

Stapleford Abbots Parish Council

Clerk: Valerie Bright
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6th August 2006

Graham Lunnun
Democratic Services Manager
Epping Forest District Council
Civic Offices
High Street
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Dear Mr Lunnun,

Complaint against Councillor R Russell, Stapleford Abbots Parish Council

With reference to your letter dated 2nd August, I apologise for not communicating with you sooner but had not realised your previous letter needed a reply. Your letter dated 29th June was on the agenda of the Parish Council meeting held on 3rd July.

Consideration of Planning Applications presents a problem for most small Parish Councils. We do not have an office and meetings are held in the Village Hall for which the Parish Council pays the going rate. As clerk I work from home and am paid for six hours a week. There are six Parish Councillors at Stapleford Abbots (there is currently one vacancy) we therefore do not have committees, the whole Council meet once a month to discuss all business. Most Planning Applications arrive at my home in time to be placed on the agenda and discussed at the next Parish Council Meeting. However, there is always a minority that arrive during the month between meetings with a deadline for reply before the date of the next meeting. It has been the practice for each Parish Councillor to look at the application in question and let the clerk know what they have to say. I then take a consensus of opinions and send on the conclusion to the Planning Department. This is then reported and minuted together with any declarations of interest at the next Parish Council Meeting. Very occasionally the Parish Councillors meet between meetings in the Parish Church to consider any Planning Applications that might be contentious. This is also minuted at the next meeting and any declarations of interest recorded. After the complaints from the Regan family last year I telephoned a number of Parish Clerks and asked how other Parishes dealt with this problem. Every one I spoke to carries out the same procedure. Two even said the Councillors sometimes get together in one of their houses to discuss plans. It would not be realistic to call a meeting for every application that arrived, as this would involve finding a hall to hire and paying overtime for the clerk. Some months this could happen two or three times.