

Coat of Arms Complaints received by Fernwood Parish Council

Updated 9/11/22

Complaint 1

From: REDACTED

Sent: 07 November 2022 13:46

To: feedback@fernwood-pc.co.uk

Subject: Formal complaint

Dear Fernwood PC,

I would like to raise a formal complaint against the PC regarding the spending of £14500 to purchase a coat of arms for the village.

Having spoken to another PC please advise on the below:

- * There's no mention of this crest on the November agenda or minutes.
- * Nothing on your website for December so assuming they didn't meet in that month?
- * January 17th agenda and minutes werent uploaded to the website until Feb 8th (along with the paperwork) and all it says is: item expenditure for consideration - coat of arms, then the price which was unanimously agreed.

There's nothing to confirm this agenda was made public ahead of the meeting, which by law they have to give three clear days notice so if she didn't put a copy on a noticeboard, Joe public wouldn't have known to attend and object.

Ultimately, I believe that this to be nothing more than a vanity project and that the money could have spent far better enriching the lives of residents and the residents should have been consulted formally on this.

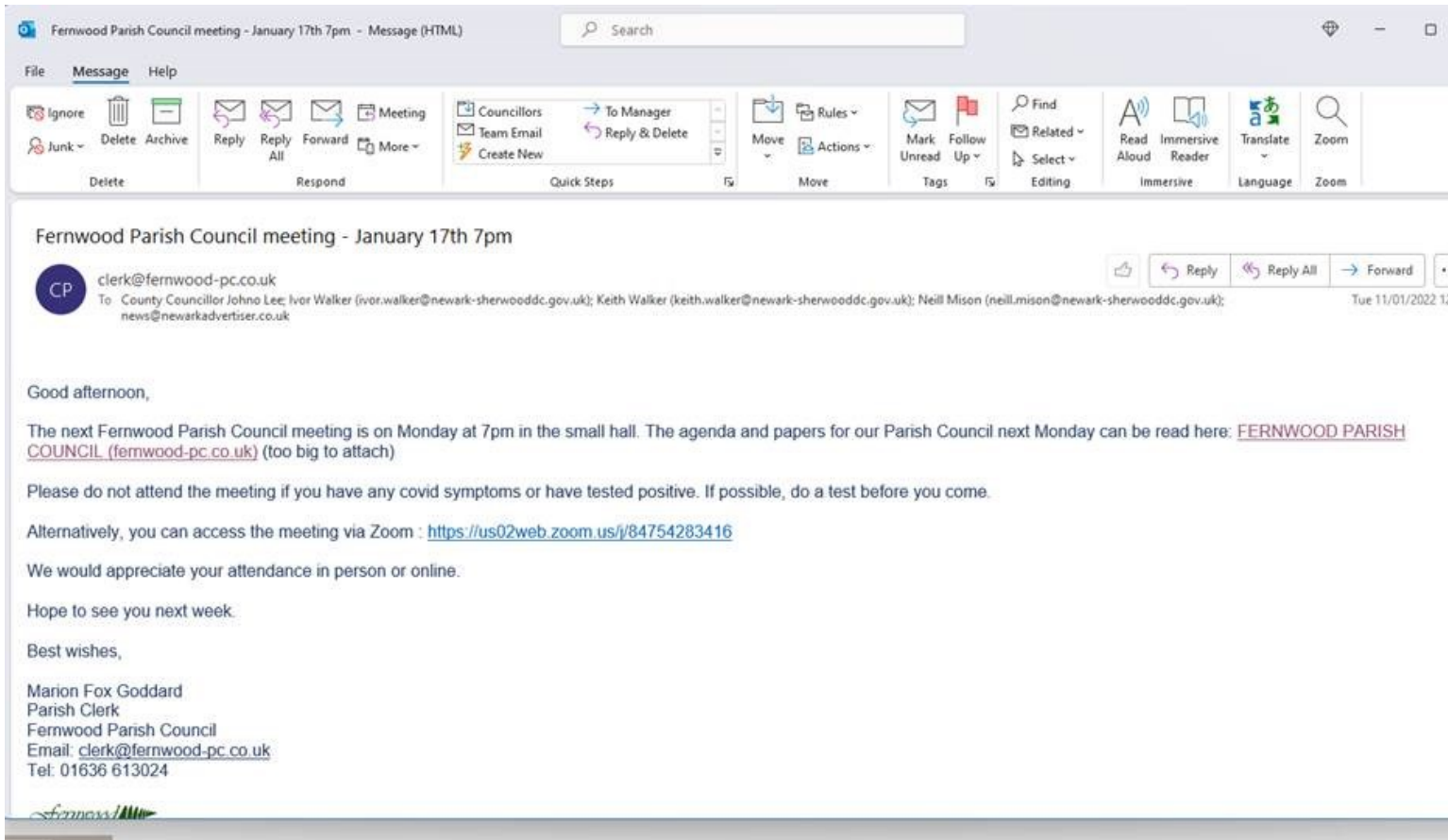
REDACTED

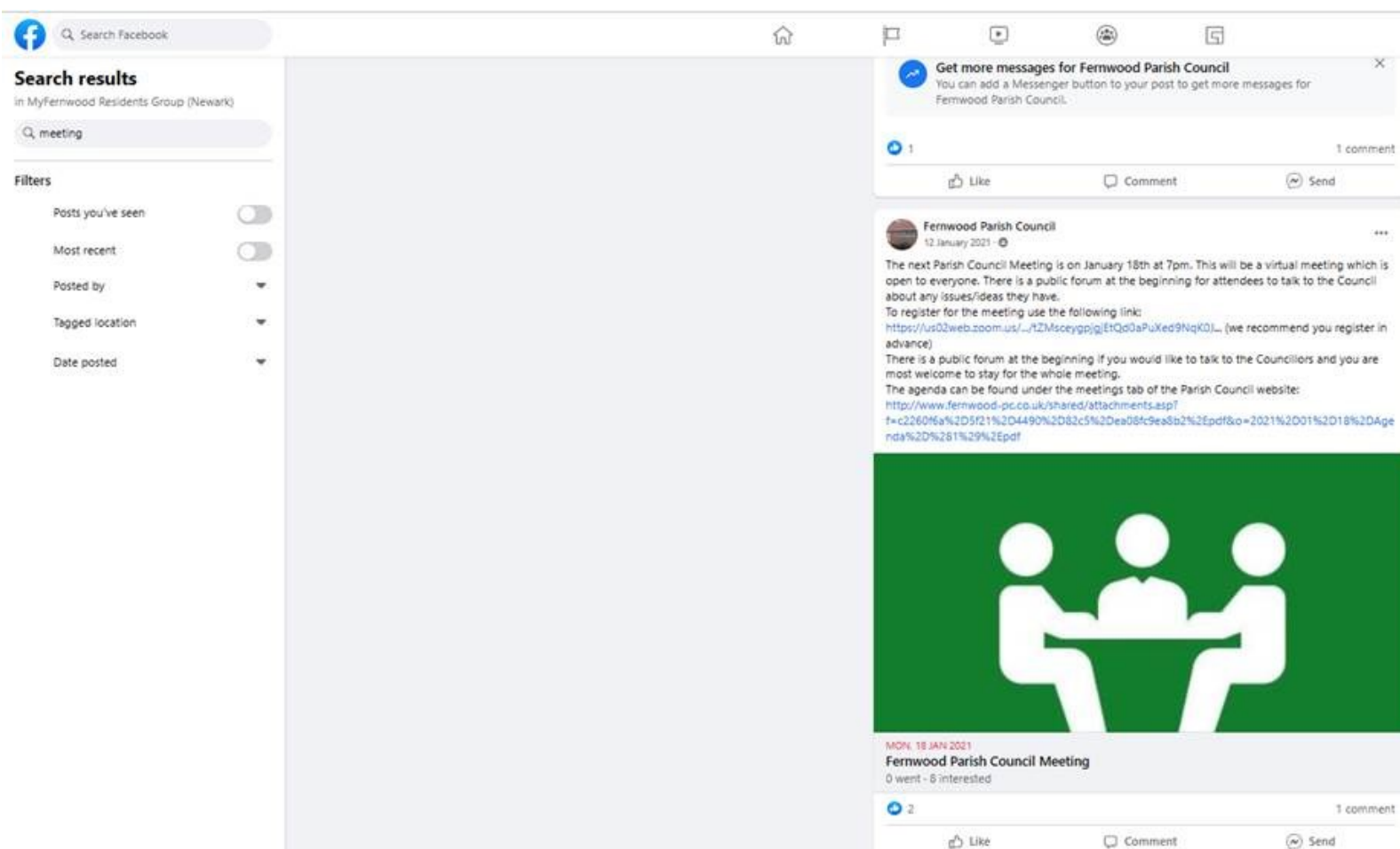
On Mon, 7 Nov 2022 at 14:52, <clerk@fernwood-pc.co.uk> wrote:

Good afternoon REDACTED,

Thank you for your complaint. I have assessed your complaint and this is answered below

The agenda for the meeting on January 17th meeting was published on Tuesday 11th January 2022. This was posted on the notice boards at the village hall and Goldstraw Lane. Below I show a screen shot of evidence of this; the invite was sent to the Newark Advertiser and the local Councillors. Details of the meeting were also shared on Facebook on January 12th. Screen shots of the evidence below.





The agenda was on the website from the 11th of January 2022. Councillor Lee's report had not been put in the agenda pack published on 11/1/22 so I uploaded a second copy with his report and an apology – this can be seen on page 15 of this link: [FERNWOOD PARISH COUNCIL \(fernwood-pc.co.uk\)](http://www.fernwood-pc.co.uk) I recall that I removed the original agenda but then had second thoughts thinking it would be better to leave the original one on so they could be compared if there was any need to go back to the agendas. So, I uploaded the initial agenda again. Fernwood Parish Council has nothing to hide.

To clarify, the meeting was convened and publicised as it is required to by law:

Agenda Item

8d: Items of expenditure for consideration

v. Coat of Arms (Page 23 has the quote that the council considered).

The council's decision to buy the coat of arms was minuted the minutes were published (Online and on the notice boards) and available for everybody to read.

I'm not sure what relevance November or December have to your complaint - if you could confirm I will come back to you.

I hope this clarifies the situation and explains to you that the council made this decision lawfully. If you have any further questions on the legality of the decision, please let me know.

Regarding the council's decision, we have released attached document today to give insight into the council's decision. Regarding your comment that the funding could have been spent on 'enriching the lives of residents and the residents', the council would not have agreed the spend if it was to be at the expense of any other project that was needed. The following document which is on the council's website, will give you insight into the significant amounts of money the council has and will receive; I can assure you that investing in the coat of arms will not affect any other project: [CIL](#)

I invite you to come to the parish council meeting this month and discuss this directly with the council. They will be meeting on November the 21st at 7:00 PM at the village hall.

I hope I've addressed your complaint to your satisfaction but if you would like to raise anything else, please do not hesitate to come back to me.

Best wishes,

Marion Fox Goddard

Parish Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer

Fernwood Parish Council

Email: clerk@fernwood-pc.co.uk

Tel: 01636 613024

Office opening times: Monday & Friday 10am-12pm, Tuesday to Thursday 10am - 1pm

From: REDACTED

Sent: 07 November 2022 15:05

To: clerk@fernwood-pc.co.uk

Subject: Re: Formal complaint Coat of Arms

Thanks,

That's a great reply (as always).

So my next question - please - is reading the statement signs are being requested, have these been costed up? I have contacted a couple of signmakers and they quoted 'roughly' £3000 each for a 'traditional type' village sign. By my estimation we want at least 2, possibly 3 (Goldstraw/ Dale and the new entrance) and in addition there are maintenance/

insurance/ replacement costs to be considered. And finally there's stationery to be considered etc.

Thanks again,

REDACTED

From: clerk@fernwood-pc.co.uk <clerk@fernwood-pc.co.uk>

Sent: 07 November 2022 15:32

To: REDACTED

Subject: RE: Formal complaint Coat of Arms

Hello REDACTED,

Thanks for coming back to me.

No, at this stage the signs haven't been costed fully. We wanted to get the coat of arms organised so we could provide a brief of the design to any companies that quote and, to be honest, delivery of the signs may take some time as we know there are going to be a lot of traffic works on the edge of the Parish over the coming years with the bridge widening etc. so we need to be sure they won't just get dug up as part of road works before we get them.

I don't think you are far out; the costs of the signs will be approx.£10,000 which is again a drop in the ocean when it comes to how much CIL we have now/will have when the signs are purchased. When we're closer to buying them and considering the cost, I will check with the council's insurer if the signs will increase the cost of our premium but from my experience, this is going to be unlikely because this question was raised about our buying the woodland and it had absolutely no effect on the premium. Replacement costs will be something the council will consider. In terms of where they go, this will be looked at in detail when we have the coat of arms ready and are able to look at where would be best for the signs to go.

Regarding stationery, we don't we don't hold branded stationery so there will be no right off costs and no new costs. With respect to this, the header will be changed but this is just pasted into documents and then printed.

Please feel free to let me have any queries. I can't guarantee I can get back to you as quickly as today but I hope that I have reassured you that the council does take into account the implications of projects they are considering.

Best wishes,

Marion Fox Goddard
Parish Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer
Fernwood Parish Council
Email: clerk@fernwood-pc.co.uk
Tel: 01636 613024

Complaint 2

From: REDACTED
Sent: 07 November 2022 17:30
To: office@Fernwood-pc.co.uk
Subject: Contact via HugoFox

Dear Parish,

You have received the following message from REDACTED

Sirs I am absolutely astounded by the news that someone has had the ridiculous notion that in these fiscally problematic times it is ok to spend thousands on a coat of arms for Fernwood. Frankly, whoever has rubber stamped this selfish vanity project, should be removed from office. Completely shameful decision making. Sincerely REDACTED

From: clerk@fernwood-pc.co.uk <clerk@fernwood-pc.co.uk>
Sent: 08 November 2022 10:22
To: REDACTED

Subject: Coat of Arms Feedback

Good morning,

Thank you for your message which I will redact and pass on to the Council. (If you would prefer it not to be redacted please let me know).

The following press release, which was published yesterday, gives some insight as to why the Council made the decision. If you have any further feedback after reading the release, do let me know.

Fernwood Parish Council Coat of Arms

Following a [freedom of information request](#)^[1], on November 3rd, Fernwood Parish Council provided information on what the council had spent Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds on. Shortly after, the response was sent, a resident added a post to the 'MyFernwoodResidents' Facebook group asking '[Fernwood Parish Council](#) looking through the accounts is it true that £14555 was spent on a coat of arms for the village?'

This led to many questions being raised by residents with concerns including that money was being spent on such things at the expense of other projects.

Transparency

All the Council's decisions and expenditure are published in publicly available agendas and minutes on the [council's website](#); a link to which is sent to the Newark advertiser, the local county councillor and the three district councillors for the area. Fernwood Parish Council is one of the most open and transparent local councils in the area. Not only are the agendas (including the agenda pack which

[1] FOI Request and response can be read through the link: [FOI requests received by Fernwood Parish Council](#)

has information that the councillors consider) and minutes published on the council's website and noticeboards, they are also promoted on the council's Facebook page and the two local social media groups which some members of the community run in Fernwood.

Council Funds

Fernwood Parish Council has received £650,186 of CIL over the last three years and with thousands more houses due to be built in the parish over the next 10 years, it is projected that the council will receive over one million pounds of CIL in addition to the amount that has already been received. This is mainly from the Barratt David Wilson Homes and Allison Homes developments. It does not take into account the CIL that the Parish Council will receive from the Persimmon Homes development.

In addition to CIL, the Parish Council requests a precept for the administration of the Council and delivery of Council Services. This is paid through residents' council tax bills. Precept has not been used to pay for the coat of arms; CIL which the council has in abundance has been used.

Why the Coat of Arms has been purchased

In January 2022, the council unanimously took the decision to request a Coat of Arms from the [College of Arms](#) with the knowledge that there are more than enough funds to allocate to other projects which the council knows are important to local residents. Fernwood is a growing parish in terms of development with original hospital dwellings, Fernwood Central, Greater Fernwood (Barratt David Wilson Homes current development) and Fernwood Meadows (Allison Homes development). To date, a fern leaf has been used on the parish council logo. The coat of arms which is currently being designed will take into account the rich history of the Parish.

Councillor Dee Harrison confirmed 'The Council would like to mark the boundaries of Fernwood parish, as many other parishes and towns do, with the 'welcome to...' signs and that's when the idea of a coat of arms came about. The Council wishes to promote civic pride in the community. There is quite often debate on whether Fernwood is a village or an estate. Fernwood is a parish - and this was a way of marking the parish boundaries as well as celebrating Fernwood's history - the Hall and grounds, RAF Balderton as well as Balderton Hospital. We wouldn't have spent this amount out of the precept, we considered the idea because it could come out of the CIL'.

Councillor Mollie Weale said 'We have a lot of money which we can spend on the village or lose it. Unfortunately, the coat of arms is expensive, and some residents will be taken aback but in the long term we all thought it a very good idea and a legacy for the future'.

Fernwood Parish Council is committed to spending CIL on projects that will benefit the community. Recently the council has bought woodland in the centre of the village. The Council has repaired streetlamps in there that have been out for over 2 years, installed bins, worked to ensure the trees are made safe and wildlife preserved. The Youth Club is another example of where the Parish Council is using CIL to deliver more for the community of Fernwood. The Council are currently investigating the possibility of extending the village hall and has requested to have centrally monitored CCTV in the centre of the parish which will be funded through CIL, if approved. The Parish Council also has plans to renew/enhance the play park in central Fernwood. Before this project is commenced, the council is waiting for the completion of the transfer of the open spaces in central Fernwood into Fernwood Parish Council ownership. It is currently still owned by the developer, but legal work is underway with Newark and Sherwood District Council and Barratt David Wilson Homes to complete the transfer. This is taking longer than Fernwood Parish Council would have liked, but the speed of this transaction is dependent on various parties; the Council have regularly requested for this to be completed as quickly as possible though.

The parish council consults residents regularly on issues affecting the village and use feedback to inform decisions made by the Council.. As more projects become possible the council will consult with local residents.

About the Council

Marion Fox Goddard, Clerk to the parish council said:

'Fernwood Parish Council is made up of 7 councillors who volunteer their time to serve on the Council. It is my job to deliver the work of the parish council including communications. The Coat of arms purchase was covered in the agenda and minutes for the January 17th, 2022, Fernwood Parish Council meeting, was briefly covered in the October issue of the Fernwood Gazette and also covered in the budget review in the October agenda pack. I try to keep residents as up to date as possible through social media posts and agendas/minutes; the council has nothing to hide in terms of its spending or decisions.

There is one thing that is guaranteed; you will never please everyone. The coat of arms has clearly raised some questions for residents. Social media can be a divisive arena and it is easy to criticise, particularly when the full picture has not been given. I would ask that if anyone has any concerns regarding decisions of the council, that these are raised through me; I will be sure to provide an answer with context and be happy to share this through social media'

Parish Council meeting – November 21st, 2022, 7pm

In light of the concerns raised following the Facebook post regarding the Coat of Arms, this will be discussed at the Parish Council meeting on November 21st. The decision will not be changed but the Council invite residents to come to the meeting to raise any questions that they have.

Parish Council meetings are held on the third Monday of each month (except December and August - when there isn't a meeting) at 7:00 PM at the village hall. Residents are welcome to attend all Parish Council meetings. They can raise any suggestions/concerns in the public forum at the beginning of the meeting and stay for the whole meeting to hear the business discussed . Alternatively, suggestions can be emailed or posted to the parish council at the village hall.

Best wishes,

Marion Fox Goddard
Parish Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer
Fernwood Parish Council
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