



[REDACTED]

Mobile: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

Consulting Parish Councils on Planning Applications

Prior to 2018 if a Parish Council, when consulted on a planning application, had a view which differed from that of the planning officer, the application was automatically considered by the full elected Planning Committee.

This right was then removed without proper notice by the Borough Council. Instead such applications, unless 'called in' by the local councillor, would go before a Sifting Panel, held behind closed doors without a detailed agenda which decides if the planning application should be decided by unelected officers alone under delegated authority.

To make the change without asking for the views of the Parishes was in direct contravention of the Borough's own published 'Scheme of Community Involvement'. Some might think the Council publishes these 'virtue-signalling' documents and then locks them in a cupboard.

The decision was reviewed in early 2019 by the Corporate Performance Panel (CPP) and some Parish Councils wrote to the Borough to give their views. They were wasting their time as these letters were not shared with other elected members by the then Chair of the CPP (probably ended up in the same cupboard).

So, in October 2019 I put a motion to the Council that it should officially consult with Parishes to learn their views, be they good or bad, on the new sifting system. The Leader of the Council, Cllr Brian Long was determined that the motion would be defeated and whipped all Conservative councillors to vote against asking Parishes what they think of the revised system. Said councillors duly did as they were told and the motion was defeated.

However, the sifting system is now again coming up for review. I write to you in my new role as Vice Chair (but currently chairing meetings) of CPP to invite you to contribute to this review. I ask those who have written before to be kind enough to resubmit their letters and for any other Parish Councils who wish their views to be heard, to write to me at my Castle Acre address. This exercise is intended to be my way of consulting with Parishes and whatever your thoughts, be they for or against, I still invite you to contact me.

It would be useful to receive written replies by the end of June. Emailed correspondence which arrives before 22nd July will also be shared with officers and councillors who sit on CPP as part of the current review.

My contact details are above and I would be happy to discuss any aspect of this matter should that be helpful.

Thank you for your time.

[REDACTED]