

SPECIALL COUNCIL MEETING – 26 FEBRUARY 2025

AGENDA ITEM 3 – PUBLIC QUESTION TIME – ORDER IN WHICH THE CHAIR OF THE COUNCIL WILL INVITE QUESTIONS BELOW RECEIVED IN WRITING IN ADVANCE OF THE MEETING

1. From Mrs Smith to the Chair of the Corporate Support Committee, Councillor Oppler

FULL DETAIL OF THE QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED IS DETAILED BELOW

Note, the Chair will:

- invite questions from members of the public who have submitted in writing their questions in line with the Council's Constitution.
- confirm that Public Question Time allows Members of the public to ask one question at a time and that a maximum of one minute is allowed for each question;
- state that questions will be invited in the order in which they have been received and that if there is time remaining from the 15 minutes allowed for Public Question Time, questioners will be allowed to ask a supplementary question.
- Outline that if in the opinion of the Monitoring Officer the question relates to the terms of reference of a Council committee, the question is to be accepted by Full Council and be automatically referred by Full Council without discussion or debate to the relevant committee and that the questioner would have been advised of this at the time they submitted their question

QUESTION ONE

From Mrs Smith to the Chair of the Corporate Support Committee, Councillor Oppler

Background - This question is also in response to another Freedom of Information Request (DSAR) which we have already made. It relates to the declaration by Neil Crowther that our behaviour was 'Unreasonable' and it was decided that our emails would be blocked, censored, and would not be delivered to their destinations for a period of at least a year, or even answered, unless Mr. Crowther considered it necessary to do so.

This included Elected Councillors who are not Arun District Council employees, but democratically elected members of Local Government and to whom denial of access is the criminal offence of 'Malfeasance'. Administrative procedures were pursued by Officers contrary to our democratic right of access to our elected representatives and decided on the authority of one Councillor alone, Councillor Lury.

We made further requests for information relating to the nature of the incidents reported to Cllr Lury, by Infomanagement and Neil Crowther and the reasons given for this action being taken. In particular we wanted to know why one Councillor alone, was able to initiate this action without considering the opinions of all other Councillors. We were given none except that we had written to many Councillors, something we are lawfully allowed to do.

This is the second time that we have been harassed in this way by Council Officers. As with the first time, when we were declared 'Vexatious Complainants' resulting in the Court Case referred to in Question One, no reasons could be provided, and no evidence produced, except that we had written to many Councillors to inform them of 'questionable practices' we had identified in the Planning Department which have since been recognised and acknowledged.

In the case of the declaration of our status as 'Vexatious Complainants', which facilitated the Court Case already identified, and lasted for 6 months, NO Elected Councillor was involved or even informed about this action. A clear example of the harassment of us by Arun District Council Officers in order to cover up information which Officers did not wish Councillors to know! As Cllr. Lury, made this third decision alone, without consultation with his colleagues, he must take sole responsibility for it.

In short, our question is:-

Question - Please identify the compelling evidence presented to you by Neil Crowther and/or 'Infomanagement' which convinced you to take the sole decision, without consulting your Colleagues, to declare us to have unreasonable behaviour, and to be punished with the consequences described above.

Written Response as confirmed by the Chair of the Council at the meeting

This response is to your question to Councillor Lury in respect of the decision to apply the Unreasonable Behaviour policy in 2024. No further information is held on this matter other than that provided to you within the response to your Data Subject Access Request 24-39. The Unreasonable Behaviour policy can be found [here](#) and you will see, as has been explained to you previously, that officers consult with the Leader of the Council (or Deputy Leader) (section 3.4) when reaching a decision under the policy. There is no requirement for that decision or consultation to be taken with all members. You were written to regarding the manner in which you have communicated with the council, namely sending emails to multiple council employees and councillors who were not directly involved in the planning matters you raised over an extended period of time. The decision to apply the policy was advised to you on 12 September 2024 by Neil Crowther, Group Head of Planning.

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