

# Belbroughton and Fairfield Parish Council

## Annual Report and Review 2019/20.

This is a summary of the Parish Council's activities & financial results in the year to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020.

We are presently in the midst of the Covid-19 crisis and we are conscious of the strains and stresses this has placed residents under.

Your Councillors have adapted well to the need to change and how we continued to function.

We have joined the "Zoom Community" for meetings and have been able carry on business pretty much as usual. Residents are very welcome to link into these video conferencing meetings.

The agendas are posted on the Parish Council website [belbroughtonandfairfield-pc.info](http://belbroughtonandfairfield-pc.info)

Through this difficult period we have agreed for our thirteen farm tenants, The Deli, Belbroughton and the Fairfield Villa F.C. a rent free period initially for three months.

Overall we had a busy year, with a mix of achievements but we also await other bodies to act.

**Traffic:** We achieved some progress on signage and have ongoing discussions with W.C.C. on various traffic calming measures throughout the Parish. We acknowledge the large number of vehicles now using village roads. We continue our efforts, in partnership with other agencies, to improve the safety in our villages. Agreement was reached with W.C.C to apply for a Road Traffic Order to reduce the national speed limit at the Stoneybridge Island side of the Stourbridge Road into Fairfield to 40 mph with supporting road markings to encourage traffic to enter Fairfield at a much lower speed than at present. Consultations are on-going with respect to other traffic management options within the Parish. We have supported the development of a hard-standing area in Fairfield for a speed check vehicle. Councillor Alan Mabbett dutifully continues to lead our efforts.

**The Environment:** Green spaces are important to our parishioners and are prioritised. Footpaths are well maintained, and we again thank our volunteer footpath warden Paul Hardcastle. With Paul's pressure the County Council have paid for a number of improvements.

The Severn Trent Resilience Project appeared to be concluding and has been well run by the contractors Barhale Ltd.

We continue to have Mr Nigel Williamson working for us as Lengthsman dealing with local tidying duties on the highways and footways and also keeping our grit bins filled. James Callaghan and Bernard Edwards contract to us for gardening services in Belbroughton and Fairfield. We thank all three for their work. Bernard has now chosen to retire after many years of service. We thank him for his efforts and wish him well for the future.

We commissioned a tidy up of the Ram Ally area in Belbroughton and a resident donated a bench for the site. Cllr. Allington arranged further litter picks in Belbroughton. Many thanks to both her and Mr Conrad Palmer and the Fairfield Community Association for their regular litter picks in Fairfield.

A new dog waste bin was installed in Wildmoor and the numbers of bin collections was increased across the whole parish area.

A new surface was put down on the Fairfield Recreation playground. Large potholes on the carpark were also filled in. The proposal for an extension to the car park is still under consideration but the cost is significant. We remain aware of the occasional flooding of the footpath between the Fairfield First School and the carpark. We are awaiting ground levels data from the North Worcs. Water Management people and have a solution in mind for drainage works. This data though cannot be produced until N.W.W.M. are back working after the 'lockdown'.

**The Green, Belbroughton:** The adjacent developer completed the agreed drainage link installed from his site to the High Street and therefore phased improvements by the Parish Council were implemented. Our thanks to councillor Sue Pawley who has lead the project along with the Working Group of both councillors and local residents.

Firstly, the very tall cypress conifers were removed to give The Green better natural light. Then a yew hedge was planted along the boundary with the Talbot P.H. carpark. Plus, thirteen specimen trees on The Green itself. The eastern boundary is to have its hedgerow reduced in height and further improvements to the site are due to be considered. The lockdown due to Covid-19 has delayed the work, but the Group has a virtual meeting planned and hope to progress further.

Should any Parishioner wish to join the Working Group please contact our clerk John Farrell.

**Neighbourhood Planning:** Rather frustrating as we await the Bromsgrove District Council moving forward on its Green Belt review before pressing ahead with the consideration of a Neighbourhood Plan.

**Schools:** The twice daily activities around our village schools continues to be challenging. Working with the County Council changes to parking regulations have been made to improve safety outside Belbroughton Primary. We monitor activities relating to the building work at Fairfield First School. The Parish Council however has only limited influence.

**Little Bell Hall Pool:** Significant further tidying of the site took place and as required legally we commissioned a structural engineers report on the state of the dam and repair requirements necessary to it and the surrounding bank should the pool be refilled. This report arrived in March and at the June 2020 Council it was agreed that the pool should not be refilled. The costs estimate of £50,000 plus logistics involved with professional bodies made this prohibitive.

There will need to be minor repairs to the dam anyway which we aim will be carried out in 2020. This being dependent upon the availability of specialist contractors during the health crisis. And, there will be ongoing maintenance of the site to keep it a safe and visually appealing amenity.

**Planning:** Quarries remain very much in the Council's scope and it will assess all future applications when they are presented to the County Council. Councillor Syd Danks admirably leads our monitoring of such issues including alleged breaches of planning permissions in the vicinity.

**Communication:** The Council continually reviews its social media involvement.

**Election May 2019:** There was no election due to there not being as many candidates as positions available. Indeed, there were 4 unfilled positions in the Fairfield Ward. Messrs. Syd Danks and Gez Ingram joined us in August and October respectively however there remain two vacancies. Please consider joining us and helping your community prosper.

The election meant we said goodbye to Cllrs. James Bradley, Trevor Jones and Chris Scurrall who all retired after many, many years of service to your community.

**Lobbying:** In June 2019 we welcomed Mr Paul Robinson Chief Executive of the Worcestershire County Council to attend a 'Question and Answer' session. The Council has regular contact with your District and County Councillors and requests that your issues are addressed.

**Income and expenditure:** Year to 31.3.2020 The Council recorded a surplus of £2,768.

<b>Precepted Income</b>	£65,000	(total of the tax from our residents)
<b>Other Income</b>		
Lengthsman Scheme	£3,078	(County Council support.)
Rental income	£14,600	(Farm tenancies, F.V.F.C. & The Deli, Belbroughton)
Cash Investments interest	£6,467	(8 investments are in place with F.S.C.S. banks)
Wayleaves	£446	(n'power & National Grid)
Ward members grants	£1,500	(Thank you C.Cllr. Karen May)
<b>Total income</b>	<b>£ 91,091</b>	

<b>Grants paid and projects for our Community:</b>		
<b>Maintenance Grants</b>		
The Parochial Church Council	£2,200	(Help with the churchyard maintenance for both Belbroughton & Fairfield churches)
Belbroughton Recreation Centre	£1,155	
Fairfield Village Hall	£730	
Belbroughton Church Hall	£730	

<b>Capital Grants:</b>		
Belbroughton Rec. Centre	£2,357	(Improvements to infrastructure)
Belbroughton Cricket Club	£1,200	(New roller)
Fairfield Village Hall	£2,000	(Projection equipment)
Fairfield Village Hall	£500	(C.C.T.V. facilities)
<b>Parish Projects:</b>		
Fairfield Recreation Ground play area	£4,657	(Surface renewal, & new swings)
Belne Brook, Drayton Rd. site	£6,640	(Site clearance works)
Repairs to footpath Bel. School – Rec	£1,500	(Funded by C.Cllr K May).
<b>Minor Grants:</b>		
Fairfield Community Association	£250	
Fairfield Villa F.C (Defib. battery)	£115	
Fairfield Social Bingo Club	£200	
Wildmoor Residents Association	£89	
Belbroughton History Society	£461	
<b>Other Expenditures:</b>		
Admin. £10,194	Dog bins emptying £5,188	Grass Mowing £5,305
Lighting £5,812	Other green space management £10,194	Staff £26,556
<b>Total Expenditure - £88,323</b>		

Full details of the accounts including the balance sheet are on our website [belbroughtonandfairfield-pc.info](http://belbroughtonandfairfield-pc.info) or alternatively a 'hard' copy can be posted to you.

**Planning Report:** 33 planning applications were considered during the Council year.

Recommendations made to the Bromsgrove District Council:

- 12 No Objection
- 12 No Objection but with conditions
- 6 Objected
- 3 Neutral

The Committee meets once a month on the third Monday.

**Agricultural Holdings Report:** The Council owns 85 acres of arable farmland in Wildmoor and Stoneybridge. This is let under 13 farm business tenancies, the land is used for various arable cropping types.

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' within the Council's ownership and thus control.

The rents were reviewed for the year commencing Sept 2020 and it was decided to keep these unchanged at £90/acre.

**Council Meetings:** Your council meets on the first Monday of the month, except allowing for bank holidays when the second Monday is used. The Planning and Finance Committees meet on each third Monday. There are no meetings in August.

Normally, these are held in the Jubilee Room, Belbroughton Recreation Centre and the Fairfield First School on a 2:1 month rotational basis. However, these are currently being conducted by video conference during the Covid-19 crisis. Residents are welcome to attend all meetings. The agendas including 'video conference' links and minutes of meetings are available on the Parish Council website [belbroughtonandfairfield-pc.info](http://belbroughtonandfairfield-pc.info). Agendas and minutes are also available by paper copy on request to the clerk tel: 01299 270722.

You can contact the Parish Council via e mail [belbroughtonpc@live.co.uk](mailto:belbroughtonpc@live.co.uk) or tel: 01299 270722.

**Parish Council Chairman**

**Councillor Dr. Robert Morgan 30<sup>th</sup> June 2020**