

Newton & Biggin Parish Council

Minutes of the meeting of Newton and Biggin Parish Council held at 8pm on Thursday 17th December 2015 at Newton Village Hall.

- 1) **Announcement read by Chair regarding recording or filming of parish council meeting:** In the interests of openness and transparency, councillors and members of the public are reminded that the law permits any person to film, record, photograph or use social media in order to report on the proceedings of a meeting of the Council or its committees when they are open to the public. This does not extend to live verbal commentary.

Filming and photography will only be permitted from the area designated. No flash photography or additional lighting should be used without prior consent.

Anyone wishing to report on the meeting should notify the Clerk or Chairman so that they can be afforded reasonable facilities.

People under the age of 18 or other members of the public not wishing to be filmed or photographed should notify the Clerk or Chairman and should sit in the area designated for this purpose.

Improper conduct or any disruptive behaviour could result in expulsion from the meeting.

- Present: Cllrs Dave Carter, Chair(DC), Jim Hotten, Vice Chair (JH), Frank Preston (FP), Judith Leggatt (JL)
 - Apologies: Anne Davies, Cllr Leigh Hunt, Clerk Sarah Esworthy (JH assumed duties of clerk for this meeting)
- 4) Declarations of interest and dispensations
- a. To receive declarations of interest from councillors on items on the agenda: None
 - b. To receive written requests for the dispensations for disclosable pecuniary interests: None
 - c. To grant any requests for dispensation as appropriate: None
- Minutes of Meeting Held on Thursday 26th November at 8 pm were agreed and signed as correct after sentence 4 (RBC are also clearing the board walk and unfortunately another picnic table has been stolen.) was deleted and the word “aggregate” added after “Type 1” in the Picnic Site accounts section.
 - Matters arising from the minutes: None
 - Correspondence:
 - A letter was received from the Clerk to Clifton P.C. outlining their position with regard to funding for the Burial Committee for 2016. This was discussed under item 9 below.
 - An email was received from Churchover P.C. outlining their objections to the Change of Use Application at Tripontium Business Centre. This was dealt with under item 8 below.

- Planning: R15/1881 Levelling of land and perimeter fence at Tripontium Business Centre together R15/2288 Change of use to Transport Depot. The members agreed with Churchover's objections and instructed the clerk to write a letter of objection to RBC Planning Department.
- The letter from Clifton PC. stating their objections to paying a precept for the Burial Committee (BC.) contained a number of inaccuracies, these were outlined in a briefing note (Appendix A) prepared by JH and given to members. The members agreed with the briefing notes and deplored CPC.'s actions but felt unable to make any substantive reply given the inbuilt majority of CPC members on the BC. The members decided to pay the precept requested of NPC. by the BC. as an act of good faith. The members discussed the request from CPC. for a meeting with NPC. to discuss the Constitution and future funding of the BC. and decided that the onus lay with the BC. to formulate proposals with regard to these matters and submit them to the Parish Councils for agreement. The delegates to the BC. were therefore requested to seek to discuss the matter at forthcoming BC. meetings. JH (as temporary Clerk) was asked to draft an answer to the Clerk of CPC. and circulate it to all members for approval before sending it.
- The Initial Precept to RBC. was agreed as £ 40.92 which is an increase of 1.75%. The members agreed that if the Final Precept granted was within +/- 0.25% of the Initial Precept the Clerk could consider the matter agreed and act accordingly. Cheques were signed for EON Electricity for street lighting and maintenance.
- Date of next meeting was agreed as Thursday 4th February 2016 at 8.00pm in the village hall.

Appendix A

Comments on Clifton P.C. minutes.

- Whilst it is true that only the 2 members from Newton P.C. (together with the clerk and a co-opted member) were present, many of the members of Clifton P.C. (including some of the Burial Committee members) were in the room below and at no time was any attempt made by anyone to join us or to ask if we could wait until their meeting finished. In view of the fact that each of the Burial Committee members knew that this meeting was necessary to set the budget, and therefore, the precept, it can only be assumed that the absence of the Clifton members was deliberate in order to ensure that a budget could not be set.
- Given the need to set a precept and the absence of a quorum the members present decided to continue the current precept. This decision was not made by the Clerk but by the committee members present. The Clerk only conveyed the decision to Clifton P.C.
- The Agreement between the Councils does not mention reserves. Therefore it neither provides for nor forbids the carrying of financial reserves. The Cemetery is a business, and like all businesses it needs reserves because it has intermittent financial demands and, at times, has to carry out capital projects. Two of these need to be carried out next year and will completely absorb all of the reserve. Also, can either of the P.C.'s provide additional finance at short notice should an emergency occur?
- The water supply to the cemetery has failed and needs to be replaced. It was to have been done voluntarily by local people. But, the persons, concerned have been alienated by Clifton P.C. and have withdrawn. It will now have to be done by a commercial contractor at an estimated cost circa £3000.00.
- The gravestone plinths (which align the graves and support the headstones) cannot be installed over existing graves and therefore, must be in place before the first burial in the new area, which may be as soon as February. Because they provide a fixed frame of reference the graves will be aligned better and maintenance will be greatly simplified, which will recoup the cost in the long term. These plinths are now the norm in new graveyards. The estimate for these is £ 3150.00 plus vat (£ 3775.00 total)
- The burial committee will need therefore about £ 7000.00 for capital expenditure plus circa £ 3000.00 (the figure quoted in the Clifton P.C. document is completely inaccurate) for running costs giving a total of nearly £10,000 less income from interments of about £2,200.00 which means that precept requested is slightly low.
- The 1942 agreement states that the precept payment ratios should be adjusted, if necessary, on the 1st day of April following the publication of the Census data. As this was not done in 2012 it cannot be done again until

2022. Therefore there is no necessity to hold discussions at this time.