



Informal Council Meeting

**Wednesday, 15th
December, 2021**

HASTINGS BOROUGH COUNCIL

AGENDA

WRITTEN QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Note: Nothing contained in this agenda or in the attached reports and minutes of committees constitutes an offer or acceptance of an offer or an undertaking or contract by the Borough Council

Questioner	Question	Answer
<p>David Roberts</p>	<p>Cllr. Batsford has told me that there are "thousands" on the housing register and that these people have a "local connection" of "at least 3 years".</p> <p>What scrutiny is given to ascertain that these people are genuinely local and don't just have a "friend" who has been living here for 3 years?</p>	<p>Councillor Batsford:</p> <p>Applicants to the Housing Register are required to evidence that they have resided in Hastings for either 3 out of the last 5 years, or 5 out of the last 10 years. If they do not meet this criteria (with certain exceptions e.g. a victim of domestic abuse whereby it is not safe for them to remain in their current area) then they will not be considered eligible in accordance with the council's Housing Allocations Scheme (can be found online). Hastings Homemove Allocation Scheme 2018</p> <p>Proof of residence is required, and can be established/evidenced by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • council tax records • tenancy agreement • utility bills • other suitable proof <p>Applicants are also required to sign to confirm that the information they have provided is true and accurate, and if false then an application can be cancelled.</p>

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Councillor Patmore	<p>There is a housing development northeast of 31 Fern Road, St Leonards on Sea. The development backs on to Hollington Stream which is surrounded by woodland owned by Hastings Borough Council.</p> <p>For the past 6 months residents surrounding the development have complained that the developer has consistently encroached on to HBC land and have pushed earth down toward the woodland damaging trees, flora, fauna and wildlife.</p> <p>Please can you tell me what HBC are doing to protect this woodland from developer encroachment and to safeguard the woodland's bio-diversity from damage caused by the development.</p>	<p>Councillor Evans:</p> <p>The following action is being taken:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Land encroachment: <p>Letter to be sent with deadline of mid-January to submit survey of what owner believes their land ownership is. Letter will also include some key dimensions, such as depth of rear gardens that have been permitted. We will compare what is submitted against land registry details once received. We will then take relevant action depending on what we find.</p> 2. Contour of land: <p>Land appears to have been levelled which is contrary to permission for site, where back gardens slope down towards rear boundary. Owner may submit application to regularise level rear gardens. This will not be invited however if an application comes in we will need to consider the impact of those changes on matters such as neighbouring residential amenity and drainage, amongst other matters.</p> 3. Displacement of soil: <p>Developer believes he owns land up to woodland edge (see point 1 above for our approach) and has been shifting soil around on what he believes is his own site. Ultimately the contours of the land should be in accordance with planning permission. Letter will be sent to owner/developer to that effect with deadline to restore land to that granted.</p> <p>Another site visit is required to check whether soil has been displaced beyond rear boundary and within the woodland beyond. Unfortunately weather conditions did not allow safe inspection on this point at the last site visit.</p>

Councillor Hilton	<p>I have now sent two requests both to Jane Hartnell and Councillor Judy Rogers for a full list of officers and their duties at the council.</p> <p>Each time I have been pointed to the list presented at our councillor induction which only describes the roles of the various directors of departments and told to direct my enquiries to the director which will then be sent to the relevant member of staff. While I understand the need not to overburden officers and use the My Hastings portal whenever possible for reporting problems, it is simply not right that councillors do not have access to the basic knowledge of who does what in our council.</p> <p>There are often queries from residents that are simply not covered by the My Hastings portal and the portal has no opportunity to track cases. This information on officers is provided by East Sussex County Council, I see no reason for the same not to be provided by HBC. When I mention this omission to councillors from other councils they are shocked that I do not have access to this information.</p> <p>Please will either Jane Hartnell or Councillor Judy Rogers arrange for councillors to be provided with a full list of all officers and their responsibilities within each department of the council?</p>	<p>Councillor Rogers:</p> <p>Thank you for your question.</p> <p>All Members of the Council have a right of access to the Chief Executive, Directors and other senior Managers for information, consultation, advice, or service requests. Where a Member requires information, it will be provided if it is readily available, for example, in Committee reports, background papers or material published on behalf of the Council. The Chief Executive, Directors and Heads of Service are free to give advice on a confidential basis about procedural matters or any other issue concerning the workings of the Council to any Councillor.</p> <p>Junior officers' work priorities are set by Senior Officers' and our protocol helps us to ensure we manage our junior officers' workloads. Councillors are not allowed to instruct officers directly – any contact needs to be via My Hastings as a service request or via a senior officer for a service issue escalation.</p> <p>We have been advised that ESCC allows all Councillors access to their staff directory which enables them to obtain email address and telephone extensions. We feel that our protocol works well for all parties involved and enables us to deal with service queries as efficiently as possible.</p>
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