

East Grinstead Town Council meeting 8 January 2024 at 7pm

Transcript of public question period

	<p>Introduction by Town Mayor (Chair) Cllr. Frazer Visser</p> <p>Welcome everyone to tonight's meeting of East Grinstead Town Council. Lovely to see you all here after Christmas. So Happy New Year to you all it's an exciting year ahead. We have a lot to get through we have a very busy agenda. So hopefully we can wizz through business tonight and thank you for the members of public that are in the room and on zoom.</p> <p>Number one on the agenda is public question time. I believe we have two people who wish to speak.</p> <p>Everyone is in the room now so I think we have two questions. Are you both there?</p>
	Yes we have [REDACTED]
	Hi good evening everybody and Happy New Year. Can you hear me OK?
	Yes we can
	<p>Yeah fantastic [REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED] What are the Council doing to protect the public and especially children from abuse? And how do councillors justify attending events hosted by [REDACTED]</p>
	Thank you very much for your questions and thank you for coming. We only really accept one question there were two very different and quite in depth questions there, which one would you like us to really focus on there?
	Let's start with the first one in that case. Do you know what are the council doing to protect people and especially children from [REDACTED]
	Thank you I think that's quite a complex question to answer without any prewarning to that question as any allegations towards that would need to be legally referenced for us to make a response to. Town Clerk would you like to?
	The only thing I can say is the Town Council are not the public authority who deal with protection of adults and protection of children, obviously that comes under West Sussex County Council. However, if the Town Council were aware and had concerns of that nature then obviously the Town Council would report these to the appropriate authority. I don't know there is much else I can really say Chair - sorry
	Okay thank you I think your right the Town Council isn't the right authority for that. But if you do have any questions or concerns then you can obviously raise them through the official channels through the Clerk and then we can take that up with West Sussex who can take that up further on your behalf if you wanted to. Thank you we have another question as well.
	Cool, can I go ahead?
	Yes please do.
	<p>Thank you, good evening everyone, my question is wordy but it is distilled to one question. So please hear me out. So in the run up to the Church of Scientology's international day of scientists event in November 2023 church officials at Saint Hill failed to give the required 6 weeks' notice from premises license to the licensing authority. Breaching such conditions is considered a serious offence with a possible fine of up to £20,000 and or 6 months imprisonment stipulated under the licensing</p>

	<p>act. Yet despite this breach the church of Scientology received merely an advisory email to give notice in the future.</p> <p>Section 10.1 of the local government association model code of conduct which I know is on the agenda this evening states that council should not accept gifts or hospitality irrespective of estimated value which could give rise to real or substantive personal gain or a reasonable suspicion of influence to show favour from people seeking to acquire, develop or do business with a local authority. So this in mind raises questions about the relationship between the church of Scientology and elected officials generally. Therefore, my question is such to what extent do councillors agree that the continued attendance of church of Scientology events, such as the Christmas light switch on and the receipt of gifts including charitable donations, risk undermining the integrity of the council and bringing councillors into disrepute.</p>
	<p>Thank you, so again a long question without prior notice that is a lot to think about in a very short time. I believe that through the standards from Mid Sussex your question has already been answered and that we have a robust system in place which is actually going to be further discussed tonight about gifts and donations that we are fully in compliance with all regulatory bodies about that and all declarations are fully clear, transparent and disclosed by all councillors that attend any event.</p> <p>In regards to charity cheques that is obviously quite common for charity cheques to be collected and received by councillors on behalf of charities. In fact tonight we are handing out cheques to sports council awardees. So I am not sure how charities give influence in that way, can be influenced in that way in that is quite general and normal conduct for local authorities up and down the country.</p> <p>We represent all members of our community and do so evenly and even handedly so I thank you for your question and I hope that those answers do answer it slightly for you but they are quite complex and quite tricky questions there, but thank you and thank you both for coming in and giving your time to ask those questions tonight. We do appreciate all public participation. Thank you.</p> <p>There are no other members of public in the room that want to ask questions, and no other people on zoom Town Clerk?</p>
	<p>Somebody has just arrived (on zoom) but I do not think they want to ask any questions.</p>
	<p>To the person who has just arrived in the zoom room, do they want to ask a question? Okay we shall move onto item number 2 which is to commence no later than 7.30pm, which is apologies for absence. Do we have any Town Clerk.</p>