



Freedom of Information request - Transparency Request relating to confusing public records, financial compliance and future budgetary provision..

1 message

Rupert Davis

11 March 2020 at 16:10

To: "FOI requests at Stadhampton Parish Council, Oxfordshire" <clerk@stadhampton.org>

Dear Stadhampton Parish Council, Oxfordshire,

It is requested for Stadhampton Parish Council (SPC) to be more transparent regarding the unregistered land, referred to as Allotment 13 (A13) on Copson Lane.

In various minutes dating backing to 2018 (minutes 105/18) SPC have stated and claimed to be the 'owners' of the unregistered land referred to as A13, yet in in other minutes they have asked former residents of Church Farm if they, instead, own the land. Then, in SPC minutes 108/19, SPC claim that they own the unregistered land under the principle of 'better entitlement' not ownership.

SPC has further stated (minutes 108/19) that they were pursuing legal action against the residence of Church Farm House due to 'the current demand' and waiting list for allotments. Yet later in September 2019 (minutes 171/19) SPC was prompted by a parishioner to admit that 5 allotments are vacant, but unable to be used by the 4 parishioners on a waiting list due to them not being maintained by SPC.

1. Can SPC clarify why it has referred to owning A13 yet has recorded consideration that others might instead be the owners?
2. If not owners, why has SPC used that term and not clarified their position more accurately?
3. If the owners, why did SPC choose to not pursue action as such, but instead opt for a lesser basis?
4. Can SPC confirm how many designated allotments were vacant in May 2019?
5. Can SPC explain why it has not maintained vacant allotments sufficient to allow use of these by Parishioners on a waiting list?

SPC's confusion and contradiction regarding their ownership of the unregistered land on Copson Lane, their 2 failed attempts of registration with HM Land Registry and the pursuit of legal action against the residence of Church Farm House has led to significant costs for the Parish of Stadhampton. SPC records it had spent a total of £3,466.00, in connection with the 2 [failed] applications made to the Land Registry [regarding land on Copson Lane] during the period Oct 2017 to Dec 2018. Subsequent to this SPC records suggest a further £10,000 has been spent.

6. Can SPC confirm the total expenditure on 'Legal & Professional' and Land Registration costs in relation to the 'land on Copson Lane' referred to as Allotment 13, from 01 January 2017 to date?
7. The published FY19/20 schedule of payments does not record the costs for legal services Oct 19 – Jan 2020. Can SPC explain why this in year cost has been omitted?
8. Can SPC evidence 3 quotes or estimates for costs relating to its FY 19/20 'Legal & professional' expenditure to comply with either section 10.3 or sections 11.1.d of its Financial Regulations?
9. If unable to, can SPC confirm and provide public record, prior to the date of first engagement of such 'Legal & professional' services that accords with Section 16.2 of its Financial Regulations?

In May 2019 (minutes 108/19) SPC records estimates of up to £50,000 for continued court action against the residents of Church Farm House. However, the recently approved SPC budget in Jan 2020, only records an estimate of £5,000 for legal fees/services. This is £45,000 less than SPC's own recorded estimate for costs relating to continued legal action which SPC have not accounted for. This £45,000 variance suggests that the SPC has plans to raise £22.5K to balance its books at year end or it has contingency to cancel all the community projects planned for 2020 in order to prevent bankruptcy.

10. Can SPC confirm the Budget forecast for 'Legal & professional' expenses in FY20/21 as £5,000 is correct?
11. Can SPC present evidence of where it has made budgetary provision within FY 20/21 for its recorded estimates of continued costs of up to £50,000?

12. If yes, where is this provision recorded?
13. If no, why has SPC omitted this significant liability?
14. Without provision for £50,000 in the FY20/21 budget, how is SPC planning to fund any court action?

Yours faithfully,

Mr R Davis

Please use this email address for all replies to this request:

[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

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