



EAST GRINSTEAD TOWN COUNCIL

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Town Clerk: Mrs J W Holden EDMS, IRRV (Hons), PSLCC



A Civility & Respect
Pledge Council

Your Ref:

My Ref:

18th April 2024

Mr A Barnes-Ross

By email

Dear Mr Barnes-Ross

Further to the hearing on 12th April, please see below the decision of the panel along with the action which will now follow.

Complaints Panel Decision:

Redaction of the You Tube video recording and associated recording transcript of the East Grinstead Town Council meeting of the 8th January 2024 was valid based on both Legal and SALC advice but was incorrectly applied.

This was due to the entire redaction of public questions from the YouTube video and certain elements from the recording transcript.

The redactions should have been specifically in relation to the Legal and SALC advice given, which was relating to the allegation of illegal activity or perceived defamatory content which could be used in legal proceedings.

The panel believes that the public questions section of committee meetings and their subsequent recording and uploading of these should continue as these provide valuable engagement with the community and transparency in the work of the committees. It is recognised that through the provision of this the Council needs to ensure that they do not open themselves up to potential legal action or prejudice any criminal or legal proceedings. The redaction of elements of the recording and transcript of these may therefore be required with formal policies and procedures put in place to ensure this is applied correctly.

For consistency this should also be applied to the You Tube video recording and recording transcript of the East Grinstead Town Council meeting of the 29th January 2024 and any and all future meetings.

Action to be taken following the decision:

The panel's decision therefore will result in amendments being made to both You Tube video's and recording transcript in terms of the specific elements being redacted/unredacted in line with the Legal and SALC advice given at the Town Council's earliest convenience.

Additional points outside the scope of the Complaint Panel:

During this hearing a number of learnings have been made and subsequent recommendations will be made back to the Town Council, which should aim to tighten or enhance a number of policies and create new procedures as required.

In addition to the amendments to the redactions, improvements to the policies and procedures, we will also communicate to the Town Council and full group of 16 Town Councillors the requests specifically made in the hearing. As explained the Complaints Panel have no standing to recommend or enforce any action, we can only share the requests that the complainant still seeks:-

1. The request for an apology (public) from East Grinstead Town Council for the handling of this matter and the impact on Mr Barnes-Ross and other victims who have bravely spoken out but feel shut down
2. The request to have any Church of Scientology publicity material (especially digital) to be redacted so no current Town Councillors are seen to be supporting or validating the organisation
3. The request for Mr Barnes-Ross to meet with the Town Councillors to help deepen their understanding of the local issues and his and local residents concerns
4. The offer that Mr Barnes-Ross kindly made to help educate and develop the Town Council's staffs skill set in redacting and editing video's

The panel would like to thank Mr Barnes-Ross for attending the Complaints Panel, for his openness, honesty and thoroughness in this matter and hope that the outcome does in some way help alleviate his concerns raised throughout the complaints process.

Yours sincerely

Cllr Pond and Cllr Hughes
Complaint Panel Members