

PARISH COUNSELLOR VACANCY FORMAL ELECTION DAY 12 NOVEMBER 2015

My name is Veronica Green.

I want to express my disappointment at the tiny percentage of Easton residents who have demanded a formal, chargeable, ballot box election for the replacement of one recently, democratically elected Parish Counsellor who, has sadly, suddenly died.

I wish to record that this tiny group of protestors do not represent the huge majority of 1120 Easton electorate.

The present group of Easton Parish Counsellors, sat before you, were democratically elected, only a few months ago, by a fantastic 67% turnout of Easton residents. A turnout rate I doubt will be achieved again. The Easton residents overwhelmingly voted for this current Parish Council. You only have to look at the number of votes for each individual candidate that stood, to see who the Easton residents wanted to represent them. I have been informed that there had not been resident balloted Parish Counsellor elections for more than 15 years, until May 2015. Previous Parish Counsellors were just co-opted on. Why can't it be the same this time?

Here we are a few months later and after the sudden death of one of those democratically elected Parish Counsellors, we are having to bow to the demands of a few individuals to have a formal, ballot box election that SNC has to charge Easton residents for, via Parish Council, at a huge cost of a minimum of £2500 (due to formal voting papers including postal votes being printed and circulated, having the village hall assigned for voting for a whole day, followed by scrutineers counting etc).

It was recorded by one of these protestors that £2500 was a small price to pay for democracy. Well let's put that into perspective with examples of the Easton village funds; this is approximately

- 15% of 2015's total annual budget of £16,400
- 5-6 years' worth of Easton village jumble sales or
- 5-6 years of Easton village plant sales or
- Good Companions recently asked for a £30 donation, so £2500 of wasted Parish Council money is 83.33 years of donations to Good Companions.

I hope the protestors have made these groups aware of this.

This election for one Parish Councillor is likely to cost more than the cost of a defibrillator.

Whilst sitting at many Easton Parish Council meetings in the 3 years of being in Easton, we have listened to hours of debate of whether Easton can afford tiny purchases, for example a £150 dog mess bin, because the previous Parish Council had already spent their modest budget on the regular outgoings, for example grass cutting, maintenance and litter collection. The 67% of Easton residents who elected

this new Parish Council gave them the position of trust, authority and responsibility to represent the best interests of the village and for achieving value for money. Unfortunately this tiny protest group have now removed the new Parish Council's ability to achieve value for money this year. The new Parish Council are now going to have to search for ways of making painful, financial cuts to cover the £2500 unexpected expenditure. Is £2500 going to have to be spent every time there is a vacancy? If so, this will bankrupt the village.

I would suggest that Easton follow the excellent example of Costessey Town Council, whose meetings we have attended. There, we witnessed them fill 2 vacancies by asking the candidates to stand up and present their past involvements and achievements for the village, their skills and attributes suitable for Parish Council and then the previously, democratically elected Parish Councillors privately, individually voted on pieces of paper. The voting slips were counted by the Clerk and the successful candidates were announced. Simple and for the cost of a bit of paper.

I have to presume that this tiny protest group have so many candidates to put forward for the replacement of one Parish Counsellor to justify the enormous £2500 cost to Easton Village. We all look forward to receiving and studying these candidates' manifestoes, where they should describe and validate the skills and attributes they will be able to bring to Easton Parish Council. Of course proven financial skills should be amongst their skills, as well as the ability to understand all the massive, detailed, technical and legal documents that surround the 907 plus houses and Food Hub. Easton Village must not, once again, get hoodwinked and railroaded, as with the previous Easton Parish Council, because they did not read or understand or respond to the documents of the last 10 years, so that the 907 houses planning application was a done deal many years before 2015.

In the interests of openness and transparency, Easton village would like to know the names of the 10 signatories who have demanded this formal, balloted election. It is only fair that they are accountable for this huge waste of money. I would expect that any potential parish counsellor is present at this meeting tonight and has regularly attended Parish Council meetings, so that they are aware of how Parish Council and local government runs and therefore what is expected of them.

Veronica Green
12 October 2015 Easton Parish Council meeting