

ANNUAL REPORT

2013-4

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 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

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Parish Clerk

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Forthcoming Parish Council Meeting dates

2014

3rd July—Northolme
7th August—Belmont
4th September—Northolme
2nd October—Belmont
6th November—Northolme
4th December—Belmont

2015

8th January—Northolme
5th February—Belmont
5th March—Northolme
9th April—Belmont
14th May—Northolme

All meetings start at 7pm with a 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 2014

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. The next full election will take place in May 2015

Parish Councils are funded through the Council Tax and for the 2013/4 year, the household council tax payment allocated to your parish council was £50,000 for the year which amounts to an average 63p per week per band D household. Your Parish Council spent £20,328 during the year ended 31st March 2014 and details of how this was spent is explained on pages 2 and 3.



Parish Council meetings are held on the first 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 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. We'll be

holding a meeting for volunteers in the near future.



ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2013-2014

This year has been a challenging one for your parish council. Government policy is to devolve more and more powers to act to local communities, but with that power comes responsibility and accountability. Changes in the way parish and town councils can or in some cases must act have brought new rules and regulations which have to be understood and complied with. Your parish council has devoted some considerable time and effort this year in meeting the ever changing demands of local government in a climate of reducing budgets but increasing needs.

Belmont Library

One of the key impacts in 2013-2014 has been the reduction in central government funding to the principal authority, Herefordshire Council, which has led to a reduction in some



Belmont Centre

of the facilities and services previously provided by Herefordshire Council such as the library service.

The Library at Belmont is a much valued facility within the Parish and research has shown that it has more visitors than many of the much larger libraries in the market towns. Furthermore, it's very existence in Belmont Community Centre has provided much needed income to ensure the Community Centre remains viable. After some debate

about it's future with Herefordshire Council, your Parish Council has worked with the South Wye Community Centre Association to provide funding towards the Library running costs, thus ensuring it's continuation to 2015. Further negotiations and possible support are likely to be needed in the future but for now the immediate future of the Library seems secure.

Abbey View Park

Much of the land for leisure around our Parish is owned by Herefordshire Council although your parish council has funded many of the improvements such as the footpaths around Abbey View Park. In 2013 work was commissioned around the culvert area linking Abbey View East with Jubilee field but the change in the public realm contractor for Herefordshire Council—from Amey Herefordshire to Balfour Beatty Living Places—resulted in that work being deferred. Further flooding on that site has resulted in a change in approach to the site management and in recent weeks the culvert area has been opened up and a new footbridge installed by the landowners which we hope will avoid further damage to the public right of way in future.

Bus Shelters

Following a request from local residents, your Parish Council has placed two orders to improve the bus shelters on the Belmont Road. Firstly, we are pressing for the total replacement of the shelter outside Brook Farm Court together with associated ground works to bring the site up to current standards, and the addition of panels to the shelter outside Tesco to

provide better protection from the weather. Again, the change of contractor from Amey to Balfour Beatty Living Places has delayed completion of this work but we are pressing for a speedy resolution.

Planning

Your Parish Council considers and makes observations on planning applications each year ranging from the addition of a conservatory to a dwelling to large scale developments. Last year we reported on a relatively large development of some 85 homes proposed on land forming part of Home Farm which generated substantial interest amongst residents. Although initially refused by the planning authority, Herefordshire Council, the applicants lodged an appeal which took place in November and the planning inspector upheld the original refusal in his verdict delivered in January.

Work has now begun in earnest on a Neighbourhood Development Plan for the Belmont Rural area, after the



Land at Home Farm

formal designation of the parish as a neighbourhood development plan area was completed earlier in the year. Planning consultants Kirkwells have been appointed to help with the more technical aspects of the plan and a presentation was made to the Annual parish meeting in May. We look forward to this opportunity

for local views to form approved local planning conditions for our Parish and welcome any and all residents to the Neighbourhood Planning Meetings, details of which can be found on the website or on local notice boards.



2015 and beyond

Finally, Parish Councillors are volunteers who are elected to serve a four year term. The next full Parish Council elections are due in May 2015 and we would urge all residents (over the age of 18) to consider standing for election in May. This is an opportunity for you to make a real difference to your local area in a time that is as challenging as it is rewarding. Details of current Parish Councillors can be found on page 4 and all would be delighted to talk to you about the role and we would encourage all to come along to the monthly Parish Council meetings—details on page 1—to find out more.

SUMMARY ACCOUNTS YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2014

2012/13	INCOME	2013/14
£45,000.	Precept	£46,956
£23	Bank Interest	£25
£10,591	Grants and other income	3,044
£55,591	TOTAL INCOME	£50,025
	EXPENDITURE	
£12,296	Staff Costs	£12,056
£1,193	General Office Costs	£1,046
£857	Insurance	£648
£37,909	Purchases	£0
£321	Room Hire	£262
£1,481	Repairs and Maintenance	£613
£4,098	S137 Payments	£534
£9,150	Community Building Grants	£3,075
0	Advertising and Publicity	0
£917	Subscriptions	£865
£405	Audit Fees	£450
£0	Election Costs	0
£0	Parish Plan	0
£228	Training	£350
£1,124	Website	£429
£201	Sundry Expenses	£0
£70,180	TOTAL EXPENDITURE	£20,328
(£14,589)	SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)	£29,697
	RESERVES	
£50,722	Balance brought forward	£36,133
(£14,589)	Net expenditure	£29,697
£36,133	BALANCE	£65,830