

ANNUAL REPORT

2014-5

Your Parish Council

Belmont Rural Parish Council was established as a parish in its own right in April 2000, having been a ward within the Parish of Clehonger prior to then. The Parish falls within the Belmont Rural Ward of Herefordshire Council.

The Parish Council boundaries are formed by Newton Brook to the South and East, Ruckhall lane to the West, and the River Wye to the North. The 2011 census (the latest for which figures are available) identified that 3,769 residents live within the Parish. In total, there are approximately 1700 dwellings in the Parish.

Parish Councillors are elected at elections held every four years and are volunteers who receive no payment of any kind for the valuable work they carry out on behalf of the local community. If a parish councillor resigns during his/her term of office, local residents can request a full election. In the absence of such a request, the parish council are free to co-opt a suitable candidate. If you are interested in becoming a parish councillor and would like more information on the role, please contact the Parish Clerk whose details can be found below.

The Parish Council has one part time employee, the Parish Clerk, who is responsible for carrying out the decisions of the Parish Council, for arranging and attending all Parish Council meetings, for maintaining all Parish financial and other records and for advising Parish Councillors on matters of procedure or law to enable them to carry out their decision making functions.

This newsletter is produced and printed by:

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BELMONT RURAL PARISH COUNCIL

Parish Councillors

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Forthcoming Parish Council Meeting dates

2015

9rd July—Northolme
13th August—Belmont
10th September—Northolme
8th October—Belmont
12th November—Northolme
10th December—Belmont

2016

14th January—Northolme
11th February—Belmont
10th March—Northolme
14th April—Belmont
12th May—Northolme

All meetings start at 7pm and include a brief (15 minute) period of public participation when members of the public can raise items of interest or concern

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Annual Report for the Parish of Belmont Rural for the year ended 31st March 2015

Parish Councils represent the grass roots level of local government and provide a means by which local people can influence their local environment and the provision of services.

Parish Councillors are volunteers who are elected to office through local elections which are held every four years. All parish councillors were elected or co-opted to the Council in May 2015 and details of current councillors can be found on page 4

Parish Councils are funded through the Council Tax and for the 2014/5 year, the household council tax payment allocated to your parish council was £50,000 for the year which amounts to an average 64p per week per band D household. Your Parish Council spent £36,927 during the year ended 31st March 2015 and



details of how this was spent is explained on pages 2 and 3. Parish Council meetings are held on the second Thursday of every month and alternate between Belmont Community Centre and Northolme Community Centre. Meetings usually start at 7pm. Members of the public are very welcome

to attend Parish Council meetings and at the discretion of the Chairman, can speak on some agenda items. Dates for forthcoming meetings are on the panel on the left can be found on notice boards and our website. Further details are also available from the Parish Clerk at the address given on page 4.

SUPPORTING YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY

Recent cutbacks in services such as grass cutting and litter picking can result in areas quickly becoming unkempt. We know that you value the rural nature of our Parish so we are now looking for volunteers to help maintain our lovely Parish. If you've some time to spare occasionally, or regularly, we

really need your help to maintain a nearby patch of public open space or flower bed. Volunteers are needed to occasionally cut back bushes, weed shrub beds, pick up litter or carry out minor maintenance tasks. If you're able to help, please contact the Clerk at the address on page 4.



ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2014-2015

As in the previous year, your Parish Council has devoted considerable time and effort this year in meeting the ever changing demands of local government in a climate of reducing budgets but increasing needs.

Neighbourhood Development Plan

Work on the Neighbourhood Development plan has been a major element of the work of your Parish Council in 2014-2015. Progress has been particularly pleasing although the work has been much more than anticipated. Expertly guided by consultants Kirkwells, the work is not yet completed and later this year residents will be invited to take part in a public vote on the plan. If you have not yet looked at the draft plan, it is still available on our website and we would welcome your views and, of course, your support.



Abbey View Park

Community Consultation

In November last year as part of a regular quarterly newsletter your Parish Council took the opportunity to ask all residents for their views on potential spending priorities. For those of you who took the time and trouble to respond either using the paper questionnaire or our electronic version, thank you. This has helped to ensure that this parish council has a clear view of the things that matter most to you so that we can direct your money to those projects.

The results clearly showed that the most important project for local residents was support for the library service at Belmont Community Centre which, along with most libraries throughout the county, was threatened with closure as a result of budget cuts. As a direct result of that indication, your Parish Council has pledged a total of £5,000 to support the library service this year, securing that service for another 12 months.



Belmont Centre

Other projects scoring highly on the questionnaire included improved grass cutting, the maintenance of footpaths and wildflowers on Jubilee Field. Again, as a direct result of that indication of preference, a volunteering scheme - Pride in Parish - has been established to support local volunteers to help maintain our local environment by providing some equipment, vital insurance cover and additional support to maintain the local environment above and beyond what is available through Herefordshire Council.

Transport

Last year we reported on proposals to replace the bus shelter outside Brook Farm Court and we can now report that the project was completed some months ago. The project included

raising the kerb to meet accessibility legislation. At the same time, some additional weather protection was provided to the shelter on the Tesco side of the Belmont Road.

Whilst on the subject of transport, those living on this side of the Belmont Road may have noticed the upgrade of the CH7 footpath to a cycle way. This was a Herefordshire Council project but your parish council worked to ensure the contractor was fully aware of drainage issues on Abbey View Park before work commenced and has highlighted some issues with the surrounding verges following completion of that work.

Elections

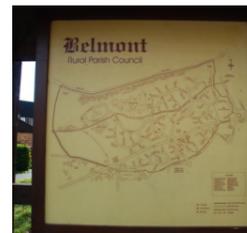
Finally, like all other parish councils in Herefordshire this May, all Parish Councillors retired and some but not all offered themselves for re-election. Several councillors, many of whom had served the local community for many years, chose not to stand again and with fewer candidates than vacancies, those offering their services for another four years were re-elected.

Of those choosing the opportunity for retirement, Councillors Cook, Hubbard and Edwards had all served this parish council for many years and will be sorely missed. Councillor Edwards in particular was one of the longest serving parish councillors, having originally been elected to represent Belmont Rural when part of Clehonger and then transferring to the new Parish Council in 2000 as its Chairman. Indeed, Councillor Edwards was a keen driving force in Belmont Rural having its own parish

council all those years ago. The new Belmont Rural Parish Council in 2000 included Councillor Hubbard and not many years later was joined by Councillor Cook. Shortly before the election, Councillor Baynham moved out of the Parish and also chose to retire. We thank them all for their valuable contribution over the many years.

At the Annual Parish Council meeting in May, we welcomed four new councillors: Lyndsey Evans, Aimee Bridges, Derek Preedy and John Newman. Some may remember Councillor Newman who served as a parish councillor in the past. We now look forward to serving the community for another four years.

Please remember that Parish Council meetings are open to the public and meetings generally include at least one period when members of the public can raise matters of concern. Details of meeting dates, times and the relevant



Parish Map

agenda can be found on notice boards and our website.

SUMMARY ACCOUNTS YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2015

2013/14	INCOME	2014/15
£46,956	Precept	£46,649
£25	Bank Interest	£43
£3,044	Grants and other income	8,544
£50,025	TOTAL INCOME	£55,236
	EXPENDITURE	
£12,056	Staff Costs	£12,290
£1,046	General Office Costs	£1,353
£648	Insurance	£593
£0	Purchases	£6,533
£262	Room Hire	£478
£613	Repairs and Maintenance	£773
£534	S137 Payments	£1,330
£3,075	Grants & Donations	£4,583
0	Advertising and Publicity	0
£865	Subscriptions	£1,137
£450	Audit Fees	£450
£0	Election Costs	0
£0	Neighbourhood Development Plan	£6,848
£350	Training	£300
£429	Website	£554
£0	Sundry Expenses	(£295)
£20,328	TOTAL EXPENDITURE	£36,927
£29,697	SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)	£18,309
	RESERVES	
£36,133	Balance brought forward	£65,830
£29,697	Net expenditure	£18,309
£65,830	BALANCE	£84,139