Council will need to consider other means of achieving the delivery of its services within the cash limited budget of £324million in addition to these efficiencies prior to the end of the 2017/18 financial year.

296/17 Fairfield Recreation Ground – Car parking

Cllr. Mabbett updated council on the carpark extension, advising that the planning application remained pending at District Council following the initial refusal but under advice that a smaller expansion of the site may be possible. Also, the Parish Council would need to produce sufficient special circumstances to contra the Green Belt regulation which did not allow such development. Fresh calculations had been worked on which suggested the increase being sought was actually a lower percentage than the planners may have appreciated.

Further information on current usage of the site will be needed from the school and the football club to produce the special circumstances that may enable the planning department to put the application out for consultation.

Council agreed, excepting Cllr. Scurrrell who abstained, that a site visit should be requested with the planning officer along with District Council Cllr. Chris Allen-Jones to examine the site and discuss the issues.

Council noted that other solutions to reduce the amount of parking along the Stourbridge Rd were required, however these could only be implemented by the County Council. Whereas, the Parish Council owned the Fairfield Recreation Ground and therefore could promote actions on it.

Action: Cllrs. Mabbett, Jones and the clerk to attend the proposed site visit.

297/17 Velo Birmingham

County Cllr. May confirmed that the County Council will be reviewing the 2017 event with CSM Ltd before any commitment is given for future years.

Birmingham City Council have however requested that Worcestershire again hosts part of the route. She informed members of 19 incidents of tacks put down on the route including one on Dordale Rd. Belbroughton. She felt that the marshalling was atrocious.

She would be happy to take back any issues from both residents and businesses.

Council noted comments received both by prior e mail and from residents at this meeting. It will compile a report for the County Council's review for consideration by the November Council.

Action: Cllrs. to advise the clerk of their comments on the event.

298/17 Neighbourhood Plan

a. Council noted the report* from the Working Group acknowledging that the information from the recent parish opinion survey would also be used by the council to decide its future priorities. It would therefore review the various Council Working Groups to assess if they remained appropriate.

b. Council approved the recommendations of the Working Group, moving to the next preparation stage including the request to designate the appropriate area with the District Council, the forming of a Steering Group and in principle the allocation of £2,000 in the 2018/19 budget towards costs. The Council will also apply for grant funding of £8,000. A second survey would be required and only when that had been analysed would a decision be taken on whether to move to develop a Neighbourhood Plan.

The Report*:

Report for Full Council meeting 2nd October 2017 at Fairfield First School

- 1. The working group met on 20th September to receive the response data of the Parish Questionnaire, and discuss next steps. The raw data, without comment, has previously been distributed to Belbroughton and Fairfield parish councillors.*

2. *A separate report, circulated 21st Sept to members entitled "Community Needs and Aspirations for the future" describes: -*
 - *The ethos and methodology of the survey*
 - *The response data*
 - *The major themes can be identified from this report. Although the survey was commissioned as the first stage towards consideration of an NHP, it has provided valuable information, in its own right, for the PC on parishioners views*
3. *The WG identified major themes and recommends that these are progressed by the existing council working groups. The aim is to include items for discussion and possible inclusion in the forthcoming 2018/19 budget consideration. The membership and activities of the current working groups should be reviewed to improve workloads and maintain balanced membership.*
4. *The major themes identified from the Survey: -*
 - *Effective maintenance is required of the current good aspects of our communities. Including our public green spaces and the overall rural and semi-rural features of our communities.*
 - *There is poor public transport provision*
 - *Improve traffic calming measures and community awareness. This should include improved police liaison and enforcement*
 - *Improve outdoor leisure areas for all age groups in both villages*
 - *Improve parking*
 - *Improve litter collection, reduce fly tipping and dog fouling.*
 - *Improve footway lighting and general maintenance.*
5. *The PC has constraints and limitations in some areas but is committed to use its influence wherever possible*
6. *The Group recommends sponsoring and encouraging self-help in communities with parishioners taking an active role in maintaining and improving the community. Gardening and library maintenance are good current examples.*
7. *The working group wishes to have a full discussion on these themes, at the October council meeting. This should allow financial implications to be considered at the ensuing budget development meetings. Outline of priorities and indications of costings may only be possible at this early stage. A full commitment to developing an NHP is not sought at this point. The budget discussions are to take place imminently.*
8. *The response data is available on our website. Printed copies can be made available upon request via the clerk. Parishioners will be directed to this option via the village noticeboards.*
9. *The local and national picture of Neighbourhood plans continues to evolve. The group unanimously recommends moving to next stage of an NHP. This will involve discussion with Bromsgrove strategic planners, our neighbouring parishes and consideration of the benefits. This to be progressed by sponsoring the setting up of a Neighbourhood Plan steering group.*
10. *The working group and Parish Council would oversee the creation of this steering group. The aim is to ensure balanced representation from our community. Close working with Bromsgrove strategic planners is essential. Continuing liaison between our PC, the steering group and the District council is a vital element of success. Any developing plan must support the aspirations of our community*
11. *The council should consider asking the budget group to allocate a sum of £2,000 towards the estimated cost of the next stage of a plan. This sum will help to provide a tool to progress with further consultation, within community, which can only be of benefit.*
12. *An application to the Localities Commission for a grant of up to £8,000 would be expected, giving the steering group a potential initial funding of £10,000. This is a common budget used by other groups.*

13. *The WG felt very strongly that a community groups consultation should be a key element of the next stage. The aim would be to ensure participation from all members of our community. This is a stand-alone positive endeavour.*
14. *The District and County Councillors for our area are kept informed and their advice and guidance sought.*
15. *Any final decision on developing a definitive NH plan will be taken at a later stage – by the Council / the steering group.*

We would request that the survey and possible progression towards the next stage of considering an NHP forms a main element of the October meeting.

Executive summary of recommendations and actions

- *The survey responses are presented for discussion*
- *The responses should be accepted and used to develop our parish council activities and priorities – thus forming a “Parish Council Plan”*
- *The survey response has been uploaded to the website, emailed to those on the database and it will be publicised on the parish noticeboards that the information is on the website and/or a copy can be requested from the Clerk.*
- *The Council approves progress to the next stage of an NHP plan. This includes setting up a steering group.*
- *The Parish Council applies to Bromsgrove District Council to notify of them of our intention to develop a Neighbourhood Plan and designate the appropriate area*
- *The PC sponsors and facilitates the creation of a Neighbourhood Plan steering group for both wards of our parish*
- *The budget group are asked to consider allocating a sum of £2,000 towards the activities of the NHP steering group. The steering group will comprise volunteers from within the wards and some parish councillors.*

It is expected that the PC will have close links with the NHP steering group and have oversight of its activities. My thanks to the all NHP working group for their input and support.

*Bob Morgan for the NHP working group
October 2107*

Action: The working group to progress.

299/17 Little Bell Hall Pool

- a. Council noted the report** from the Working Group.
- b. Council approved the recommendations of the Working Group. It also confirmed that the site would not be sold. The Report**:

The group met on 1st August to review the current situation. This included a site visit. The recent works, in the last 12 months, to the area have been successful. The former pool and dam area is currently stable.

The County Council have acknowledged the Parish Council’s advisory note to them that the pool had been drained in June 2016. This note being sent since WCC own the highway known locally as “Drayton Road” which is adjacent to the former pool. The District Council is aware from the involvement of the N.W.W. management team.

A project to refill the pool would encounter the following issues:-

- a. *The current structure is porous but stable*
- b. *We are now advised that a restoration cost of £30.000 is probably too conservative estimate*

- c. *Maintaining a safe pool, with due regard to current legislation and published guidance, would be expensive and well beyond anything that was considered when the last restoration project was devised.*
- d. *The risk of litigation would I be greatly increased.*
- e. *Ongoing maintenance of the dam and the pool area will be expensive and unpredictable. The Parish Council underestimated this at the time of the last restoration*
- f. *The safety risks would be increased*
- g. *The benefits to the environment of a pool area as opposed to “wetlands” is neutral*
- *The working group recommends the following: -*
 - a. *The former pool area can continue its reversal back to a natural watercourse*
 - b. *The area should be tidied up, but not made to feel any way an urban space*
 - c. *The current risk assessment to be revised by the clerk with referral to the WG to specify regular maintenance and additional inspections after unusually wet weather patterns.*
 - d. *The lengthsman to be consulted on this task and a decision made as to whether this can be incorporated into his current duties or a special project needs to be devised. This cost to be discussed at finance and incorporated into future budgets, if necessary.*
 - e. *Organising a team of volunteers if such comes forward to help with maintenance work in clearing foliage from the footway and possibly the banks themselves, subject to the banks being stable may be considered. The risks are high and need to be considered carefully before and such project is considered*
 - f. *The working group will meet to , review the area in March and report to council*
 - g. *If a group of villagers wished to set up a project group to consider the full restoration of management of the former pool, then this should be considered by council in the future.*
 - h. *The sale of the pool was considered and enquiries were made by the clerk. The only available option currently was to offer the pool for sale by auction. The cost of this would be £ 2-3000 with no guaranteed result. The WG considered this this would be poor use of public funds. This option can be reconsidered if circumstances or opportunities change.*
 - i. *An addition to the signage to be incorporated informing residents that the pool has had to been drained in June 2016 for structural reasons*

I would like to record my thanks to the working group members, Councillors Margetts and Hood their efforts and Councillor Boss for her hospitality on several occasions.

Bob Morgan for the LBHP Working Group October 2017

Cllr. MacDonald left the meeting.

300/17 Ram Ally / Dark Lane Belbroughton – Tree Replacement

Council approved the planting of an oak to replace the felled diseased lime tree. It also approved the installing of a bench at the site which had been requested by local residents.

Action: Cllr. Margetts and the clerk to progress with the B.D.C. Tree Officer.

301/17 Traffic Calming

Council agreed to approach the County Cllrs. for support from their Divisional Funds for expenditure on traffic calming measures.

Action: The traffic calming group to consider specifics in the light of further discussions with the W.C.C. Highways.

302/17 Defibrillators

Council agreed subject to West Midlands Ambulance Service agreement, that signs should be erected around the villages indicating the locations of the defibrillators.

Action: Cllr. Pawley and the clerk to progress.

303/17 Fairfield Post Office

Council noted that the adjacent shop had now closed. Cllr. Mabbett advised council that local residents were concerned at the possibility of the post office also closing.

Council agreed that a member would join with local residents to monitor the position and to seek possible solutions should its future be in jeopardy.

Action: Cllr. Mabbett would attend this group and report back to Council.

304/17 The Green Belbroughton

Cllr. Pawley advised Council of a homeowner's issues over damp in her property which abuts The Green. The resident would like an adjacent pathway constructed, at her cost, thus taking away the part of the earthen bank situated against her wall. Council agreed to consider looking at permitting a footpath to be constructed but initially request a surveyors report from the resident along with a specific written proposal.

Action: Cllr. Pawley to discuss with the resident.

305/17 Councillors Items

Cllr. Margetts advised that the WCC had agreed subject to adequate space being available to the siting of a bench on Holy Cross Lane on the site of a former B.T. phone box.

Action: Cllr. Margetts to progress.

Cllr. Margetts advised that a tree on entrance to Woodgate Way Belbroughton required the lower branches reducing to let in light.

Action: the clerk will discuss with the BDC Tree Officer as the tree is in the Conservation Area.

Cllr. Pawley advised that 6 strands of the Belbroughton tree lights were not working. Council agreed to use the BDC team to check the connections.

Action: Clerk to instruct B.D.C.

Cllr. Mabbett advised he was chasing both C.Cllr. Shirley Webb and WCC Highways Richard Clewer on a response on both the dropped kerbs request and engineering works for traffic calming on Stourbridge Rd. Fairfield.

Cllr. Mabbett advised that the line of sight at the mini roundabout looking towards Catshill was obscured by bramble vegetation. The Lengthsman would be asked to attend.

Cllr. Boswell requested that November Council considers Christmas festivities on The Green Belbroughton.

Cllr. Bradley advised that the footpath warden had advised that the footpath from The Belbroughton Rec. running to 'New Barn' has a gate in a very poor condition. The County Council has agreed to provide a new gate and the local farmer had agreed to install this for a nominal sum of circa £50. Council agreed to fund the installation costs.

Cllr. Bradley requested a future agenda considers funding improvements to an overgrown path from Belbroughton to Drayton beside the stream albeit the local farmer has agreed to trim this back there is a wet patch needing drainage works. However this site is just inside the Chaddesley Corbett Parish area. Council agreed it would consider this but would need to see costings.

Cllr. Bradley advised that a meeting with Sajid Javid M.P. was still available notwithstanding the need to postpone two recent dates firstly due to the general election and later a clash with Scarecrow Weekend when no suitable premises were available. Council agreed continue to seek a meeting.

Cllr. Bradley advised that residents had concern with the appropriateness of the new window display at the shop in Belbroughton which depicted a large wine glass. Council agreed to write to the proprietor expressing concern and also to enquire of the Conservation Officer whether such display was legal.

The Meeting was closed at 10.25 p.m.

Signed Chairman.