

**Minutes of the Fremington Parish Council Parks and Playing Fields Committee
held on Thursday 30th May 2019 at 10.00am
at the Parish Council Offices, 12 Higher Road, Fremington.**

Present: Cllrs S Adams, Mrs J Cann, I Capon, I Crawford, Ms M Scott and J Bell.
Mrs K Graddock, Acting Parish Clerk.
7 members of the public.

Councillor F Biederman as outgoing Vice Chairman took the Chair

1905/37 **Election of Chairman**

RESOLVED: That Cllr S Adams be elected as Chairman for 2019/20.

(NC)

Councillor S Adams took the Chair.

1905/38 **Election of Vice Chairman**

RESOLVED: That Cllr Ms M Scott be elected as Vice Chairman for 2019/20.

(NC)

1905/39 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies as recorded on the attendance sheet were received from Cllr McCormack-Hole.

1905/40 **Declarations of interests**

None received.

1905/41 **To agree the agenda as published**

Agreed.

1905/42 **Chairman's Announcements**

No announcements were made.

1905/43 **Public Participation Period**

The Secretary of the Muddlebridge Allotment Association introduced himself and two other Officers from the Association. He explained that he felt it was important to provide a link between the Council and the tenants of the Allotment Association and they represent the views of the tenants on site. The Chairman of the Association read out a statement, which was circulated to members prior to the meeting and is appended to these minutes as Appendix 1. However, he explained that the waiting list had now increased to 5.

1905/44 **Minutes**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 25th April 2019 are approved and signed as a correct record.

(NC)

1905/45 **Bench at Griggs Field**

The request had not been received by the applicant. Therefore, no matter was to be discussed.

1905/46 **Village Green**

Members were circulated copies of the previous resolution (1902/34) prior to the meeting and were tabled an email of complaint received from a member of the public with regards to allowing dogs on leads on the Village Green. Members

discussed the 3 month trial and it was felt that there hadn't been sufficient evidence to make a decision on whether to allow dogs on leads on the green and that there hadn't been a great deal of footfall so far. Cllr Bell felt that dogs should not be allowed on the Village Green as it is a place for families and very young children, after some discussion it was

RESOLVED: That the trial period is extending for a further 3 months.

(5.1)

1905/47

Part B – Exclusion of Press and Public

RESOLVED that under Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 that the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following items as they involve likely disclosure of confidential information.

(NC)

1905/48

Muddlebridge Allotments

Correspondence was received from the Muddlebridge Allotment Association that was circulated prior to the meeting. The Clerk gave a verbal update on the progress to date in relation to the lease of the land and possible rental costs and it was

RESOLVED:

1. That the Clerk arrange a site visit of the allotments for all members of the Parks and Playing Fields Committee.
2. That the Clerk contact the Agents to challenge the possible lease requirements.
3. That the Clerk meet with the Allotment Association to discuss the possible lease requirements.

(NC)

1905/49

Close

There being no further business the meeting closed at 10.40am.

Signed..........

Dated..... 26-06-19

Appendix 1

MUDDLEBRIDGE ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATIONStatement to Parks & Playing Fields Com. 30th May 2019

It is almost 10 years to the day that MUDDLEBRIDGE ALLOTMENTS started life, when all 33 applicants, on the Fremington Parish Council's waiting list for allotment plots, walked through the gates at Muddlebridge, an area rented for 7 years from the Church, for allotments. They enthusiastically started to transform an old permanent pasture, full of weeds, infested with rabbits, lacking depth of soil and full of stone rubble, left over from a previous contractor's road improvement site, into workable allotment gardens.

The challenge was too great for some and within the first couple of months 8 plot holders had given up, leaving 12 plots with no tenant.

By the end of 2009 all plots were successfully occupied, paying £1.72 per 10 sq.m's, and with a waiting list of over 30.

Over the following 6 years, to the start of the Church's rent review in 2015, there were 15 more changes with the waiting list remaining at around 30.

Due to the way the plot holders Tenancy Agreement, with the Parish, had been written Fremington Parish Council had no option but to issue all tenants a 12 month notice to quit. Rumours circulated that the Church, on the back of all the hard work solely put in by the plot holders, were either going to sell the land or massively put up the rent to the Parish. Our Association gave evidence of what local allotment rentals were and what Agricultural pastoral rents were being paid (figures obtained from the Agricultural and Horticultural Development Board). In addition our Parish Councillor representative, Cllr Myka Scott, gave a statement to the P & P Committee members, in summary saying " *a high increase may make allotments unaffordable to some of our more vulnerable member who enjoy the company and friendship that having an allotment brings. ALLOTMENTS SHOULD BE AFFORDABLE TO ALL & NOT EXCLUSIVE*" This was **ignored** and our rents increased March 2016 to £3.90 per 10 sq.m's for 2 years and then again in March 2018 to £4.50 per sq.m's.

Derek Beechey (MAA's Treasurer) made a statement, on behalf of the Association, to the P & P Fields 25th November 2015 Committee meeting expressing our disappointment that rents had risen by over 161% in the 4 year period. We were concerned that such high increases would see the demise of our allotment site and go the same way as the allotments at the Big Sheep with their high rents – die and now extinct.

By the end of 2016 the waiting list dropped, with 12 plot changes, to only 18 and since then another 18 have given up with **only one on the waiting list and all occupied.**

Unoccupied plots on Babbages is costing the Parish considerable money (see P & P Fields Com Meeting minutes February 2019). If more plots at Muddlebridge become vacant the cost to the Council will increase, no doubt a further increase to our rents – result more plot holders giving up due to high rents. An ever decreasing spiral of more rent the more cost to the parish

With vacant plots on Babbages (rent £1.72 / 10sq m's), Barnstaple (rent £2.20 / 10 sq.m's) and Bishops Tawton (£3.75 / sq.m's) who is going to put their name on the waiting list for a Muddlebridge plot with possibly rents exceeding £5 per 10 sq m's.

PLEASE, PLEASE resist the Church's greed for another big rent increase, or Muddlebridge will disappear.

IS THAT WHAT THE PARISH REALLY WANTS ?