

Belmont Rural Parish Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council, held on Thursday 8th October 2015 At Belmont Community Centre, Eastholme Avenue, Belmont

Present: Mr. A. Myatt In the Chair
Mr. A. Bridges
Ms. A. Bridges
Mr. R. Loft
Mr. J. Newman
Ms. D. Parish
Mr. D. Preedy
Mr. M. Schoffer

In attendance: Mrs. E. Kelso Clerk
Mrs. T. Bowes Ward Councillor, Belmont Rural
Mr. M. Heeley Locality Steward, Belfour Beatty Living Places
Ms. L. Outtrim Balfour Beatty Living Places

142/15 To receive Apologies, Declarations of Interest and requests for dispensation

Apologies were noted from Councillor Lyndsey Evans

Declarations of Interest were noted as follows:

Name	Nature of Interest	Agenda item/Minute ref.
Mr. A. Bridges	Non Disclosable interest as a trustee of Northolme Community Centre Association	Agenda item 6.2 Minute Ref. 148/15(b)
	Discloseable Pecuniary Interest as payment being made to spouse	Agenda item 6.2 Minute Ref 148/15(b)
Mr. J. Newman	Non Disclosable Interest as a trustee of South Wye Community Association	Agenda item 10 Minute ref. 152/15
Ms. D. Parish	Non Disclosable interest as a trustee of Northolme Community Centre Association	Agenda item 6.2 Minute Ref. 148/15(b)

Mr. A. Myatt	Non Disclosable Interest as a trustee of South Wye Community Association Non Disclosable interest as property overlooks land under discussion	Agenda item 10 & 11 - Minute ref. 152/15 & 153/15 Agenda item 9 Minute ref. 151/15
Miss A. Bridges	Non Disclosable Pecuniary Interest as payment being made to family member (mother)	Agenda item 6.2 Minute Ref. 148/15(b)

There were no requests for dispensation.

144/15 Public Participation

There were no items raised during this period.

145/15 Minutes of the meeting held on 10th September 2015

It was agreed that the Chairman be authorised to sign the Minutes of the meeting held on 10th September as produced to the meeting as a true record of proceedings at that meeting.

146/15 Clerk's Report

The Clerk's report was noted.

147/15 Correspondence

The following items of correspondence were noted:

- Monthly newsletter from the Belmont & Newton Farm Safer Neighbourhood Team.
- Balfour Beatty will be holding a "Parish Briefing" for parish councillors and clerks on 27th October and 29th October at their Thorn Office training room, from 7pm – 8.30pm on both days. Members who wish to attend should advise the Clerk.
- The Clerk has been invited to a further meeting with South Wye Community Association on 21st October to discuss the future of the Community Centre.
- A letter has been received from Citizens Advice Bureaux thanking the parish council for their generous donation.

148/15 Finance Matters

(a) Report from the Finance Working Party

Notes from the FWP held on 28th September were noted.

(b) To authorise payments for October

Having declared a disclosable pecuniary interest, Councillor Adrian Bridges left the room for this agenda item.

Payments as per the attached schedule were approved and Councillor Bridges returned to the meeting.

(c) Balances as at date of meeting

Current account:	£500.00
Deposit account:	£115,597.12
Petty cash:	£12.90

Balances include a second payment of precept amount of £25,000 received on 16th September.

(d) To receive quarterly financial report

Members noted the quarterly financial report as attached to these Minutes. It was further noted that a draft operating budget for 2016-7 to 2018-9 would be considered at the November meeting with a view to setting a precept for 2016-7 in December. To that end, the Clerk was requested to consider a number of possible capital and one off projects for consideration during those discussions.

149/15 Planning Matters

(a) Current Applications

Additional information has been provided in connection with application reference 151314 – New Single Carriageway (Southern Link Road) and associated works. Members with access to email have been provided with the link. The planning file is too large to be copied or made available at the meeting. Members were requested to advise whether further information/objections/comments are required to be submitted so that the Clerk can provide a consensus view for the next meeting under delegated powers.

It was further noted that some activity on the ground for this application site had been seen and thought to be bore testing and the taking of soil samples. Surveying of bat activity has also been evident.

The Clerk noted that she had received objections to an earlier planning application in Wydean Rise but these were in line with already submitted objections by this Parish Council and discussed at the last meeting.

(b) Permitted Development

There have been no notifications of permitted development since the last meeting.

(c) Neighbourhood Development Plan Update

A plan showing protected public open space has been provided to Kirkwells who are now updating the draft plan to take into consideration any further issues resulting from the newly adopted Core Strategy. Submission to Herefordshire Council is now planned for end October.

150/15 Training Matters

A verbal report was received from the Clerk on the Social Media course attended.

Members were advised of a further training opportunity, Planning and Community Action which takes place on Saturday 10th October from 10am to 3pm at the HALC offices. Any member wishing to attend, should contact the Clerk to book a place.

Herefordshire Council will be holding a seminar on the newly adopted Core Strategy for parish councils on Thursday 22nd October at 6.30pm at the Shirehall.

151/15 Update on Management Plan for Jubilee Field and consider future of Jubilee Field

Matt Heeley, locality steward for Balfour Beatty Living Places indicated that there was a general agreement from the landowner and BBLP to the proposed management plan for Jubilee field, subject to an acceptable cultivation license to be drawn up. The planned grass cut and drop would take place within the next few days.

Members also noted that despite some earlier indication that the widening of the footpaths on Abbey View Park would not take place, this would now be done towards the end of October, following a weed spray around the path edges. Members thanked Mr. Heeley for progressing this.

The Clerk has received an indication that the original owner of Jubilee Field has approached Herefordshire Council with a view to possibly regaining ownership of the area on the grounds that the land has not been used as originally intended as public open space. The Clerk confirmed that the terms of the original purchase of the land by Herefordshire Council envisaged more frequent grass cutting but also the installation of cycle racks etc. The cycle racks had been installed for some years and the additional footpath linking Abbey View Park and Jubilee Field, together with the tree planting and mown footpaths clearly indicated that the land had been used as public open space. It was agreed to await further details.

In accordance with standing orders and following a declaration of a non disclosable interest by the Chairman in connection with the following two agenda items, Councillor Bridges took the chair for the following items (minute reference 152/15 and 153/15).

152/15 Grant request for £500 from South Wye Community Association towards cost of running a Santas Grotto in December

A copy of the application had been provided to Members. The Clerk noted that this application had not been reviewed by the Finance Working Party as two members of the finance working party would declare a non disclosable interest in the application. It was proposed, and agreed by members, that a decision on this application be deferred until a finance working party had considered whether the application required any further information before presenting to the full parish council for a decision.

Councillor Adrian Bridges and Councillor Derek Preedy agreed to join the Finance Working Party to consider this application further.

153/15 Grant request for £300.00 from South Wye Community Association towards the cost of running a Christmas Carol Concert

A copy of the application had been provided to Members. The Clerk noted that this application had not been reviewed by the Finance Working Party as two members of the finance working party would declare a non disclosable interest in the application. It was proposed, and agreed by members, that a decision on this application be deferred until a finance working party had considered whether the application required any further information before presenting to the full parish council for a decision.

Councillor Adrian Bridges and Councillor Derek Preedy agreed to join the Finance Working Party to consider this application further.

In accordance with standing orders, the Chairman resumed the chair for the remainder of the meeting.

154/15 Communications Policy

A draft Communications Policy was considered by Members, having been amended to include the use of social media as a communication method. The draft policy document was approved by Members as presented at the meeting.

155/15 Social Media Strategy

A draft Social Media Strategy governing the use of social media by the Parish Council and by Members when acting as Councillors was approved.

156/15 Age UK

It was agreed that a donation of £150.00 be made to Age UK in accordance with their request for funding as presented to the meeting.

Noting the comments of the Finance Working Party, the Clerk was instructed to write to Age UK to encourage the organisation to offer activities and services within the Parish to local residents and to indicate to Age UK that the Parish Council might consider requests for funding towards such activities.

157/15 Date of next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 12th November at Northolme Community Centre, Northolme Road, Belmont, commencing at 7pm.

Belmont Rural Parish Council
Meeting held on Thursday 8th October 2015
Minute ref. 148/15(b)
Schedule of Payments approved at the meeting

Payee	Detail	Net		VAT		Total Payment
Northolme Community Association	Room hire for August meeting	£	18.00		£	18.00
Mrs. E. Kelso	Reimbursement of purchase cost tablet pcs for parish council	£	1,104.21		£	1,104.21
ABC Print (Hereford) Ltd.	Printing quarterly newsletter	£	262.00			
	Printing questionnaire	£	190.00	£ 38.00	£	490.00
Cash	Petty Cash Reimbursement	£	112.10		£	112.10
Mrs. K. Bridges	Distribution of quarterly newsletter	£	120.00		£	120.00
Payments by Standing Order this month:						
Salaries (net)		£	860.31			
HRMC		£	168.97	£ -	£	1,029.28
Total payments this month:		£	2,835.59	£ 38.00	£	2,873.59

Belmont Rural Parish Council

2015-2016 Budget Review
to 30.9.2015

2014-5 Expenditure	Expenditure	2015-2016 Agreed Budget	2015-2016 Expenditure to date	Forecast Expenditure 2015-2016	Notes/comments
	<u>General expenditure</u>				
£ 12,290	Staff costs	£ 12,600.00	£ 6,456.32	£ 12,632.00	Uncontested election
£ 1,353	General office costs	£ 1,200.00	£ 661.08	£ 1,200.00	
£ 593	Insurance	£ 650.00	£ 578.50	£ 579.00	
£ 478	Room Hire	£ 650.00	£ 304.50	£ 650.00	
£ 773	Repairs & Maintenance	£ 4,500.00	£ 3,343.16	£ 4,500.00	
£ 1,137	Subscriptions	£ 900.00	£ 900.00	£ 900.00	
£ 450	Audit Fees	£ 450.00	£ 450.00	£ 450.00	
£ -	Election costs	£ 3,100.00	£ -	£ 100.00	
	Advertising/publicity		£ -		
£ 300	Training	£ 750.00	£ 772.70	£ 800.00	
£ 554	Website expenditure	£ 600.00	£ 429.25	£ 600.00	
-£ 295	Miscellaneous expenses	£ 250.00	£ -	£ 250.00	
£ 17,633	<u>Sub-Total</u>	£ 25,650.00	£ 13,895.51	£ 22,661.00	
	<u>Other expenditure</u>				
£ 6,533	Capital and other projects*	£ 20,000.00	£ 5,183.76	£ 20,000.00	
£ 1,330	Newsletter/Annual Report	£ 3,000.00	£ 1,718.00	£ 3,000.00	
£ 4,583	Grants and donations**	£ 15,000.00	£ 5,900.00	£ 15,000.00	
£ 6,848	Neighbourhood Plan	£ 5,000.00	£ 1,580.00	£ 5,000.00	
	Parish Plan	£ 5,000.00	£ -	£ 5,000.00	
£ 19,294	<u>Sub-total</u>	£ 48,000.00	£ 14,381.76	£ 48,000.00	
£ 36,927	Totals	£ 73,650.00	£ 28,277.27	£ 70,661.00	

2014-2015	Income	2015-2016 To date	2015-2016 Budget	Forecast	
£ 46,649	Precept	£ 46,904.00		£ 46,904.00	
£ 8,229	Grants Received	£ 3,096.00		£ 3,096.00	
£ 314	Sundry Income	£ -		£ 750.00	
£ 43	Bank Interest	£ 20.29		£ 40.00	
£ 55,235	<u>Total Income</u>	£ 50,020.29		£ 50,790.00	

Reserves

Balance brought forward		£ 84,139.00
Forecast deficit/surplus		-£ 19,871.00
Forecast carry forward	£ -	£ 64,268.00

Belmont Rural Parish Council

Communications Policy

AIMS

This policy is intended to:

- Establish clear channels of communication between the Parish Council and residents, local and national groups, agencies, Herefordshire Council and others.
- Ensure that residents are provided with information on the work of the Parish Council and other important matters in a timely manner to encourage citizenship and involvement in Parish matters and generate informed comment.

INTRODUCTION

Belmont Rural Parish Council was created in April 2000 having previously formed part of the Parish of Clehonger. The Parish boundaries consist of the River Wye to the North, Newton Brook to the South and East and Ruckhall Lane to the West. The A465T divides the Northern and Southern areas of the Parish. There are approximately 1650 houses within the Parish boundaries.

Legislation sets out a number of circumstances when a Parish Council must provide information to residents and the manner in which that information is made available. For example, there is a statutory requirement for a notice to be displayed within the Parish explaining Parishioners' rights with regard to the annual external audit of Parish Council accounts. Where legislation conflicts with any element of this policy, statutory requirements will prevail.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

All communications from Belmont Rural Parish Council will meet the following criteria:

- Be civil, respectful and relevant
- Not contain content that is unlawful, libellous, harassing, defamatory, abusive, threatening, harmful, obscene, profane, sexually oriented or racially offensive
- Not contain content copied from elsewhere for which it does not own the copyright
- Not contain any personal information, other than necessary basic contact details
- Will be generated and issued by the Clerk to the Parish Council
- Will not be used for the dissemination of any political advertising

METHODS OF COMMUNICATION

It is the policy of the Parish Council to use a range of methods of communication with Parishioners and outside bodies. This may include, but is not limited to:

- Parish Council meetings
- Public meetings
- Correspondence
- Telephone calls
- E-mail
- Notice boards
- Newsletters, reports and information sheets
- Advertising
- Website
- Social Media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and other social media sites as may be appropriate from time to time

Parish Council Meetings

1. Dates for Parish Council meetings for the forthcoming year will be agreed at the Annual Parish Council meeting in May each year, and will take place monthly unless agreed otherwise. All meetings will be open to Members of the public.
2. Notices will be placed on notice boards and on the website no later than three clear days prior to each meeting to inform members of the public of the date, time and venue of each meeting.
3. Meetings will take place in a public venue which is fully accessible to those with disabilities within the Parish, wherever possible.
4. The Parish Council reserves the right to exclude members of the public from all or part of a meeting, as permitted by law, but as a general principle will not do so unless there are substantial grounds for using this power. The Chairman may exclude an individual from all or part of a meeting if that individual's behaviour is inconsistent with the good conduct of the meeting.
5. At least one period within the meeting will be set aside for members of the public to raise matters of interest. This period of public participation will last no longer than fifteen minutes unless the Parish Council resolves otherwise. Matters raised by members of the public during these sessions must be noted and carried forward to the next meeting.
6. Items to be raised at Parish Council meetings must be notified to the Clerk no later than ten days prior to the meeting date so that the item can be included in the meeting Agenda.
7. Draft Minutes of meeting will be placed on the parish council website as soon as possible after the date of the meeting, clearly marked "draft" to indicate that the Minutes have not yet been adopted by the Parish Council. Printed copies of Minutes of Parish Council meetings will be available to members of the public at a nominal charge to cover photocopying costs.

Parish Meetings

1. At least one Parish Meeting will be held each year and known as the Annual Parish Meeting. Voluntary and Community Groups operating within the Parish will be invited to report to members of the public on their work, at this meeting.
2. The Parish Council may convene other Parish Meetings to discuss items of particular importance to Parishioners, and must do so if six or more electors request such a meeting to discuss an identified topic.

Correspondence

1. All items of correspondence to the Parish Council must be addressed to the Parish Clerk.
2. All items of correspondence from the Parish Council must, unless agreed otherwise by the Parish Council, be prepared and signed by the Parish Clerk. In this instance, correspondence includes e-mails, text messages, tweets and other social media posts and other electronic forms of communication.
3. All items of correspondence received will be either circulated to members of the Parish Council or brought before the next available meeting. Where a reply is expected, an acknowledgement will be sent within five working days of receipt and a full reply sent as soon as practicable following a meeting.

E-mail

1. The Clerk will maintain an e-mail account solely for Parish Council business and ensure it is monitored on a daily basis.
2. All correspondence received by e-mail will be responded to by e-mail unless otherwise directed.
3. E-mail correspondence is the preferred method of written communication where facilities exist as receipt is almost instantaneous. Hard copies of e-mail correspondence will be made for those who do not have access to e-mail.

Telephone calls

1. Contact telephone numbers for Parish Councillors and the Clerk will be displayed on notice boards.
2. A telephone answering machine will be used for messages outside normal working hours and any messages will normally be responded to on the next working day.

Notice boards

1. Parish notice boards will be provided by the Parish Council at locations to be agreed within the Parish boundary.
2. The following items will be displayed in Parish notice boards:
 - Any statutory notice, for example accounts, election notices etc.
 - Parish Councillor and Clerk contact details
 - Parish Council meeting notices
 - Parish Council meeting dates for the forthcoming year
 - Other Parish Council information notices
 - Herefordshire Council information notices
 - Notices by voluntary/community organisations
 - Any other items at the discretion of the Clerk and/or Chairman.
3. Where space is at a premium, the above is in order of preference.

Newsletters, reports and information sheets

1. The Parish Council aims to publish a newsletter/information sheet at least four times per year to give Parishioners information on the work of the Parish Council. Such newsletters will be delivered to each household within the Parish. A budget will be agreed at the precept meeting each year to cover the cost of production and distribution of these newsletters.
2. Ad hoc newsletters will be used whenever there are matters which the Parish Council feels should be brought to the attention of Parishioners.
3. An annual report and accounts will be prepared each year to include details of Parish Council income and expenditure for the previous financial year. The Annual Report will be delivered to all households within the parish and will appear on the website
5. All newsletters, reports and information sheets must be approved by the Parish Council before printing and distribution unless the Parish Council resolves otherwise.

Advertising

1. The Parish Council reserves the right to use advertising where necessary but will normally only use paid advertising where other methods of communication are inappropriate.
2. No advertising, paid or otherwise, will be placed without the prior approval of the Parish Council.

Requests for Information

1. Members of the public have the right, under the Freedom of Information Act, to request access to information in accordance with the Parish Council's adopted Publication Scheme, a copy of which is attached to this policy. It is not necessary for the Freedom of Information Act to be quoted when making a request for information under the Act.
2. All requests for information must be passed to the Clerk or in the Clerk's absence, the Chairman.
3. Where a member of the public requests access to Parish Council documents, arrangements will be made for those documents to be made available at a time and place to suit all parties. At least one Parish Councillor will attend in addition to the Clerk and/or Chairman.
4. A nominal charge will be levied for copies of documents, to cover photocopying costs.
5. All requests for information will be reported to the next available Parish Council meeting.
6. The Parish Council will maintain registration with the Information Commissioners Office and adhere to all recommended practices with regard to data protection.

Website

1. The Parish Council will maintain a website with information about the parish council and activities within the parish.
2. The Clerk will be responsible for maintaining and updating the website on a day to day basis.
3. At least one other parish councillor, as authorised by the Parish Council, will have access to the Website in order to upload or maintain the content in order to ensure that it can be updated when the Clerk is not available.
4. The website content will be agreed by the Parish Council from time to time.
5. Urgent items not identified within the usual content may be agreed by the Clerk, Chairman, Vice Chairman and one other Parish Councillor between meetings and reported to the full Council for agreement at the next available meeting.

Social Media

1. The Parish Council will use social media such as Facebook and Twitter as appropriate as a method of communication with residents and will maintain social media accounts for this purpose, maintained and managed by the Parish Clerk.
2. All posts by the Parish Council will be prepared and uploaded by the Clerk.

3. Responses to any online or social media posts referring to the work of the parish council will be responded to on behalf of the Parish Council solely by the Parish Clerk, in consultation where necessary with the Chairman and Vice Chairman.
4. A separate internet, email and social media policy by employees and members regulates the conduct of employees and members online in connection with Parish Council business and/or the use of Parish Council equipment and facilities for such purposes.

Approved by Belmont Rural Parish Council
at a meeting held on 8.10.2015

Belmont Rural Parish Council

Social Media Strategy

1. Introduction

The objective of this policy is to provide Members and staff an overview of Social Media and outline the Parish Council's position on various aspects of their use. In addition, it includes guidelines on employee and Parish Councillor responsibilities when using such channels of communication.

2. What is "Social Media"

Social media is a term for websites based on user participation and user-generated content. They include social networking sites and other sites that are centred on user interaction.

Social media has the following characteristics:

- Covers a wide variety of formats, including text, video, photographs, audio
- Allows messages to flow between many different types of device; PCs, phones and tablets (eg iPad)
- Involves different levels of engagement by participants who can create, comment or just view information
- Speeds and broadens the flow of information
- Provides one-to-one, one-to-many and many-to-many communication
- Lets communication take place in real time or intermittently

Examples of popular social media tools include: Twitter, Facebook, Wikipedia, You Tube, Pinterest, Snip.It, Linked In and Whats App. Groupings of interest are a natural feature of the development of such systems with people with similar interests being attracted to share information.

3. Pitfalls

Whilst these tools are very useful to share information quickly with other people, there are some pitfalls to be aware of:

- The information in most cases is shared in the public domain and can be viewed by anyone in the world. You do not even need to register in many cases to view the content. Registering is only required should you wish to participate and post to the site.
- Groups on specific themes can be set up easily and posts then edited by the owners of

that group to reflect their single interest, ensuring theirs is the only voice heard. There is no guarantee of truth and ill-informed comment and gossip is as likely to be found there as useful information.

- The nature of these tools is that information is shared immediately and it is all too easy to respond instantaneously which can result in unintentionally inflaming a situation. Information can then be shared with other sites and be spread far beyond the intended audience. Friends of Friends may not be our Friends.

It is also very easy to spend a lot of time viewing and responding to messages that would outweigh the value gained in the first place.

4. Purpose of the Policy

Social media provides the Parish Council with the opportunity to communicate to a wide audience instantaneously on a range of subjects relating to its activities, providing updates, news, information and retweeting relevant information from other sources. It also provides an opportunity to communicate with the younger age group, the business community and hopefully the harder to reach groups.

The Parish Council will make use of approved social media tools to quickly disseminate information but carefully control its use in order to minimise the risks as stated above. In the first instance this will include Facebook and Twitter.

5. Aims and Objectives

Social media can be used by the Parish Council as an effective and measurable way to achieve resident engagement and attract publicity.

The aim of this Policy is to ensure:

- Engagement with individuals and communities and successful promotion of Parish Council- based services through the use of social media
- A consistent approach is adopted and maintained in the use of social media
- That Parish Council information remains secure and is not compromised through the use of social media
- That users operate within existing policies, guidelines and relevant legislation
- That the Parish Council's reputation is upheld and improved rather than adversely affected
- That communication by use of social media is effective, timely, appropriate, useful, engages with a wider audience and utilises cross-promotion of other Parish Council communication tools (eg website, quarterly magazine, linking facebook to twitter account etc)

Social media activity isn't something that stands alone, to be effective it needs to integrate as part

of the general communications policy. Any planned campaigns, promotions and activities can be plugged in to social media platforms to increase reach and exposure. Please refer to the Parish Council's Communications Policy.

6. Policy Statement

It is acknowledged that there is considerable potential for using social media which can provide significant advantages. The responsible, corporate use of social media is actively encouraged. The following applies equally to Officers/Employees and Members.

This policy provides a structured approach to using social media and will ensure that it is effective, lawful and does not compromise Parish Council information or computer systems/networks.

Users must ensure that they use social media sensibly and responsibly, and ensure that its use will not adversely affect the Parish Council or its business, nor be damaging to the Parish Council's reputation and credibility or otherwise violate any Parish Council policies.

The following guidelines will apply to online participation and set out the standards of behaviour expected as a representative of Belmont Rural Parish Council:

- Be aware of and recognise your responsibilities identified in the Social Media Policy.
- Remember that you are personally responsible for the content you publish on any form of social media.
- Never give out personal details of others such as home address and telephone numbers.
- Ensure that you handle any personal or sensitive information in line with the Data Protection Act.
- Use a disclaimer. When using social media for personal purposes, you must not imply you are speaking for the Parish Council. Avoid use of the Parish Council e-mail address, logos or other Parish Council identification. Make it clear that what you say is representative of your personal views only. Where possible, you should include a standard disclaimer, such as: "Statements and opinions here are my own and don't necessarily represent the Parish Council's policies or opinions".
- Know your obligations: you must comply with other Parish Council policies when using social media. For example, you should be careful not to breach Parish Council confidentiality.
- Show respect to all. You should be respectful of the authority and employees. Derogatory comments are always wrong.
- Use of the Parish Council's Twitter or Facebook accounts must always reflect the Parish Council's position/decisions on a matter and in no circumstances must it be used to express personal opinion, particularly when used by a Parish Councillor. If unsure, say nothing.

Parish Councillors are at liberty to set up accounts using any of the tools available but should

ensure they are clearly identified as personal and do not in any way imply that they reflect the Parish Council's view. Parish Councillors should at all times present a professional image and not disclose anything of a confidential nature. Comments of a derogatory, proprietary or libellous nature should not be made and care should be taken to avoid guesswork, exaggeration and colourful language.

Responsibilities

The Clerk is the designated 'Parish Council' owner of the Parish Council Twitter feed and any other Social Media channels agreed by the Parish Council. Parish Councillors officially appointed by the Parish Council may assist the Clerk to disseminate information on the Parish Council's Twitter feed during busy times or when the Clerk is on leave to ensure the best use of the Twitter account. However all must ensure they follow this policy. No account details may be changed without the permission of the Clerk or agreement of the Parish Council.

Individual Parish Councillors are at liberty to set up their own accounts but they should ensure they comply with this policy and ensure the 'personal view' disclaimer is used.

7. Guidance for Parish Councillors - *social media and meetings*

The Parish Council encourages Parish Councillors to keep residents informed of Belmont Rural issues and the use of social media can help with this, especially during official Parish Council meetings. Twitter is a quick and direct way of feeding concise updates about a meeting - these principles for members are aimed at the use of Twitter but are equally applicable to other forms of social media.

Below are some extra guidelines for Parish Councillors to consider for the use of social media during meetings:

- Handheld devices and laptops are permitted (indeed encouraged) for use during meetings to allow environmentally friendly and effective communication. The use of such devices is intended to improve communication during meetings - not to interrupt or distract anyone taking part. Ensure the volume on all electronic devices is turned to 'mute'.
- Parish Councillors' tweets/blogs during Parish Council meetings should refer to the discussions which are taking place at the meeting - tweeting/blogging about other subjects will show the public and other attendees at the meeting that you are not engaging properly in the meeting.
- Parish Councillors have a responsibility to take Parish Council business seriously and it is not appropriate for members to use social media to tease or insult other members
- Remember that if you break the law using social media (for example by posting something defamatory), you will be personally responsible.

8. Facebook Strategy

Social networks are rapidly growing in popularity and are used by all ages in society. The most

popular social networks are web-based, commercial, and not purposely designed for town Parish Council use. They include sites like Facebook, MySpace, Bebo, and Xanga. For individuals, social networking sites provide tremendous opportunities for staying in touch with friends and family. For the Parish Council the sites provide a modern alternative means to communicate with residents of the town.

Facebook, for example, offers a platform allowing you to share unlimited content, including images and videos.

Example activity:

- Share articles / blog posts / expertise
- Start discussions and ask questions to encourage interaction
- Create surveys to encourage participation from visitors
- Upload images and videos
- Generic news – what’s happening in the area

One of the hallmarks of online networks is the ability to “friend” others – creating a group of others that share interests and personal news. Care should be exercised when accepting invitations to friend others within personal social networking sites. Friends will gain access to the Parish Council’s network of contacts on the site.

Good practice guidelines for the use of Facebook by the Parish Council as a body or Parish Councillors as individuals are:

- As a Parish Council, we have a professional image to uphold and how we conduct ourselves online impacts this image.
- Remember that people classified as “friends” have the ability to download and share your information with others.
- Post only what you want the world to see. It is not like posting something to your web site or blog and then realizing that a story or photo should be taken down. On a social networking site, basically once you post something it may continue to be available, even after it is removed from the site.
- Do not disclose confidential matters or criticize Parish Council policies or personnel.
- Set your profile’s security and privacy settings carefully. At a minimum, all privacy settings should be set to “only friends”. “Friends of friends” and “Networks and Friends” open the content to a large group of unknown people.
- All activity on the Parish Council Facebook page must follow the Parish Council’s agreed statement of purpose and outcomes for the use of the networking tool.
- Do not post images that include young people without parental permission.
- Pay close attention to the site’s security settings and allow only approved personnel full access to the site.
- Only add statements approved by the Parish Council or the Clerk.
- Do not use commentary deemed to be defamatory, obscene, proprietary, or libellous. Exercise caution with regards to exaggeration, colourful language, guesswork, obscenity, copyrighted materials, legal conclusions, and derogatory remarks or characterizations.
- Weigh whether a particular posting puts your effectiveness at Belmont Rural Parish Council at risk.
- To reduce security risks, do not install any external applications that work with the social networking site. Examples of these sites are calendar programs and games.
- Maintain updated anti-virus and malware protection to avoid infections of spyware and

- adware that social networking sites might place on your computer.
- Be careful not to fall for phishing scams that arrive via email or on your wall, providing a link for you to click, leading to a fake login page.
- If you find information on the social networking site that falls under the mandatory reporting guidelines then you must report it as required by law.

Please stay informed and cautious in the use of all new networking technologies.

9. Twitter Strategy

Twitter is a 'microblogging' platform which allows users to post short messages and converse with other users. Unlike email or text messaging, these conversations take place in the open and engage audiences in discussions about services, products and issues— connecting a vast amount of likeminded people in an often targeted and purposeful way.

Example activity:

- Share relevant articles / blog posts / expertise
- Start discussions and ask questions to encourage interaction
- Link to Facebook content / surveys / pictures / videos
- Follow and participate in discussions with other related tweeters
- Comment on tweets and re-tweet other posts to build community
- Offer relevant Q&A sessions
- Provide information and news updates on Parish Council activities
- Disseminate information in emergency situations

The Belmont Rural Parish Council Twitter account has been set up to inform followers of related news, events, online facilities and other matters that may be of interest to residents of the community, local businesses and visitors to the area.

People following Belmont Rural Parish Council can expect tweets covering some or all of the following:

- Updates on Parish Council activities
- Announcements about matters of importance to Belmont Rural residents and those who may be visiting or moving to the Parish
- Requests for information and assistance
- News about our online facilities
- Re-tweets from organisations that we are following which meet our Twitter Policy

Following:

If you follow the Parish Council on Twitter it will not automatically follow the person back and the right is reserved to block that person from following the Parish Council. Being followed by us does not imply endorsement of any kind.

Belmont Rural Parish Council is unable to monitor Twitter round the clock. However it will endeavour to answer all sensible tweeted questions. Please be aware that due to privacy it may not be possible to answer all tweet questions.

Parish Councillors are at liberty to set up their own accounts subject to following the guidelines. Key questions when tweeting are:

- What do the followers really want to know?
- When do they need to know it?
- Why is the information you're sharing relevant?
- Am I the most appropriate person to be responding to queries/commenting on tweets if it is a Parish Council-related matter?

Keep the content valuable!

Negative comments should only be responded to with factual information and on-line arguments must always be avoided.

10. Other Social Media

At this stage it is not intended to use any other forms of social media for official use by Belmont Rural Parish Council. However this could be open to review in the future.

Parish Councillors are entitled to use any form of social media they wish to but must abide by this policy at all times when so doing.