

Belmont Rural Parish Council

Minutes of a Meeting of the Parish Council, held on Thursday 3rd July 2014 At Northolme Community Centre, Northolme Road, Belmont

Present: Mr. A. Myatt Chairman
Mr. K. Baynham
Mr. A. Bridges
Mr. D. Cook
Mr. P. Edwards
Mr. B. Hubbard
Mr. R. Loft
Ms. D. Parish
Mr. M. Schoffer

In attendance: Mrs. E. Kelso
4 members of the public

80/14 Apologies, Declarations of Interest and requests for dispensation

The following declaration of interest was received:

| Name | Nature of Interest | Agenda item/Minute ref. |
|----------------|---|------------------------------------|
| Mr. A. Bridges | Disclosable pecuniary interest as payment being made to family member | Agenda items 7.2 Ref: 85/14 (b) |

There were no further declarations of interest.

There were no requests for dispensation.

81/14 Public Participation and to introduce Mike Gill, Locality Steward from Balfour Beatty

Mr. Gill introduced himself and outlined the role of the Locality Steward for Balfour Beatty, explaining that a new Steward for Hereford South – Craig Sandeman – had been recruited and would assume responsibility for the Belmont Rural area shortly

Mr. Gill then took questions from Members and members of the public in attendance, noting in particular:

- The reduction in grass cutting for amenity areas had created a number of issues not just in the poor appearance of the parish generally but the longer grass was proving difficult to cut

when the mowers did attempt to do so, frequently requiring two cuts instead of one and possibly leading to additional costs.

- The longer grass now hides bottles and cans requiring a litter pick before the mowers move in to avoid injuring members of the public nearby
- Concern was expressed that longer cut grass left on the ground would represent a fire hazard in the summer months and might kill growing grass left underneath.
- Some of the decisions relating to additional cuts for safety reasons were questioned
- Young people in attendance at the meeting expressed their concern that their only play areas, i.e. those informal play spaces used as a kick about area, were unusable due to the uncut grass
- Although the parish council has requested additional cuts to informal play areas which it would consider funding, no response has been received from Balfour Beatty Living Places despite several requests.
- It was noted that leaving the grass longer would result in seed setting in kerbs and gutters resulting in greater weed growth in future. Consideration of additional kerb weed sprays was requested.

It was further noted that Herefordshire Council/Balfour Beatty Living Places were encouraging community groups and charities to take responsibility for some grounds maintenance work, which would be easier once the next cut takes place.

There were further comments on lack of maintenance to shrubs and trees on public open space, leading to some access routes becoming impassable due to overgrown shrubs and the risk of injury to the public from overhanging branches.

Finally, Mr. Gill apologies for the poor service from Balfour Beatty Living Places and suggested that the policy might be reconsidered in the light of experience this year.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Gill for attending the meeting and he, and the members of the public in attendance then left the meeting.

81/14 To approve Minutes of the meetings held on 29th May and 5th June

The Minutes of the parish council meetings held on 29th May and 5th June had been previously circulated. It was agreed that the Chairman be authorised to sign each of the Minutes as presented to the meeting as a true record of proceedings at each meeting.

It was further agreed that the Chairman be authorised to sign the Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 29th May 2014 as a true record of proceedings at that meeting.

82/14 Clerk's Report

The Clerk's report, as attached to these Minutes, was noted.

83/14 West Mercia Police/Parish Watch

West Mercia Police were not in attendance. Councillor Edwards reported that he had attended a police briefing at Tesco recently and noted little criminal activity within the parish since the last meeting.

84/14 Correspondence

Other than routine correspondence distributed to members separately, the following items were noted:

- (a) Draft protocol for recording and filming of council or committee meetings. It was noted that this will be the subject of a separate agenda item at a later date.
- (b) Notification of an exhibition of proposals relating to the South Wye Transport Package consultation

Members expressed concern that notification about the exhibition had not been formally sent to the Parish Council and there appears to have been no publicity that might have enabled residents to attend who might wish to do so although residents in Clehonger had received notification last month. It was reported that some 125 people had attended over the three day period and a smaller version of the exhibition would move into the Library at Belmont. The plan identifies the most favoured route for the proposed relief road being that which is furthest away from the Parish boundary. The consultation period runs to 8th August and will be an agenda item for the August meeting.

85/14 Financial Matters

(a) To note report from the Finance Working party

Minutes from the FWP meeting held on 25th June were noted.

(b) To authorise payments for June 2014

Authority was given to make the following payments:

| | |
|-------------------------------|---------|
| Mrs. K. Bridges | |
| Distribution of Annual Report | £120.00 |
| Petty cash reimbursement | £49.34 |
| ABC Print (Hereford) | |
| Printing of Annual Report | £268.00 |
| R G Howells | |
| Refurbishment of notice board | £172.69 |

(c) To note account balances as at the date of the meeting

| | |
|------------------|------------|
| Current account: | £500.00 |
| Deposit account: | £82,936.91 |
| Petty cash: | £75.66 |

(d) Other financial matters

- It was reported that Auditors conducting the external audit had requested further information from the Clerk, which had been dealt with.
- Royal Bank of Scotland has written to indicate that with effect from 30th September, interest on the deposit account will be paid monthly rather than quarterly.

86/14 Planning Matters

(a) Planning applications now due for observations

None

(b) Planning applications notified for permitted development

None

(c) Update on Neighbourhood Development Plan progress

Councillor Bridges provided an update on a recent meeting with Kirkwells, notes from which were provided to Members. The next NDP steering group meeting is scheduled for 9th July.

The Clerk reported that she had received written comment from Mr. Paul Heinrich following the presentation at the Annual Parish Meeting and a volunteer had joined the Steering Group.

(d) Other planning matters

- The application by Tesco to extend the premises to facilitate the dotcom business has been approved with conditions
- It was noted that the extension to a property in Wheatridge Road has been approved, with conditions.
- Tesco are advertising a change to their petrol filling station opening hours. It was confirmed that this was within the previously agreed planning consent.
- A pre-application approach to Ward Councillors has been made to extend the equipment and services for mobile phone use at the junction of Abbotsmead Road and Belmont Road which Ward Councillors have objected to on safety grounds, particularly in the light of the proposals contained within the South Wye Transport Package.

87/14 Training

There were no reports from Members who had attended training sessions and no requests for further training.

88/14 Ward Councillor Reports

Members noted verbal reports from Ward Councillors on their activities as Ward Councillors since the last meeting.

89/14 Proposal to purchase a new printer for use by the Clerk

It was agreed that a new printer/scanner be purchased for use by the Clerk up to a budget price of £300 in order to facilitate scanning of documents in pdf format.

90/14 Community Resilience Plan

Having reviewed the suggested template for a Community Resilience Plan it was agreed not to proceed with a plan at this stage but to complete the “key contact” details contained within the plan and make these public and available on the website.

91/14 Provision of IT equipment for councillors

Members discussed the proposal to issue councillors with tablet pcs or something similar for use in connection with their role as a parish councillor and the potential implications of doing so. After a brief discussion, it was agreed to defer a decision on this until after the next full parish council elections.

91/14 Pride in Parish Scheme

Noting that originally the Pride in Parish scheme was set up to encourage volunteer litter picking, it was agreed to re-launch the scheme with a view to using volunteers to help with grounds maintenance throughout the parish, particularly once the next grass cut takes place later in July. Some volunteers had already come forward following a section in the Annual Report to Residents and posters would be placed on notice boards and the website to encourage others. It was agreed that a meeting of volunteers be held as soon as possible and in the meantime the Clerk was authorised to approach Herefordshire Council to seek guidance on the use of voluntary help for routine grounds maintenance work. Councillor Hubbard indicated he would be keen to help run the project.

92/14 Date of next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 7th August at Belmont Community Centre, Eastholme Avenue, Belmont, commencing at 7pm.

1. Bus Shelter

At the last meeting a request was made for clarification on the design proposed for the works associated with the bus shelter outside Brook Farm Court. A copy of the response has been attached.

2. Abbey View Park

At the last meeting the Clerk was instructed to obtain alternative quotations for the work remaining work envisaged on Abbey View Park. Due to the Clerk's absence on leave, quotations have not yet been obtained.

3. Grass Cutting

A schedule for grass cutting within the Parish is now available on the Herefordshire Council website, suggesting that the informal areas around the parish will be cut in July. No response has been received from Balfour Beatty Living Places to our request for a price for providing an enhanced service for grass cutting.

The clerk has received several complaints from residents at what is perceived as a deterioration of the general environment as a result of the long grass. One injury to a dog has been reported from hidden material in the long grass. Lack of visibility along the path linking Northolme Road with Abbotsmead Road has been reported as a hazard to pedestrians from cyclists and several footways are partially blocked by overgrown shrubs and bushes.

4. Litter Bins

The litter bin removed from the gate on Abbey View Park remains in the temporary position. The Waste Management Team at Herefordshire Council has categorically refused any request for emptying wherever the bin is located, referring the Clerk to Balfour Beatty who have similarly refused to consider adding the bin to their emptying schedule.

The proposed and as yet unauthorised move to the footpath in Dorchester Way cannot be done by the handyman who lacks appropriate equipment to cut through the existing tarmac.

5. Notice Boards

The notice board in Dorchester Way has had a temporary refurbishment with the addition of a new backing to both sides of the board.

6. Annual Report

The annual report has now been printed and is in the process of being distributed to all households.

7. Parish Allowances

Herefordshire Council has responded with regard to the question raised regarding grants or payments to Parish Councillors for IT equipment as currently available to Herefordshire Councillors. It has been confirmed that any such grant would have to be set by the Independent Remuneration Panel before it could be adopted by any Parish Council. This is to be discussed further under agenda item 13.