



BEMBRIDGE PARISH COUNCIL

The Clerk to the Council,
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9th August 2018

Dear Mr Alexander Hopkinson-Woolley

Thank you for the questions at Full Council on 7th August during the public forum.

***Resident:** how much did it cost the Bembridge Council in 1988, when there may have been one part time clerk and perhaps one lengthsman? How many more staff are there now and how much more will the newly proposed staffing levels cost? What other council anywhere pays such a large proportion of the precept in staffing? What other council anywhere has such a high staffing ration to population? Is there an increase in the office workload to justify the increase in staffing hours, such as the office being open for public enquiries for longer? Are queries being answered more quickly and more efficiently? How much extra might we have to pay the clerk if the already high level of staffing is further increased? What is the percentage increase per year in parish running costs since 1988 and how does that compare with inflation? What steps are now being taken to keep costs to a minimum? Are we to give up the idea of moving the lengthsman, wasting £16,000? When we think of money wasted on fund-raising ideas that produced nothing, when we think of the quite unnecessary ideas for extra spending, such as moving the public conveniences, spoiling the Village Hall kitchen space and terminating sources of income for no obvious reason, apart from spite, it seems there must be a malign force behind this extravagance. What is the source of this financial irresponsibility? Is the majority of the council, four of which changed electoral stance without giving any convincing explanation, a group of puppets dancing to the tune of a puppeteer? Who might be the puppeteer? When and if 5/7 is sold and the revenues forfeited and the money thrown away in the current extravagance, will Bembridge become a small version of Northamptonshire but on a proportionately far worse scale? The new finance group needs to produce far better outcomes than those we have had from the foolishly constituted group we are in the process of giving up. We need some financial sense for a change, not the unthinking unbridled extravagance that has blighted our parish for the last few years. Apart from this, the proposal that a group, that has operated in secret, be put in charge of our finances, would seem to come from the same malign force that has been directing Bembridge's financial decisions in recent years. Will the proceedings continue to be kept away from public scrutiny? The Chairman needs to change his spots, demonstrate he is competent and act in the interests of the Bembridge parishioners for a change; is he able to do so? Is he up to the challenge?*

I would love to write you a dissertation about how Local councils/Government has progressed in 30 years or even how the world has changed in 30 years however I am no longer a student and you are no longer a teacher plus I don't have the available time to do so.

The use of computer data was introduced at Bembridge Parish Council in 2002 therefore it would take an excessive amount of time to ascertain the information you have asked for from the hard copy minute books. You are welcome to come into the Parish Office and research the information for yourself as we have the minute books going back to 1894.

Bembridge Parish Council has taken on, in the past seven years, most of the discretionary services that were provided by the Isle of Wight Council such as toilets, grounds maintenance, environment officer role, beach cleaning, maintenance of Rights of Way,

beach safety equipment etc. The statutory services that the Isle of Wight Council may look to devolve are potentially all Rights of Way, elements of Social Care, Housing, Youth Provision, Car Parks, Planning, Environmental Health, Licensing and the list could go on. The assets taken on are three sets of public toilets, the Old School Field, Lincoln Way Pond and the Coastguard Green.

There are a range of local services that the Parish Council has had to take over otherwise provision would have ceased such as the Bembridge Friendship Circle; Community bus, Street Fair administration and more in the pipeline with the pending transfer of the maintenance of St Luke's Churchyard if it is closed by order of the Secretary of State.

Bembridge has an ageing population with 48% being over 60 compared to the Island average of 31% and national average of 23% (source 2011 census). The younger generations have to work longer in life and with increasing retirement ages meaning fewer volunteers are coming forward.

The asset stock for a Parish Council of 2,100 properties, 3,224 electorate and approx. 4,000 population and a medium size is vast; most of which are old buildings requiring a lot of investment to bring them up to modern day standards. Some of these properties are underused.

Bembridge Parish Council delivers a vast amount of services for a medium size Parish. If you were to compare us to Parish & Town Councils who deliver similar services you will find that we are under resourced in comparison.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Emma Goldring', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Emma Goldring
Clerk Bembridge Parish Council

Cc Bembridge Parish Councillors