

additional papers 2

Council

Mon 20 Apr
2009
7.00 pm

Council Chamber
Town Hall
Redditch



www.redditchbc.gov.uk

Access to Information - Your Rights

The Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 widened the rights of press and public to attend Local Authority meetings and to see certain documents. Recently the Freedom of Information Act 2000, has further broadened these rights, and limited exemptions under the 1985 Act.

Your main rights are set out below:-

- Automatic right to attend all Council and Committee meetings unless the business would disclose confidential or “exempt” information.
- Automatic right to inspect agenda and public reports at least five days before the date of the meeting.
- Automatic right to inspect minutes of the Council and its Committees (or summaries of business undertaken in private) for up to six years following a meeting.
- Automatic right to inspect lists of background papers used in the preparation of public reports.
- Access, upon request, to the background papers on which reports are based for a period of up to four years from the date of the meeting.
- Access to a public register stating the names and addresses and electoral areas of all Councillors with details of the membership of all Committees etc.
- A reasonable number of copies of agenda and reports relating to items to be considered in public must be made available to the public attending meetings of the Council and its Committees etc.
- Access to a list specifying those powers which the Council has delegated to its Officers indicating also the titles of the Officers concerned.
- Access to a summary of the rights of the public to attend meetings of the Council and its Committees etc. and to inspect and copy documents.
- In addition, the public now has a right to be present when the Council determines “Key Decisions” unless the business would disclose confidential or “exempt” information.
- Unless otherwise stated, all items of business before the Executive Committee are Key Decisions.
- (Copies of Agenda Lists are published in advance of the meetings on the Council’s Website:
www.redditchbc.gov.uk

If you have any queries on this Agenda or any of the decisions taken or wish to exercise any of the above rights of access to information, please contact

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11. Urgent Business - Notice of Motion - Winter Utility Bills

To consider a Notice of Motion:

A Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor K Banks. It concerns the effect of increasing winter fuel bills, the current inflated monthly payments utilities companies are demanding and their impact on debt.

This Notice of Motion was received too late to meet Standing Orders deadlines, but has been accepted by the Mayor for consideration at this meeting on the basis of its broad public interest at this time of the year, as winter utility bills are being received by householders, and the fact that there is not a further ordinary Council meeting before 22 June 2009 which could receive the Motion.

(Report attached)

Council

20 April 2009

NOTICE OF MOTION – URGENT ITEM – WINTER UTILITY BILLS

The following Urgent Notice of Motion has been received from Councillor Kath Banks, and accepted for consideration by the Mayor:

"The Council asks that the Government investigate the charges made by all gas and electricity (utility) companies in respect of monthly charges made by direct debit.

It has recently come to my attention that householders will this year be required to pay substantial additional amounts per month over and above what they were previously expected to pay.

I'm sure that there are many people throughout the country who have received similar requests and who do not understand why such extortionate contributions will be required each month. Nor do I understand how these companies are calculating their bills or why they are not informing customers soon enough when monthly direct debit contributions are not covering the costs of electricity or gas consumption.

I am concerned about the impact that this may be having on people, particularly the most vulnerable members of society, who may not be willing or comfortable with challenging the utility companies about such excessive demands.

Householders are encouraged to pay their bills on a monthly basis by direct debit so that as customers they don't get into debt, but if monthly repayment requirements are being inflated in this way, it is hard to see how debt may be avoided."

Proposed by: Cllr K Banks

Seconded by: Cllr J Brunner.

The above Notice of Motion missed the notification period required under Standing Order 6. However, the item has been accepted by the Mayor as Urgent Business for tonight's Council meeting, on the basis of its broad public interest at this time of the year, as winter utility bills are being received by householders, and the fact that there is not a further ordinary Council meeting before 22 June 2009 which could receive the Motion.

