

Jayne Isaac

From: ~~[REDACTED]~~
Sent: 15 January 2021 14:32
To: Jane Isaac; Paul Finlay; Greg Harker; Richard Foster; Michael Arnold; John Cooch
Subject: SPC Meeting 14/01/21

Flag Status: Flagged

To Stretton Parish Council

Disqualification of Councillor Brian Lester

I understand that the document which I read out at last night's meeting cannot be included in the minutes. However, as I would like the full content of the document to be on record, I am including it in this letter. The following is what I read out at the meeting.

I have a question – why has Brian Lester been asked to leave Stretton Parish Council in the middle of a global pandemic?

I was, possibly incorrectly, under the impression that any decision such as this should have been discussed in open forum so that the villagers, whom the Parish Councillors represent, should be aware of any such discussion/decision. Please correct me if I am wrong.

Stretton is a small village with 4 farms (excluding small sheep/alpaca enterprises and riding stables etc). Brian Lester has been our only rural representation on the Parish Council.

Brian has no internet connection and is currently not IT literate. As far as I know IT literacy has hitherto not been a requirement for a Parish Councillor. This had obviously been a reason for him not being able to attend Zoom Council meetings. Hasn't the government made special allowances for Councillors who have no IT capability and cannot therefore attend on-line meetings?

At this point I refer you to the 2 items at the end of this letter relating to joining a Zoom meeting by use of an ordinary landline telephone. It is quite clear that no attempt was made by SPC to enable Brian to be included in these meetings as he would not have known about this capability.

None of us have had a good year, but Brian has had a worse year than any of us. Following an accident with one of his cattle, he has suffered a DVT in his leg, which resulted in Brian ending up in Peterborough hospital as a very sick man. He was not only very ill, he was extremely frightened at being in hospital during these 'covid' times. On his return home, he was dependent on the kindness of neighbours and friends as he was barely able to walk.

Since his return he has had to sell his herd of beautiful British Friesians, which he and his family had built up over many years. He has had to close his farming business and let out the land. This is devastating for any farmer.

Is it usual to ask a councillor to leave when he is unable to attend due to illness?

Stretton is a small rural community. During these Covid times we are advised to be kind to each other. Does the Council think that this action against Brian Lester has been kind?

So 4 questions to be answered by SPC please:-

Why was Brian disqualified in the middle of a global pandemic?

Why was this not discussed in a public meeting?

Is it usual to disqualify a councillor due to illness?

Does SPC consider this action to be kind?

Joining a Zoom meeting by non-internet phone

Ref from <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/councils-given-new-powers-to-hold-public-meetings-remotely>

Local authorities in England have been handed new powers to hold public meetings virtually by using video or telephone conferencing technology from Saturday (4 April 2020).

Ref joining such a meeting by traditional phone

<https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201362663-Joining-a-meeting-by-phone>

Overview

You can join a Zoom meeting by means of teleconferencing/audio conferencing (using a traditional phone). This is useful when:

- you do not have a microphone or speaker on your PC/Mac,
- you do not have a smartphone (iOS or Android) while on the road, or
- you cannot connect to a network for video and VoIP (computer audio)

I await your answers on the above questions

Regards

~~Penny Leese~~

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