

QUESTIONS

Executive Summary

The following question has been received under Section 3 of the Executive Procedure Rules. The reply by the Leader of the Council is set out below.

1. Question from Mr Robert Shatwell

“At a recent meeting of the council’s overview and scrutiny committee the council were severely criticised for the use of Part, where press and public are excluded from knowing matters being discussed. Does the council take no notice of it’s own committees. I note that at a planning committee meeting held on 29th September 2020 the agenda shows 2 items to be discussed under part 2, containing legal advice on future appeals. Can you please explain why it was necessary to discuss these in secret?

May I remind the council that all matters relating to the council are financed by the residents, that all officers are servants of the residents and all councillors are the democratically elected representatives of the residents. It therefore falls that all matters relating to the activities of the council should be known by the residents and not, as a secret society, discussed in secret. British government, both nationally and locally are subject to democracy and not dictatorship.”

Reply by Councillor A Azad

“The Council was not “severely criticised” by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. On 15 June 2020, the Committee recommended to Council that decisions regarding disclosure of Part II items (i.e. items considered without the press and public present) should be more transparent and kept under regular review. Council agreed this recommendation and, following consideration by the Standards and Audit Committee, adopted a Confidentiality Protocol at its meeting on 15 October 2020.

The Planning Committee considered one Part II item at its meeting on 29 September 2020, not two as stated by Mr Shatwell. This comprised privileged legal advice in respect of a forthcoming planning appeal. As such, it would not have been appropriate for this business to have been dealt with in public. Although the Committee met shortly before the Confidentiality Protocol was formally adopted, the Council’s actions were consistent with the Protocol and the relevant statutory provisions.

Finally, I wish to emphasise that the Council is a transparent organisation and will only deal with matters in Part II when it is strictly necessary to do so.”

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| Background Papers: | None. |
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