

Subject: Public Request for Information Policy

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I have just a few comments on this proposed policy in front of you tonight.

This seems another example of DNV use of a hammer to kill a fly. The earlier report spoke of one or two abusers of the process. That is one or two out of 80,000 residents. For this we need a policy? One shudders to think of "what next"?

This is also endemic of the culture of subservience at DNV. "No bullet-proofing, no action". A few months ago the fairly well paid manager of the golf club sat in council chambers and said he would not bring revenue enhancement ideas to council absent their direction to do so. Now Mr. Howie, paid in six figures, tells you in effect he is not prepared to use his business common sense to deal with a few abusers of the process. He needs you to give him a policy. Then he is absolved of responsibility for some decisions.

Is this the management model to which you subscribe?

If you ARE going to enact yet another micromanagement policy, at least add to the policy that the person being refused the information is advised in writing with reasons. And ensure that "repetitious" does not mean repeated requests for information never provided in the first place. I can provide several examples of that!!!!

As for C. Harris' point previously as to why the public should have access to information on as good (or, she claimed) better terms than she as a councillor has, I offer the following:

-Does she want to encourage or discourage public participation? If the latter, keep adding roadblocks and giving the PERCEPTION that public input is not welcome. For good input, one needs good information. Why another policy instead of the use of common sense?

-She is paid to be a councillor. Public input is by unpaid volunteers.

-Councillors have far more and better access to staff and information than volunteers. They get reports volunteers do not, in camera and otherwise. They get more briefings than the public. Volunteers often have to go FOI to get what a councillor can obtain.

-Council may well, as C. Harris says, be subject to a policy that info Council want requiring more than three hours Staff time have to be approved by council, but how often is it enforced? Secondly, Council can CHANGE that policy. Volunteers cannot change policies restricting their rights.

-Council does not have to pay for materials copied for them..
Volunteers do.

I do not support abusive or unreasonable behaviour by anybody in accessing information. But where is the use of business common sense instead of a policy for everything? "Command and control" is old school, even in government, now.

Implementing this policy, in my view, sends a very negative perception message. Not only re public input, but re management style.

Why not try common sense instead of a policy for awhile???

John Hunter

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