

East Grinstead Town Council meeting 29 January 2024 at 7pm

Transcript of public question period

	<p>Introduction by Town Mayor (Chair) Cllr. Frazer Visser</p> <p>Good evening everyone and welcome to tonight's Council meeting for the discussion and setting of the budget for East Grinstead Town Council. Welcome everyone and this is a public meeting and although it is held in public therefore once the public session is complete the public are welcome to stay and watch the business being transacted but not interrupt or interact. Any disruption will result in persons being removed.</p> <p>Before we turn to public questions I wish to remind all those that wish to speak that questions are welcome on matters that are on the agenda only. So questions that are called are for items on the agenda as per our standing orders. The Council have been lenient with this in the past but due to some of the nature of the questions we are adhering strictly to our standing orders going forward with the Council.</p> <p>I will now open the public questions and in accordance with our standing orders anyone wishing to ask a question will advise which parish they live in and not speak for more than 2 minutes and be mindful that the answer may not be given this evening as the Chair will determine how any answer is provided. I will also remind you that it is not a debate or there is no right of reply as per our standing orders.</p> <p>So I will open the room to public questions, does anyone have any questions relating to the items on the agenda tonight?</p>
	<p>Yes I do</p>
	<p>Can I have your name and the parish you live in please?</p>
	<p>My name is, [REDACTED] in terms of the parish I live in whilst I don't mind giving my name I don't want to give any indication as to where I reside due to [REDACTED] of critics it's a safety concern.</p>
	<p>OK</p>
	<p>In terms of the agenda, my question relates to the Christmas Lights switch on event staffed by Saint Hill which is mentioned on in the Mayors forward on today's agenda, and in respect of the business on the agenda point 4 to approve the last meetings minutes my questions relates to an issue of concern first raised in that meeting that remains unresolved [REDACTED] It has taken me years to pluck up the courage to speak out and face my trauma [REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED] How do you think I feel when the Mayor says he kindly requests that we refrain from discussing the issue on social media or public platforms, I will not be gagged or silenced this is not an allegation it is the truth.</p>
	<p>Thank you what was the question sorry?</p>
	<p>I want to know why we think it is OK for the council to accept a donation from an organisation that I was part of [REDACTED]</p>

	<p>Thank you, I will answer in two parts – one is any accusation of anything that of a serious nature as I have put in writing to people that have requested should be made to the proper authorities that is the police for historic accusations or current accusations to West Sussex County Council safeguarding. East Grinstead Town Council is neither of those two bodies so please we urge you that any historic accusations should be made to the Police. Secondly in regards to any donations that have been received by organisations in this town, East Grinstead Town Council represent all members of our community evenly irrespective of belief, faith or background</p>
	<p>Any proven cases would therefore be taken into account We have dealt with all ??? legal members evenly and that is of every faith or background or group within the town we are, we don't judge on those backgrounds so that is why we represent everybody evenly. I am sorry to hear of your history and I would urge you to report that to the police, again it is not particularly an item on this agenda and I would urge anyone asking questions that this is about the budget that we are setting is the order of the business today. Thank you. Does anyone have anything else about the budget they wish to ask, if not I will move onto item number 2.</p>
	Noise from the zoom room
	Is that a question?
	Yes it is relating to the budget point 8 on the agenda if that is OK.
	OK
	<p>Similarly though I do wish to withhold my location and my parish [REDACTED] but I do stress that this does relate to point 8 on the agenda and from the wording in the forward by the Town Mayor, and so given the local government association code of conduct it says that councils have an important role to play in tackling modern slavery and it must insure that staff have received the relevant training in modern slavery and its indicators. Given the concerns about [REDACTED] which have been raised with the council, what is the council doing to ensure that it is not endorsing or benefiting from [REDACTED] when accepting help from Scientology volunteers at official events, and I believe that relates to point 8 given the budgeting for staffing in potential for voluntary activities and charitable activities that the council may undertake.</p>
	<p>I think the budget in point 8 is for staff that we actually employ and we don't employ anyone connected with the Church of Scientology at all, so that is not relation to item number 8. In regards to modern slavery we adhere to all the policies to do with that any other question to do with that I do not really see are relevant to this discussion.</p> <p>Again I would reiterate the point that any historic or current things should be reported immediately to the proper authority which this council isn't but we do comply with national guidelines that deal with that.</p>
	<p>Hello I would like to speak if that is OK? Hello my name is Abbie and I am also not going to give my location either. Hello everyone I am a disabled lady and I would not be able to participate in the [REDACTED] because I am classed as a degraded being, OK. This means that I am not worth saving, so I would like to ask the Mayor does the Mayor think it is appropriate that he continues to support such a discriminatory group? Thank you.</p>
	<p>Thank you again I feel that I would answer that by saying that we represent all organisations and people in our community evenly. I will also reference to the people that are coming onto this zoom call to ask these questions, that we are not the Church of Scientology we are not connected to the Church of Scientology or represent them in anyway. I am not here to defend them or be part of them, if you have these questions I would urge you to direct them towards them or if you have any other disability groups that have impact to your particular question. I</p>

	<p>have no idea what their policy is regarding disabled people or access but again this is not for us to answer that question it would be for them to answer that question in regard to how they treat disabled people that is not something we can answer on their behalf or part of the agenda. I am really sorry but I am going to have to be strict on this I do understand why you are all here and I have heard your questions we have answered in writing to several people as well if you do have anything that relates to the budget please do ask it if not this is not the right forum.</p>
	<p>I do have a question that is related to what was discussed but also to the budget. I am not going to disclose where I am for reasons that everyone else has said.</p>
	<p>Could you state your name for the record please</p>
	<p>██████████ As a public figure with a responsibility as a role model I am also a designated safeguarding officer and a trained mental health first aider, I couldn't find your safeguarding policy or any guidance on your site and I am deeply troubled by the lack of responsibility that the council is taking regarding all this evidence of ██████████ which is part of your responsibility. So my question is what action are you taking to assure the public that you take safeguarding concerns seriously regarding the ██████████</p>
	<p>Thank you. We have asked that we don't have the same question again but I will reiterate that the actions that this Town Council have taken and put in writing to several members that have contacted us is to report this to the correct authority – we at the Town Council are not the authority to do this to – however, the Police should be notified of any historic cases and anything you believe is going currently on through safeguarding should be reported to West Sussex County Council safeguarding we are the Town Parish Council and as such we represent our members and our residents within the town evenly and fairly. We work alongside other agencies to assist them when needed, but I would again reiterate the same point that if you are making all these serious allegations in public to do it through public questions at East Grinstead Town Council is not the right forum to do that it needs to be done properly through the right channels and the right channels are the police and WSCC. I am sorry to hear of all these allegations and accusations but at this stage that is what they are please do report them to the police I urge that strongly for you. They are the agencies that are in place to help you with these situations. Thank you.</p> <p>We are now moving onto item number 2 of the agenda.</p>