
Subject: FW: MOST URGENT

Dear Town or Parish Clerk, or District Association secretary

I write on behalf of the supporters of Southsea Town Council in Portsmouth, which the city council here in Portsmouth is desperate to shut down. The argument they use is that there is no need for a second local council tax. It is a grotesquely false claim and demonstrably so. The fact is the city council sees the Southsea town council as a thorn in its flesh and, as a unitary authority, wishes to be answerable to no-one. We managed to get Quality status and prove our worth to the Secretary of State. We've done many many good things for local people.

You and your members I feel sure understand just how effective town and parish councils are - they are very low cost, do amazing amounts of work for local people, and really enhance the lives of local communities.

Portsmouth City Council under the Liberal Democrats have consistently opposed having a town council in Southsea and have tried several times to shut it down. Two years ago the Secretary of State for Communities refused their application. Now under new legislation the decisions on whether to have town and parish councils have been handed over to unitary authorities like Portsmouth City Council.

Immediately Portsmouth announced a postal ballot which is currently being held as part of yet another Southsea Town Council review (the third). The ballot closes on 25th February and in straightened times we fear that the Lib Dem machine will be victorious. They have flooded the area with different anti town council leaflets and have conducted a lobbying campaign second only to a general election campaign.

We find it difficult to understand why they so bitterly oppose Southsea Town Council, because it runs contrary to official Lib Dem party policy which encourages local democracy at the grass roots. There are Lib Dem members of town and parish councils across the country.

We would ask two things of your council as a matter of great urgency:-

1. Could you please write to Portsmouth City Council explaining how crucial your own town/parish council is for your community; stating what you do for your local people. If you believe this form of local democracy can work in urban areas like Portsmouth - please say so.

The address to send comments to is review@portsmouthcc.gov.uk

2. Please write to Nick Clegg, leader of the Lib Dems at the House of Commons, asking why Portsmouth City Council's policy runs counter to national Lib Dem policy?

Can you kindly copy me any communication you send.

Very sincerely,

Michael Bilton.