

From: [Vicki Bates](#)
To: [All Councillors List](#)
Cc: [Pam Smith](#); [Michael Cullen](#); [Caroline Simpson](#); [Damian Eaton](#)
Subject: Notice of Informal Council Meeting - Thursday 20 May 2021 @ 6pm (on Microsoft Teams)
Date: 12 May 2021 07:34:00

Dear Councillor

I write to confirm that pursuant to paragraph 1.2 of Procedure Rule 1 – Council Meeting Procedure Rules (Part 5 of the Council's Constitution – Procedure Rules) an informal council meeting will take place remotely by Microsoft Teams on Thursday 20 May 2021 at 6pm.

The relevant extract from the constitution is below:-

"1.2 In the event that it appears likely that disagreement about any business to be transacted would cause political debate at the Annual Council Meeting, an informal Council Meeting will be convened before the Annual Council Meeting. The decisions of the informal meeting will be reported to the Annual Council Meeting and ratified without debate".

A formal calendar invitation and agenda will follow in due course from Democratic Services.

Kind regards
Vicki Bates

**Strategic Head of Service & Monitoring Officer
(Legal & Democratic Governance)**

Corporate and Support Services
Legal Department
Stockport Council
Room 325
Town Hall
Edward Street
Stockport
SK1 3XE

Direct: 0161 474 3219 / 07815 715 625

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From: [Damian Eaton](#)
To: [Vicki Bates](#)
Subject: FW: External: Informal council
Date: 12 May 2021 10:08:43
Attachments: [image001.jpg](#)

Hi Vicki,

We've received this enquiry from the press RE the meeting.

How should we respond to this?

Damian

Damian Eaton
CSS Manager (Democratic Services)
Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council
Town Hall, Stockport SK1 3XE

0161 474 3207 | [Stockport Democracy](#) | [Webcasting](#)



From: Communications <xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx@xxxxxxxx.xxx.xx>
Sent: 12 May 2021 09:29
To: Damian Eaton <xxxxxx.xxxxx@xxxxxxxx.xxx.xx>
Subject: FW: External: Informal council

Hi Damian

Please can you advise regarding the media enquiry below.

Thanks

From:
Sent: 12 May 2021 09:03
To: Communications <[xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx@xxxxxxxx.xxx.xx](#)>
Subject: External: Informal council

Good morning,

Hope all's well.

I understand from Cllr Iain Roberts tweets that an informal council will be held next Thursday, to decide on who will form the 2021/22 administration etc.

Will I be able to attend/stream this as a member of the press? I understand this is usually held in private?

Kind regards,

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From: [Cllr Mark Hunter](#)
To: [Pam Smith](#); [Vicki Bates](#)
Cc: [Cllr Elise Wilson](#); [Cllr Mike Hurleston](#); [Cllr A Charles-Jones](#); [Cllr Gary Lawson](#)
Subject: Informal Council
Date: 14 May 2021 14:45:05
Attachments: [MH PS May2021.pdf](#)

Dear Pam & Vicki

Please find attached a letter regarding next week's Informal Council meeting.

With regards
Mark

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STOCKPORT
METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cllr Mark Hunter
Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group
26 Albert Road, Cheadle Hulme SK8 5DA
Tel: 0161 486 0334 / 0161 474 3284
Email: cllr.mark.hunter@stockport.gov.uk

14th May 2021

Pam Smith
Chief Executive
Stockport Town Hall
SK1 3XE

Vicki Bates
Strategic Head of Service & Monitoring Officer (Legal &
Democratic Governance)
Stockport Town Hall
SK1 3XE

Dear Pam and Vicki,

I appreciate your continuing help and assistance in these challenging times.

Regardless of the outcome of next Thursday's Informal Council, I wish to raise with you the issue of said meeting taking place behind closed doors. I am well aware of the constitutional position but it seems to me, and my colleagues, that it would be extraordinary for a decision which clearly impacts on the future of the Borough to be taken in secret. I believe that local residents would find it hard to understand why they have been deprived of their usual and established right to see democracy in action.

In the circumstances, I formally request that we do allow press and public to be present throughout the meeting.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Best wishes,

Mark

Cllr Mark Hunter
Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group

cc: Cllr Elise Wilson, Cllr Mike Hurlstone, Cllr Anna Charles-Jones, Cllr Gary Lawson

Cllr Mark Hunter
Liberal Democrat Member
for Cheadle Hulme South

From: [Vicki Bates](#)
To: [Cllr Mark Hunter](#); [Pam Smith](#)
Cc: [Cllr Elise Wilson](#); [Cllr Mike Hurleston](#); [Cllr A Charles-Jones](#); [Cllr Gary Lawson](#)
Subject: RE: Informal Council
Date: 14 May 2021 16:39:00

Dear Cllr Hunter

Thank you for your email and letter.

I am on leave this afternoon and Monday but will endeavour to liaise with Pam and revert to you during Monday.

Kind regards
Vicki Bates

**Strategic Head of Service & Monitoring Officer
(Legal & Democratic Governance)**

Corporate and Support Services
Legal Department
Stockport Council
Room 325
Town Hall
Edward Street
Stockport
SK1 3XE

Direct: 0161 474 3219 / 07815 715 625

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From: Cllr Mark Hunter <xx@xx>
Sent: 14 May 2021 14:42
To: Pam Smith <xx@xx>; Vicki Bates <vicki.bates@stockport.gov.uk>
Cc: Cllr Elise Wilson <xx@xx>; Cllr Mike Hurleston <xx@xx>; Cllr A Charles-Jones <cllr.a.charles-xx@xx>; Cllr Gary Lawson <xx@xx.uk>
Subject: Informal Council

Dear Pam & Vicki

Please find attached a letter regarding next week's Informal Council meeting.

With regards
Mark

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From: [Communications](#)
To: [Vicki Bates](#); [Damian Eaton](#)
Cc: [Girsteen Roe](#);
Subject: FW: External: Informal council
Date: 17 May 2021 10:29:17

Vicki, Damian,

See enquiry below.

Are you able to assist with a response ?

Thanks,

From:
Sent: 17 May 2021 10:19
To: Communications <xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx@xxxxxxxx.xxx.xx>; Communications <xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx@xxxxxxxx.xxx.xx>
Subject: External: Informal council

Good morning,

I understand that Thursday's informal council meeting will be held on Teams and exclude press and public.

I am told that Lib Dem leader Mark Hunter has written to the chief executive and monitoring officer asking for the meeting to be made public.

As things stand, however, I understand the meeting is to go ahead in private.

As this meeting will essentially decide who will run the council for the next 12 months, as a journalist I am disappointed that I will not be able to report on the proceedings and decisions/votes taken.

We will be running a pre-piece story stating that this meeting will be held in private.

Please could I have a quote explaining why the council believes it is democratic and justifiable to hold this meeting in private? **My deadline is 12 noon today.**

We are seeking legal advice as to whether we could challenge the press exclusion from the proceedings.

Kind regards,

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From:
To: [Damian Eaton](#);
Cc: [Kirsteen Roe](#); [Communications](#); [Vicki Bates](#)
Subject: RE: External: Informal council
Date: 17 May 2021 11:30:54

Hi Damian

Kirsteen is writing a few lines on this and will share.
Thanks

For a print / design project please visit our portal at:

[Print and design portal](#)

From: Communications <xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx@xxxxxxxx.xxx.xx>

Sent: 17 May 2021 10:29

To: Vicki Bates <xxxxx.xxxxx@xxxxxxxx.xxx.xx>; Damian Eaton
<xxxxxx.xxxxx@xxxxxxxx.xxx.xx>

Kirsteen Roe

<xxxxxxxx.xxx@xxxxxxxx.xxx.xx>;

Subject: FW: External: Informal council

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From: [Vicki Bates](#)
To: [Cllr Mark Hunter](#)
Cc: [Cllr Elise Wilson](#); [Cllr Mike Hurleston](#); [Cllr A Charles-Jones](#); [Cllr Gary Lawson](#); [Pam Smith](#)
Subject: RE: Informal Council
Date: 17 May 2021 18:24:00

Dear Cllr Hunter

Thank you for your email.

The purpose of the informal council meeting (as set out in the constitution) is to give Members an opportunity to discuss, in private, and resolve any business that could cause any political disagreement at the Annual Council Meeting so as to preserve the main purpose of that meeting, namely the ceremonial appointment of the First Citizen, the new Mayor, and in order to safeguard the reputation of the council. The opening up of the informal council meeting to the public and press could undermine the purpose of the private meeting and set an unwanted precedent for the future.

It is however, a matter for the meeting itself to regulate how it wants to conduct proceedings, namely, whether it wishes the public and press to be present.

Kind regards
Vicki Bates

**Strategic Head of Service & Monitoring Officer
(Legal & Democratic Governance)**

Corporate and Support Services
Legal Department
Stockport Council
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SK1 3XE

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From: Cllr Mark Hunter <xx@xx>
Sent: 14 May 2021 14:42

To: Pam Smith <x@xx>; Vicki Bates <vicki.bates@stockport.gov.uk>

Cc: Cllr Elise Wilson <x@xx>; Cllr Mike Hurleston

<x@xx>; Cllr A Charles-Jones <cllr.a.charles-

x@xx>; Cllr Gary Lawson <x@x.uk>

Subject: Informal Council

Dear Pam & Vicki

Please find attached a letter regarding next week's Informal Council meeting.

With regards

Mark

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From: [Vicki Bates](#)
To: [Pam Smith](#); [Michael Cullen](#); [Caroline Simpson](#)
Cc: [Damian Eaton](#)
Subject: FW: Informal Council
Date: 17 May 2021 18:24:00

Dear colleagues

Please see below just sent.

Kind regards
Vicki Bates

**Strategic Head of Service & Monitoring Officer
(Legal & Democratic Governance)**

Corporate and Support Services
Legal Department
Stockport Council
Room 325
Town Hall
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Cc: Cllr Elise Wilson <xx@xx>; Cllr Mike Hurleston <xx@xx>; Cllr A Charles-Jones <cllr.a.charles-xx@xx>; Cllr Gary Lawson <xx@xx.uk>; Pam Smith <xx@xx>
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(Legal & Democratic Governance)**

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From: Cllr Mark Hunter <[xx@xx](#)>
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To: Pam Smith <[x@xx](#)>; Vicki Bates <[xx@xx](#)>
Cc: Cllr Elise Wilson <[xx@xx](#)>; Cllr Mike Hurleston <[xx@xx](#)>; Cllr A Charles-Jones <[cllr.a.charles-jones@xx](#)>; Cllr Gary Lawson <[xx@xx](#)>
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With regards
Mark

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From: [Democratic Services](#)
Subject: External: Summons for the Council Meeting, Thursday, 20th May, 2021, 6.00 pm
Date: 17 May 2021 19:02:00

Councillor,

The agenda for the informal meeting due to take place on Thursday, 20 May 2021 has now been published.

Please note that while the agenda lists all the items that are due to be considered by the Annual Council Meeting, the only items that need be discussed are those where there is likely to be disagreement or which would result in political debate.

It is currently planned that the sole item of business for discussion at the meeting will be Agenda Item 11 – 'Cabinet Leader (Leader of the Council)'.

The Summons for Council Meeting, Thursday, 20th May, 2021, 6.00 pm has just been published.

You can view this document when connected to the internal network using the link: [Summons details on intranet web site](#)

To see the publicly available information, follow the link: [Summons details on public web site](#)

Meeting venue: Webcast - Remote Meeting

The following items are included in the summons:

No. Item

1. Election of Mayor
2. Investiture of the Mayoress with her Badge of Office
3. Vote of Thanks to Past Mayor and Past Mayoress
4. Appointment of Deputy Mayor
5. The Deputy Mayoress to be invested with her Badge of Office
6. Vote of Thanks to Past Deputy Mayor and Past Deputy Mayoress
7. Minutes
8. Mayor's Announcements
9. Declarations of Interest
10. Report on the Election of Councillors
11. Cabinet Leader (Leader of the Council)
12. Deputy Cabinet Leader (Deputy Leader of the Council), the Cabinet, and the Allocation of Responsibilities
13. Allocation of Places on Committees in Accordance with the Proportionality Rules

14. Appointment of Scrutiny Committees and Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee
15. Appointment of Ordinary Committees, Area Committees, Working Parties and Other Member Bodies
16. Representation of the Council on Outside Bodies
17. Appointment of Leaders of Political Groups
18. Council Meetings
19. Business Programme
20. Constitution and Scheme of Delegation

From: [Damian Eaton](#)
To: [Vicki Bates](#)
Subject: FW: External: Informal council
Date: 17 June 2021 10:56:52
Attachments: [image001.jpg](#)

Damian Eaton

CSS Manager (Democratic Services)
Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council
Town Hall, Stockport SK1 3XE

0161 474 3207 | [Stockport Democracy](#) | [Webcasting](#)

From: Damian Eaton
Sent: 12 May 2021 14:49
To: Communications <xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx@xxxxxxxx.xxx.xx>
Cc:
Subject: RE: External: Informal council

Hi, yes, this is fine.
Damian

Damian Eaton

CSS Manager (Democratic Services)
Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council
Town Hall, Stockport SK1 3XE

0161 474 3207 | [Stockport Democracy](#) | [Webcasting](#)

From: Communications <[xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx@xxxxxxxx.xxx.xx](#)>
Sent: 12 May 2021 14:48
To: Damian Eaton <[xxxxxx.xxxxx@xxxxxxxx.xxx.xx](#)>
Cc: Communications <[xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx@xxxxxxxx.xxx.xx](#)>;
Subject: RE: External: Informal council

Damian – we’ve just tweaked message slightly – is this still ok to go ?

Thanks,

Thank you for your email.

You are correct that the meeting next Thursday (20 May) is a private meeting and therefore the public (including the press) are not entitled to attend. Also, just to confirm as the meeting is private, it will not be webcast.

From: Damian Eaton <xxxxxx.xxxxx@xxxxxxxxx.xxx.xx>
Sent: 12 May 2021 10:32
To: Communications <xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx@xxxxxxxxx.xxx.xx>
Subject: RE: External: Informal council

Good morning,

Please can we respond on the following lines:-

Dear

Thank you for your email.

You are correct in that the meeting is a private meeting and accordingly the public (including the press) are not entitled, nor required to attend. Furthermore, as the meeting is private, the meeting will not be webcast.

Damian

Damian Eaton
CSS Manager (Democratic Services)
Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council
Town Hall, Stockport SK1 3XE

0161 474 3207 | [Stockport Democracy](#) | [Webcasting](#)



From: Communications <xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx@xxxxxxxxx.xxx.xx>
Sent: 12 May 2021 09:29
To: Damian Eaton <xxxxxx.xxxxx@xxxxxxxxx.xxx.xx>
Subject: FW: External: Informal council

Hi Damian

Please can you advise regarding the media enquiry below.

Thanks

Communications and Marketing Support Officer
Stockport Council
Room 314 Town Hall
Stockport SK1 3XE

From:

Sent: 12 May 2021 09:03

To: Communications <xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx@xxxxxxxxx.xxx.xx>

Subject: External: Informal council

Good morning,

Hope all's well.

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Will I be able to attend/stream this as a member of the press? I understand this is usually held in private?

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From: [Communications](#)
To: [Vicki Bates](#)
Subject: FW: External: Informal council
Date: 17 June 2021 12:10:35

From: Communications <xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx@xxxxxxxx.xxx.xx>
Sent: 12 May 2021 15:00
To:
Cc: Communications <xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx@xxxxxxxx.xxx.xx>
Subject: RE: External: Informal council

Hi

Thank you for your email.

You are correct that the meeting next Thursday (20 May) is a private meeting and therefore the public (including the press) are not entitled to attend. Also, just to confirm as the meeting is private, it will not be webcast.

Kind regards

Communications Team
Stockport Council
Stockport
SK1 3XE

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From:
To: [Pam Smith](#)
Cc: [Caroline Simpson](#); [Democratic Services](#)
Subject: External: Informal council meeting, Thursday May 20
Date: 18 May 2021 10:25:34

Good morning Pam,

I am writing to challenge and appeal against the council's decision to hold the 'informal council' meeting on Thursday, May 20 in private.

Having read the constitution I can find nothing which says this meeting may be held in private.

Indeed, Article 3 states citizens have the right to "attend the Council Meeting and meetings of Committees and Sub-Committees except where confidential matters are being discussed".

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From: [Cllr Mark Hunter](#)
To: [Vicki Bates](#)
Cc: [Cllr Elise Wilson](#); [Cllr Mike Hurleston](#); [Cllr A Charles-Jones](#); [Cllr Gary Lawson](#); [Pam Smith](#)
Subject: Re: Informal Council
Date: 18 May 2021 10:33:27

Vicki,

Thank you for your reply.

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I look forward to hearing from you.

Best wishes,

From: Vicki Bates <[vicki@xxx](#)>
Sent: 17 May 2021 18:24
To: Cllr Mark Hunter <[mark@xxx](#)>
Cc: Cllr Elise Wilson <[elise@xxx](#)>; Cllr Mike Hurleston <[mike@xxx](#)>; Cllr A Charles-Jones <[cllr.a.charles-jones@xxx](#)>; Cllr Gary Lawson <[gary@xxx.uk](#)>; Pam Smith <[pam@xxx](#)>
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Kind regards
Vicki Bates

Strategic Head of Service & Monitoring Officer

(Legal & Democratic Governance)

Corporate and Support Services
Legal Department
Stockport Council
Room 325
Town Hall
Edward Street
Stockport
SK1 3XE

Direct: 0161 474 3219 / 07815 715 625

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From: Cllr Mark Hunter <xx@xx>
Sent: 14 May 2021 14:42
To: Pam Smith <xx@xx>; Vicki Bates <vicki.bates@stockport.gov.uk>
Cc: Cllr Elise Wilson <xx@xx>; Cllr Mike Hurleston <xx@xx>; Cllr A Charles-Jones <cllr.a.charles-xx@xx>; Cllr Gary Lawson <xx@xx.uk>
Subject: Informal Council

Dear Pam & Vicki

Please find attached a letter regarding next week's Informal Council meeting.

With regards
Mark

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the above named, please delete or destroy the email and any attachments immediately and inform the sender of the error.

From: [Vicki Bates](#)
To: [Damian Eaton](#); [Pam Smith](#); [Caroline Simpson](#); [Michael Cullen](#)
Subject: FW: Informal Council
Date: 18 May 2021 10:35:00

Dear colleagues

Please see below for your information; only Pam is copied in, hence my circulation.

Kind regards
Vicki Bates

**Strategic Head of Service & Monitoring Officer
(Legal & Democratic Governance)**

Corporate and Support Services
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Stockport Council
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From: [Pam Smith](#)
To: [Vicki Bates](#); [Michael Cullen](#)
Subject: Fwd: External: Informal council meeting, Thursday May 20
Date: 18 May 2021 10:37:08

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From:
Sent: Tuesday, May 18, 2021 10:25 am
To: Pam Smith
Cc: Caroline Simpson; Democratic Services
Subject: External: Informal council meeting, Thursday May 20

Good morning Pam,

I am writing to challenge and appeal against the council's decision to hold the 'informal council' meeting on Thursday, May 20 in private.

Having read the constitution I can find nothing which says this meeting may be held in private.

Indeed, Article 3 states citizens have the right to "attend the Council Meeting and meetings of Committees and Sub-Committees except where confidential matters are being discussed".

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Loca

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From: [Vicki Bates](#)
To: [Democratic Services](#)
Cc: [Damian Eaton](#)
Subject: RE: External: Informal council meeting, Thursday May 20
Date: 18 May 2021 10:40:00

Thanks – just discussing it with Pam.

Kind regards
Vicki Bates

**Strategic Head of Service & Monitoring Officer
(Legal & Democratic Governance)**

Corporate and Support Services
Legal Department
Stockport Council
Room 325
Town Hall
Edward Street
Stockport
SK1 3XE

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From: **On Behalf Of** Democratic Services
Sent: 18 May 2021 10:39
To: Vicki Bates <xxxxx.xxxx@xxxxxxxxxx.xxx.xx>
Cc: Damian Eaton <xxxxxx.xxxx@xxxxxxxxxx.xxx.xx>
Subject: FW: External: Informal council meeting, Thursday May 20

Hi

Please see the email below which has come in to the Democratic Services Inbox.

Kind regards

CSS Officer (Democratic Services)

Legal and Democratic Governance

Corporate and Support Services Directorate Stockport Council, Town Hall, Stockport, SK1 3XE

Tel: 0161 474 3203

E mail

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From:

Sent: 18 May 2021 10:25

To: Pam Smith <xxx.xxxxx@xxxxxxxxx.xxx.xx>

Cc: Caroline Simpson <xxxxxxxx.xxxxxx@xxxxxxxxx.xxx.xx>; Democratic Services
<xxxxxxxxxx@xxxxxxxxx.xxx.xx>

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From: [Pam Smith](#)
To: [Vicki Bates](#); [Michael Cullen](#); [Caroline Simpson](#)
Cc: [Damian Eaton](#)
Subject: RE: Informal Council
Date: 18 May 2021 13:56:47

Hello Vicki

Agree with the email please send.

Kind regards

Pam

From: Vicki Bates <~~x@xx~~>
Sent: 18 May 2021 12:07
To: Michael Cullen <~~x@xx~~>; Pam Smith <~~x@xx~~>; Caroline Simpson <caroline.simpson@stockport.gov.uk>
Cc: Damian Eaton <~~x@xx~~>
Subject: FW: Informal Council

Dear Colleagues

Please see proposed response having spoken to Damian about process.

Dear Cllr Hunter

Thank you for your email.

The informal council meeting is called the informal council meeting because it is not convened under the Local Government Act 1972 hence, for example, there not being a requirement for an agenda 5 days in advance, hence that we can hold the meeting on Microsoft Teams and hence why the public and press are not entitled to attend as of right.

As confirmed yesterday it is up to the meeting whether it wishes to open itself up to the public and press. I note that your intention that you wish to formally move that the public and press be entitled to be present.

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Kind reg
Vicki Bates

**Strategic Head of Service & Monitoring Officer
(Legal & Democratic Governance)**

Corporate and Support Services
Legal Department
Stockport Council
Room 325
Town Hall
Edward Street
Stockport
SK1 3XE

Direct: 0161 474 3219 / 07815 715 625

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From: Vicki Bates <[redacted]>
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Cc: Cllr Elise Wilson <[redacted]>; Cllr Mike Hurleston <[redacted]>; Cllr A Charles-Jones <[redacted]>; Cllr Gary Lawson <[redacted]>; Pam Smith <[redacted]>
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From: [Jason Good](#)
To: [Vicki Bates](#)
Cc: [Damian Eaton](#); [Cllr Mark Hunter](#); [Cllr Lisa Smart](#)
Subject: Motion to enable public and media access to the Informal Council Meeting
Date: 18 May 2021 14:39:23
Attachments: [Public and media access to the Informal Council Meeting.docx](#)

Vicki,

Cllr Hunter has asked me to share with you the attached motion for Informal Council, following your advice regarding the meeting.

Kind regards,

Jason

Jason Good

Political Assistant, Liberal Democrat Group

*Legal & Democratic Governance
Corporate and Support Services*

Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council

Email: xxxxx.xxxx@xxxxxxxxxx.xxx.xx
Mobile: 07800 618927

<http://www.stockport.gov.uk>

Please note that during the COVID-19 pandemic I am working from home and best contacted by email

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Public and media access to the Informal Council Meeting

This council meeting believes that, in the interests of openness and transparency and given it will determine the political makeup of the council's administration, the Informal Council Meeting should be open for the public and members of the press and media to see.

This council meeting therefore resolves to hold the meeting in public by webcasting it and making a copy of this webcast available afterwards in the usual way.

Proposed: Cllr Mark Hunter

Seconded: Cllr Lisa Smart

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Date: 18 May 2021 13:58:00

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Subject: Informal Council

Dear Pam & Vicki

Please find attached a letter regarding next week's Informal Council meeting.

With regards
Mark

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From: [Vicki Bates](#)
To: [Caroline Simpson](#); [Michael Cullen](#); [Damian Eaton](#)
Cc: [Pam Smith](#)
Subject: FW: Informal Council
Date: 18 May 2021 13:59:00

Dear colleagues

Please see below for your information.

Kind regards
Vicki Bates

**Strategic Head of Service & Monitoring Officer
(Legal & Democratic Governance)**

Corporate and Support Services
Legal Department
Stockport Council
Room 325
Town Hall
Edward Street
Stockport
SK1 3XE

Direct: 0161 474 3219 / 07815 715 625

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From: Vicki Bates
Sent: 18 May 2021 13:58
To: Cllr Mark Hunter <xx@xx>
Cc: Cllr Elise Wilson <xx@xx>; Cllr Mike Hurleston <xx@xx>; Cllr A Charles-Jones <cllr.a.charles-xx@xx>; Cllr Gary Lawson <xx@xx.uk>; Pam Smith <xx@xx>
Subject: RE: Informal Council

Dear Cllr Hunter

Thank you for your email.

The informal council meeting is called the informal council meeting because it is not convened under the Local Government Act 1972 hence, for example, there not being a requirement for an agenda 5 days in advance, hence that we can hold the meeting on Microsoft Teams and hence why the public and press are not entitled to attend as of right.

As confirmed yesterday it is up to the meeting whether it wishes to open itself up to the public and press. I note your intention that you wish to formally move that the public and press be entitled to be present.

If you wish to formally move such a motion then please can you or Jason submit a motion to Damian in writing that the informal council meeting can be open to the press and public (via webcast).

There are then two options as to the way forward:-

1. All group leaders and Cllr Lawson agree in advance of Thursday evening's meeting that the meeting will be webcast; or
2. The motion will be the first item on the agenda and if there is any dissent then it will move to the vote. There will be no need to amend the agenda. We will however notify all Councillors by email that this will be the first item on the agenda.

Kind regards
Vicki Bates

**Strategic Head of Service & Monitoring Officer
(Legal & Democratic Governance)**

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From: Cllr Mark Hunter <[redacted]>
Sent: 18 May 2021 10:33
To: Vicki Bates <[redacted]>
Cc: Cllr Elise Wilson <[redacted]>; Cllr Mike Hurleston <[redacted]>; Cllr A Charles-Jones <[redacted]>; Cllr Gary Lawson <[redacted]>; Pam Smith <[redacted]>
Subject: Re: Informal Council

Vicki,

Thank you for your reply.

Having checked the constitution, I can find no specific reference to the Informal meeting being in private. Please can you point me to where in the constitution it says this?

In the circumstances, it is my intention to formally move that we do allow press and public to be present at the start of the meeting. Your guidance on precisely how this might be done in a correct and appropriate manner would be very much appreciated.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Best wishes,

Mark

From: Vicki Bates <[redacted]>
Sent: 17 May 2021 18:24
To: Cllr Mark Hunter <[redacted]>
Cc: Cllr Elise Wilson <[redacted]>; Cllr Mike Hurleston <[redacted]>; Cllr A Charles-Jones <[redacted]>; Cllr Gary Lawson <[redacted]>; Pam Smith <[redacted]>
Subject: RE: Informal Council

Dear Cllr Hunter

Thank you for your email.

The purpose of the informal council meeting (as set out in the constitution) is to give Members an opportunity to discuss, in private, and resolve any business that could cause any political disagreement at the Annual Council Meeting so as to preserve the main purpose of that meeting, namely the ceremonial appointment of the First Citizen, the new Mayor, and in order to safeguard the reputation of the council. The opening up of the informal council meeting to the public and press could undermine the purpose of the private meeting and set an unwanted precedent for the future.

It is however, a matter for the meeting itself to regulate how it wants to conduct proceedings, namely, whether it wishes the public and press to be present.

Kind regards
Vicki Bates

**Strategic Head of Service & Monitoring Officer
(Legal & Democratic Governance)**

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From: Cllr Mark Hunter <xx@xx>
Sent: 14 May 2021 14:42
To: Pam Smith <xx@xx>; Vicki Bates <xx@xx>
Cc: Cllr Elise Wilson <xx@xx>; Cllr Mike Hurleston <xx@xx>; Cllr A Charles-Jones <cllr.a.charles-xx@xx>; Cllr Gary Lawson <xx@xx>
Subject: Informal Council

Dear Pam & Vicki

Please find attached a letter regarding next week's Informal Council meeting.

With regards
Mark

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From:
To:
Cc: [Pam Smith](#)
Subject: RE: External: Informal council meeting, Thursday May 20
Date: 18 May 2021 14:29:53
Attachments: [image001.jpg](#)

Dear

Thank you for your email.

Please confirm, when you refer to “challenge and appeal”, whether you wish to make a formal complaint to the Council’s Monitoring Officer and/or the Corporate complaints team and I will ensure that they contact you.

In the interim however, I can confirm, in order to assist you, that the informal council meeting is called the informal council meeting because it is not convened under the Local Government Act 1972 hence, for example, there not being a requirement for an agenda 5 days in advance, hence that we can hold the meeting on Microsoft Teams and hence why the public and press are not entitled to attend as of right. As such, the articles of the Constitution that you refer to below are not relevant.

It is up to the meeting whether it wishes to open itself up to the public and press.

Kind regards,

Pam

Pam Smith
Chief Executive
Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council

Email: xxx.xxxxxx@xxxxxxxxxx.xxx.xx
Telephone: 0161 474 3001



From:
Sent: 18 May 2021 10:25
To: Pam Smith <xxx.xxxxxx@xxxxxxxxxx.xxx.xx>
Cc: Caroline Simpson <xxxxxxxxx.xxxxxxx@xxxxxxxxxx.xxx.xx>; Democratic Services <xxxxxxxxxxxxx@xxxxxxxxxx.xxx.xx>
Subject: External: Informal council meeting, Thursday May 20

Good morning Pam,

I am writing to challenge and appeal against the council’s decision to hold the ‘informal

council' meeting on Thursday, May 20 in private.

Having read the constitution I can find nothing which says this meeting may be held in private.

Indeed, Article 3 states citizens have the right to "attend the Council Meeting and meetings of Committees and Sub-Committees except where confidential matters are being discussed".

Article 4 defines the Council Meeting as "a meeting to which all members of the Council have been called, constituted and conducted in accordance with this Constitution".

That clearly includes the annual meeting and, in the view of legal advice I have sought, the informal meeting - particularly as the constitution states that is where the debate will take place and that its decisions will be ratified at the annual meeting without debate.

If the council still intends to exclude the press and public please can I ask you to clarify which part of the constitution gives the council the power to hold the informal meeting in private.

Kind regards,

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To: [Pam Smith](#)
Cc: [Caroline Simpson](#); [Democratic Services](#); [Vicki Bates](#); [Monitoring Officer](#); [Chris Walker](#)
Subject: External: MOST URGENT: LEGAL NOTICE Stockport Council Meeting May 20
Date: 18 May 2021 17:03:51

I refer to your refusal to allow MEN's local democracy reporter to attend the "informal" Stockport Council meeting for elected Councillors on May 20.

I understand your reason for this is that it is not convened under the Local Government Act 1972 and therefore the public do not have the right to attend.

This anti democratic and secretive stance not only contravenes government guidance on transparency and openness in local government

e.g. "Open and accountable local government
A guide for the press and public on attending and reporting meetings of local government"

which states

"Transparency and openness should be the fundamental principle behind everything councils and other local government bodies do"

but also is contrary to the intentions of paragraph 3 of "The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012"

Paragraph 3. "Subject to regulation 4, a meeting of a decision-making body must be held in public."

None of the exceptions in regulation 4 apply in this instance

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2012/2089/regulation/4/made>.

Please also see

"Open and accountable local government

A guide for the press and public on attending and reporting meetings of local government"

page 8

It is a legal duty for the local government body to follow the new provisions. If a local government body's existing Standing Orders are not fully in line with the new legislation, in the short-term, we recommend they simply waive the relevant provisions of those old Standing Orders which could be taken to inhibit the new reporting rules, and then take steps to update formally its Standing Orders.

I understand that a motion will be moved, debated and voted upon regarding a new council leader. Therefore, it will be our submission as a meeting of a decision body, describing the meeting as "informal" does not exempt you from your obligations to hold the meeting in public either legally or morally. .

It is vital in a free and democratic society that the decisions and discussions of elected officials are open to public scrutiny.

You will be well aware of the attempts by Kensington and Chelsea Council to exclude the public and the Press from its meeting following the Grenfell fire

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/jun/29/grenfell-survivors-barred-from-council-meeting-about-fire>

Please confirm that you will reverse your decision to exclude the Press from this meeting and communicate this to those on the email list by 11am Tomorrow (Wednesday 19th May) .

Failing such a confirmation MEN Media reserves its rights to take further immediate action to secure legal access to the meeting.

I look forward to hearing from you by return . MEN Media's rights are fully reserved , including but not limited to the right to make an urgent application to the High Court

Yours sincerely

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From: [Vicki Bates](#)
To: [Michael Cullen](#)
Subject: FW: External: MOST URGENT: LEGAL NOTICE Stockport Council Meeting May 20
Date: 18 May 2021 17:06:00

Kind regards
Vicki Bates

**Strategic Head of Service & Monitoring Officer
(Legal & Democratic Governance)**

Corporate and Support Services
Legal Department
Stockport Council
Room 325
Town Hall
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SK1 3XE

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From:
Sent: 18 May 2021 17:03
To: Pam Smith <xxx.xxxx@xxxxxxxxx.xxx.xx>
Cc: Caroline Simpson <xxxxxxxx.xxxxxx@xxxxxxxxx.xxx.xx>; Democratic Services <xxxxxxxxxx@xxxxxxxxx.xxx.xx>; Vicki Bates <xxxxx.xxxx@xxxxxxxxx.xxx.uk>; Monitoring Officer <xxxxxxxxxx.xxxxxx@xxxxxxxxx.xxx.xx>;
Chris Walker <xxxxx.xxxxx@xxxxxxxxx.xxx>
Subject: External: MOST URGENT: LEGAL NOTICE Stockport Council Meeting May 20

Dear Ms Smith

I refer to your refusal to allow MEN's local democracy reporter to attend the

“informal” Stockport Council meeting for elected Councillors on May 20.

I understand your reason for this is that it is not convened under the Local Government Act 1972 and therefore the public do not have the right to attend.

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I look forward to hearing from you by return . MEN Media’s rights are fully reserved , including but not limited to the right to make an urgent application to the High Court

Yours sincerely

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From: [Vicki Bates](#)
To: [Damian Eaton](#)
Subject: FW: External: MOST URGENT: LEGAL NOTICE Stockport Council Meeting May 20
Date: 18 May 2021 17:08:00

Kind regards
Vicki Bates

**Strategic Head of Service & Monitoring Officer
(Legal & Democratic Governance)**

Corporate and Support Services
Legal Department
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From:

Sent: 18 May 2021 17:03

To: Pam Smith <xxx.xxxx@xxxxxxxxx.xxx.xx>

Cc: Caroline Simpson <xxxxxxxx.xxxxxx@xxxxxxxxx.xxx.xx>; Democratic Services <xxxxxxxxx@xxxxxxxxx.xxx.xx>; Vicki Bates <xxxxx.xxxx@xxxxxxxxx.xxx.uk>; Monitoring Officer <xxxxxxxxx.xxxxxx@xxxxxxxxx.xxx.xx>;
Chris Walker <xxxxx.xxxxx@xxxxxxxxx.xxx>

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From: [Jason Good](#)
To: [Vicki Bates](#)
Cc: [Damian Eaton](#); [Cllr Mark Hunter](#); [Cllr Lisa Smart](#)
Subject: RE: Motion to enable public and media access to the Informal Council Meeting
Date: 19 May 2021 09:44:42

Thanks, Vicki.

Cllr Hunter has asked me to request that the motion be shared with the other Group Leaders and Cllr Lawson as you mentioned, to see if there agreement in advance of the meeting that it be held publicly.

Kind regards,

Jason

Jason Good

Political Assistant, Liberal Democrat Group

*Legal & Democratic Governance
Corporate and Support Services*

Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council

Email: xxxxx.xxxx@xxxxxxxxxx.xxx.xx

Mobile: 07800 618927

<http://www.stockport.gov.uk>

Please note that during the COVID-19 pandemic I am working from home and best contacted by email

From: Vicki Bates <~~xx@xx~~>
Sent: 18 May 2021 15:42
To: Jason Good <~~xx@xx~~>
Cc: Damian Eaton <~~xx@xx~~>; Cllr Mark Hunter <~~xx@xx~~>; Cllr Lisa Smart <cllr.lisa.smart@stockport.gov.uk>
Subject: RE: Motion to enable public and media access to the Informal Council Meeting

Thanks Jason.

Kind regards
Vicki Bates

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(Legal & Democratic Governance)**

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From: Jason Good <jg@xxx>
Sent: 18 May 2021 14:39
To: Vicki Bates <vb@xxx>
Cc: Damian Eaton <de@xxx>; Cllr Mark Hunter <mh@xxx>; Cllr Lisa Smart <ls@xxx>
Subject: Motion to enable public and media access to the Informal Council Meeting

Vicki,

Cllr Hunter has asked me to share with you the attached motion for Informal Council, following your advice regarding the meeting.

Kind regards,

Jason

Jason Good

Political Assistant, Liberal Democrat Group

*Legal & Democratic Governance
Corporate and Support Services*

Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council

Email: xxxxx.xxxx@xxxxxxxxxx.xxx.xx
Mobile: 07800 618927

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From: [Vicki Bates](#)
To: [Pam Smith](#); [Caroline Simpson](#); [Michael Cullen](#)
Cc: [Damian Eaton](#)
Subject: FW: Motion to enable public and media access to the Informal Council Meeting
Date: 19 May 2021 09:48:00

Good morning

Please see below.

I think this will be covered by the draft email I have just prepared to group leaders...

Kind regards
Vicki Bates

**Strategic Head of Service & Monitoring Officer
(Legal & Democratic Governance)**

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From: Jason Good <[jg@stockport.gov.uk](#)>
Sent: 19 May 2021 09:45
To: Vicki Bates <[vb@stockport.gov.uk](#)>
Cc: Damian Eaton <[de@stockport.gov.uk](#)>; Cllr Mark Hunter <[mh@stockport.gov.uk](#)>; Cllr Lisa Smart <[cllr.lisa.smart@stockport.gov.uk](#)>
Subject: RE: Motion to enable public and media access to the Informal Council Meeting

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Jason

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Political Assistant, Liberal Democrat Group

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Corporate and Support Services*

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Mobile: 07800 618927

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From: Vicki Bates <xx@xx>

Sent: 18 May 2021 15:42

To: Jason Good <xx@xx>

Cc: Damian Eaton <xx@xx>; Cllr Mark Hunter

<xx@xx>; Cllr Lisa Smart <xx@xx>

Subject: RE: Motion to enable public and media access to the Informal Council Meeting

Thanks Jason.

Kind regards

Vicki Bates

**Strategic Head of Service & Monitoring Officer
(Legal & Democratic Governance)**

Corporate and Support Services

Legal Department

Stockport Council

Room 325

Town Hall

Edward Street

Stockport

SK1 3XE

Direct: 0161 474 3219 / 07815 715 625

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From: Jason Good <xx@xx>
Sent: 18 May 2021 14:39
To: Vicki Bates <xx@xx>
Cc: Damian Eaton <xx@xx>; Cllr Mark Hunter <xx@xx>; Cllr Lisa Smart <xx@xx>
Subject: Motion to enable public and media access to the Informal Council Meeting

Vicki,

Cllr Hunter has asked me to share with you the attached motion for Informal Council, following your advice regarding the meeting.

Kind regards,

Jason

Jason Good

Political Assistant, Liberal Democrat Group

*Legal & Democratic Governance
Corporate and Support Services*

Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council

Email: xxxxx.xxxx@xxxxxxxxxx.xxx.xx
Mobile: 07800 618927

<http://www.stockport.gov.uk>

Please note that during the COVID-19 pandemic I am working from home and best contacted by email

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suspect that you are not, the above named or the person responsible for delivery of the message to the above named, please delete or destroy the email and any attachments immediately and inform the sender of the error.

From:
To: [Cllr Elise Wilson](#); [Cllr Mark Hunter](#); [Cllr Mike Hurleston](#); [Cllr A Charles-Jones](#); [Cllr Gary Lawson](#)
Subject: Private and Confidential
Date: 19 May 2021 10:02:35
Sensitivity: Confidential

STRICLY PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

Dear Group Leader & Cllr Lawson,

I write to inform you at that at 17.04 yesterday evening I received an email from Reach plc, the owner of MEN Media, the publisher of the Manchester Evening News (MEN) threatening legal proceedings in relation to the informal council meeting on 20 May 2021.

In that regard I refer to Vicki's email to you of yesterday at 13:58 in respect of the options for the way forward regarding access to the meeting for the press and public. Vicki has received the notice of motion from Cllr Hunter and unless agreement to access is confirmed by each of you by 12 noon today then democratic services will write to all councillors this afternoon giving notice of that notice of motion.

I will be responding to the email from Reach plc later today and meanwhile have arranged to have a barrister on standby should any proceedings be issued by them that necessitate attendance at court.

Kind regards,

Pam

Pam Smith

Chief Executive, Stockport Council

Tel: 0161 474 3001

Email: xxx.xxxxx@xxxxxxxxxx.xxx.xx

<http://www.stockport.gov.uk>

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the sender of the error.

From: [Pam Smith](#)
To: [Vicki Bates](#); [Michael Cullen](#); [Caroline Simpson](#)
Cc:
Subject: Re: draft email to group leaders from Pam for approval
Date: 19 May 2021 10:04:05

Agreed.

Thank you.

Pam

Get [Outlook for iOS](#)

From: Vicki Bates <~~x@xx~~>
Sent: Wednesday, May 19, 2021 9:53:47 AM
To: Pam Smith <~~x@xx~~>; Michael Cullen
<~~x@xx~~>; Caroline Simpson <caroline.simpson@stockport.gov.uk>
Cc:
Subject: RE: draft email to group leaders from Pam for approval

Hi all

Approved version below with amends from Michael:-

Mark it please – Strictly Private & Confidential

Dear Group Leader & Cllr Lawson

I write to inform you at that at 17.04 yesterday evening I received an email from Reach plc, the owner of MEN Media, the publisher of the Manchester Evening News (MEN) threatening legal proceedings in relation to the informal council meeting on 20 May 2021.

In that regard I refer to Vicki's email to you of yesterday at 13:58 in respect of the options for the way forward regarding access to the meeting for the press and public. Vicki has received the notice of motion from Cllr Hunter and unless agreement to access is confirmed by each of you by 12 noon today then democratic services will write to all councillors this afternoon giving notice of that notice of motion.

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Kind regards
Pam

Kind regards

Vicki Bates

**Strategic Head of Service & Monitoring Officer
(Legal & Democratic Governance)**

Corporate and Support Services
Legal Department
Stockport Council
Room 325
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Edward Street
Stockport
SK1 3XE

Direct: 0161 474 3219 / 07815 715 625

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From: [Vicki Bates](#)
To:
Cc: [Caroline Simpson](#); [Chris Walker](#); [Michael Cullen](#); [Pam Smith](#)
Subject: RE: External: MOST URGENT: LEGAL NOTICE Stockport Council Meeting May 20
Date: 19 May 2021 10:52:00

Dear

I refer to your email to Pam Smith, the Council's Chief Executive of 18 May 2021 at 17.04 requesting a response by 11.00 on Wednesday 19 May 2021. As you will appreciate this unilaterally imposed timescale demanding a response within less than 2 working hours' is completely unreasonable.

I am the Council's Monitoring Officer and Strategic Head of Service (Legal and Democratic Governance) and am responding on the Chief Executive's behalf due to the (entirely unwarranted) threats of legal proceedings contained in your email.

Not only is the tone of your email wholly inappropriate, your claims are without foundation. It would appear that you are writing under several misapprehensions and misunderstandings (set out below) and as such your correspondence is premature and unnecessary:-

1. the Chief Executive has not made any decision to refuse access to the press or public to the meeting on 20 May 2021;
2. as stated to your colleague by email yesterday, the decision rests with the members attending the informal council meeting as to whether the press and public can attend via webcast. There are ongoing discussions in respect of that between members. In the event that an agreement is not reached prior to the meeting then the inclusion of the press and public will be the first item on the agenda for the meeting on 20 May 2021 for discussion and decision;
3. however, as previously stated, as the meeting is an informal meeting, not convened under the 1972 Act, or any other legislation, it is not open to the public or the press as of right (like many other informal meetings that take place at the Council between members and/or officers). It is not a decision making body. The Annual Council Meeting on 25 May 2021 will be webcast and is where the decisions will be made that were discussed on 20 May 2021. This process is certainly not "*anti-democratic and secretive*" but is part of the Council's Constitution which is agreed (and adopted) by all 63 members at the start of each municipal year.
4. your references to various legislation are incorrect and not relevant as they relate to meetings of decision making bodies; the informal council meeting is not a decision making body;
5. your reference to the Cabinet Meeting of the Kensington & Chelsea Borough Council is again not relevant as that was a meeting of the Cabinet formally convened pursuant to statute which the Council sought to exclude the public from and hold in private.

Finally, I note your reference to making an application to the High Court (in respect of a decision which currently rests with members) in respect of which the Council's rights remain reserved and in respect of which we put you on notice that our costs will be

sought from you on an indemnity basis should you choose to (misguidedly) proceed in that way, together with a wasted costs order.

Please note that I am instructed to accept service of proceedings by email on behalf of the Council.

Yours sincerely
Vicki Bates

**Strategic Head of Service & Monitoring Officer
(Legal & Democratic Governance)**

Corporate and Support Services
Legal Department
Stockport Council
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From:

Sent: 18 May 2021 17:03

To: Pam Smith <xxx.xxxx@xxxxxxxxx.xxx.xx>

Cc: Caroline Simpson <xxxxxxxx.xxxxxx@xxxxxxxxx.xxx.xx>; Democratic Services <xxxxxxxxxxxx@xxxxxxxxx.xxx.xx>; Vicki Bates <xxxxx.xxxxx@xxxxxxxxx.xxx.uk>; Monitoring Officer <xxxxxxxxxx.xxxxxx@xxxxxxxxx.xxx.xx>;
Chris Walker <xxxxx.xxxxxx@xxxxxxxxx.xxx>

Subject: External: MOST URGENT: LEGAL NOTICE Stockport Council Meeting May 20

Dear Ms Smith

I refer to your refusal to allow MEN's local democracy reporter to attend the

“informal” Stockport Council meeting for elected Councillors on May 20.

I understand your reason for this is that it is not convened under the Local Government Act 1972 and therefore the public do not have the right to attend.

This anti democratic and secretive stance not only contravenes government guidance on transparency and openness in local government

e.g. "Open and accountable local government

A guide for the press and public on attending and reporting meetings of local government"

which states

"Transparency and openness should be the fundamental principle behind everything councils and other local government bodies do"

but also is contrary to the intentions of paragraph 3 of "The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012"

Paragraph 3. "Subject to regulation 4, a meeting of a decision-making body must be held in public."

None of the exceptions in regulation 4 apply in this instance

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2012/2089/regulation/4/made>.

Please also see

“Open and accountable local government

A guide for the press and public on attending and reporting meetings of local government”

page 8

It is a legal duty for the local government body to follow the new provisions. If a local government body's existing Standing Orders are not fully in line with the new legislation, in the short-term, we recommend they simply waive the relevant provisions of those old Standing Orders which could be taken to inhibit the new reporting rules, and then take steps to update formally its Standing Orders.

I understand that a motion will be moved, debated and voted upon regarding a new council leader. Therefore, it will be our submission as a meeting of a decision body,

describing the meeting as “informal” does not exempt you from your obligations to hold the meeting in public either legally or morally. .

It is vital in a free and democratic society that the decisions and discussions of elected officials are open to public scrutiny.

You will be well aware of the attempts by Kensington and Chelsea Council to exclude the public and the Press from its meeting following the Grenfell fire

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/jun/29/grenfell-survivors-barred-from-council-meeting-about-fire>

Please confirm that you will reverse your decision to exclude the Press from this meeting and communicate this to those on the email list by 11am Tomorrow (Wednesday 19th May) .

Failing such a confirmation MEN Media reserves its rights to take further immediate action to secure legal access to the meeting.

I look forward to hearing from you by return . MEN Media’s rights are fully reserved , including but not limited to the right to make an urgent application to the High Court

Yours sincerely

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From: [Jason Good](#)
To: [Vicki Bates](#)
Cc: [Cllr Mark Hunter](#); [Cllr Lisa Smart](#); [Damian Eaton](#)
Subject: RE: Informal Council
Date: 19 May 2021 10:56:13

Thanks, Vicki – those emails all noted.

Kind regards,

Jason

Jason Good

Political Assistant, Liberal Democrat Group

*Legal & Democratic Governance
Corporate and Support Services*

Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council

Email: xxxxx.xxxx@xxxxxxxxxx.xxx.xx
Mobile: 07800 618927

<http://www.stockport.gov.uk>

Please note that during the COVID-19 pandemic I am working from home and best contacted by email

From: Vicki Bates <~~xx@xx~~>
Sent: 19 May 2021 10:48
To: Jason Good <~~xx@xx~~>
Cc: Cllr Mark Hunter <~~xx@xx~~>; Cllr Lisa Smart
<~~xx@xx~~>; Damian Eaton <damian.eaton@stockport.gov.uk>
Subject: FW: Informal Council

Hi Jason

Please see below and attached.

I will ask Damian to circulate to all councillors this afternoon if we have not had agreed from all Group Leaders and Cllr Lawson by 12 noon today.

Kind regards
Vicki Bates

**Strategic Head of Service & Monitoring Officer
(Legal & Democratic Governance)**

Corporate and Support Services
Legal Department
Stockport Council
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Stockport
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From: Vicki Bates
Sent: 19 May 2021 10:47
To: Cllr Mark Hunter <xx@xx>; Cllr Elise Wilson <xx@xx>; Cllr Mike Hurleston <xx@xx>; Cllr A Charles-Jones <cllr.a.charles-xx@xx>; Cllr Gary Lawson <xx@xx>
Cc: Pam Smith <xx@xx>
Subject: RE: Informal Council

Dear Group Leaders and Cllr Lawson

Cllr Hunter has asked me to share with you a copy of the motion that will be circulated to all councillors this afternoon by democratic services if I do not receive confirmation from each of you by 12 noon today that you agree to the public and press being present at tomorrow's informal council meeting.

Kind regards
Vicki Bates

**Strategic Head of Service & Monitoring Officer
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From: Vicki Bates

Sent: 18 May 2021 13:58

To: Cllr Mark Hunter <xx@xx>

Cc: Cllr Elise Wilson <xx@xx>; Cllr Mike Hurleston

<xx@xx>; Cllr A Charles-Jones <cllr.a.charles-

xx@xx>; Cllr Gary Lawson <xx@xx>; Pam Smith

<xx@xx>

Subject: RE: Informal Council

Dear Cllr Hunter

Thank you for your email.

The informal council meeting is called the informal council meeting because it is not convened under the Local Government Act 1972 hence, for example, there not being a requirement for an agenda 5 days in advance, hence that we can hold the meeting on Microsoft Teams and hence why the public and press are not entitled to attend as of right.

As confirmed yesterday it is up to the meeting whether it wishes to open itself up to the public and press. I note your intention that you wish to formally move that the public and press be entitled to be present.

If you wish to formally move such a motion then please can you or Jason submit a motion to Damian in writing that the informal council meeting can be open to the press and public (via webcast).

There are then two options as to the way forward:-

1. All group leaders and Cllr Lawson agree in advance of Thursday evening's meeting that the meeting will be webcast; or
2. The motion will be the first item on the agenda and if there is any dissent then it will move to the vote. There will be no need to amend the agenda. We will however notify all Councillors by email that this will be the first item on the agenda.

Kind regards
Vicki Bates

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From: Cllr Mark Hunter <[xx@xx](#)>
Sent: 18 May 2021 10:33
To: Vicki Bates <[xx@xx](#)>
Cc: Cllr Elise Wilson <[xx@xx](#)>; Cllr Mike Hurleston <[xx@xx](#)>; Cllr A Charles-Jones <[cllr.a.charles-xx@xx](#)>; Cllr Gary Lawson <[xx@xx](#)>; Pam Smith <[xx@xx](#)>
Subject: Re: Informal Council

Vicki,

Thank you for your reply.

Having checked the constitution, I can find no specific reference to the Informal meeting being in private. Please can you point me to where in the constitution it says this?

In the circumstances, it is my intention to formally move that we do allow press and public to be present at the start of the meeting. Your guidance on precisely how this might be done in a correct and appropriate manner would be very much appreciated.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Best wishes,

Mark

From: Vicki Bates <v@xxx>
Sent: 17 May 2021 18:24
To: Cllr Mark Hunter <m@xxx>
Cc: Cllr Elise Wilson <e@xxx>; Cllr Mike Hurleston <m@xxx>; Cllr A Charles-Jones <cllr.a.charles-j@xxx>; Cllr Gary Lawson <g@xxx>; Pam Smith <p@xxx>
Subject: RE: Informal Council

Dear Cllr Hunter

Thank you for your email.

The purpose of the informal council meeting (as set out in the constitution) is to give Members an opportunity to discuss, in private, and resolve any business that could cause any political disagreement at the Annual Council Meeting so as to preserve the main purpose of that meeting, namely the ceremonial appointment of the First Citizen, the new Mayor, and in order to safeguard the reputation of the council. The opening up of the informal council meeting to the public and press could undermine the purpose of the private meeting and set an unwanted precedent for the future.

It is however, a matter for the meeting itself to regulate how it wants to conduct proceedings, namely, whether it wishes the public and press to be present.

Kind regards
Vicki Bates

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From: Cllr Mark Hunter <xx@xx>
Sent: 14 May 2021 14:42
To: Pam Smith <xx@xx>; Vicki Bates <xx@xx>
Cc: Cllr Elise Wilson <xx@xx>; Cllr Mike Hurleston <xx@xx>; Cllr A Charles-Jones <cllr.a.charles-xx@xx>; Cllr Gary Lawson <xx@xx>
Subject: Informal Council

Dear Pam & Vicki

Please find attached a letter regarding next week's Informal Council meeting.

With regards
Mark

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From: [Cllr A Charles-Jones](#)
To: [Vicki Bates](#)
Subject: Re: Informal Council
Date: 19 May 2021 11:19:26

Dear Vicki,

We had a group discussion yesterday evening which suggested that if this issue went to a vote, our group would give 2 votes for allowing the press/public, and one abstention. Therefore, on that basis we do have a majority view that the press and public should be permitted.

Many thanks,

Anna

Cllr Anna Charles-Jones | Heald Green Ward

From: Vicki Bates <~~xx@xx~~>
Sent: Wednesday, May 19, 2021 10:46:32 AM
To: Cllr Mark Hunter <~~xx@xx~~>; Cllr Elise Wilson <~~xx@xx~~>; Cllr Mike Hurleston <~~xx@xx~~>; Cllr A Charles-Jones <cllr.a.charles-~~xx@xx~~>; Cllr Gary Lawson <~~xx@xx~~.uk>
Cc: Pam Smith <~~xx@xx~~>
Subject: RE: Informal Council

Dear Group Leaders and Cllr Lawson

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Kind regards
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Sent: 18 May 2021 13:58

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Cc: Cllr Elise Wilson <xx@xx>; Cllr Mike Hurleston <xx@xx>; Cllr A Charles-Jones <cllr.a.charles-@xx>; Cllr Gary Lawson <xx@xx.uk>; Pam Smith <xx@xx>

Subject: RE: Informal Council

Dear Cllr Hunter

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I look forward to hearing from you.

Best wishes,

Mark

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From: Cllr Mark Hunter <[xx@xx](#)>
Sent: 14 May 2021 14:42
To: Pam Smith <[xx@xx](#)>; Vicki Bates <[xx@xx](#)>
Cc: Cllr Elise Wilson <[xx@xx](#)>; Cllr Mike Hurleston <[xx@xx](#)>; Cllr A Charles-Jones <[cllr.a.charles-xx@xx](#)>; Cllr Gary Lawson <[xx@xx](#)>
Subject: Informal Council

Dear Pam & Vicki

Please find attached a letter regarding next week's Informal Council meeting.

With regards
Mark

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From: [Cllr Mike Hurleston](#)
To: [Pam Smith](#); [Cllr Elise Wilson](#); [Cllr Mark Hunter](#); [Cllr A Charles-Jones](#); [Cllr Gary Lawson](#)
Cc: [Helena Parker](#)
Subject: Re: Private and Confidential
Date: 19 May 2021 11:38:44
Sensitivity: Confidential

Thanks Pam

I have no objection to allowing requested access.

I am concerned that the MEN threatened the Council with legal action .

Kind regards

Cllr Mike Hurleston
Conservative Councillor
Bramhall South & Woodford
Leader of the Conservative Group

From on behalf of Pam Smith

<xx@xxx>

Sent: Wednesday, May 19, 2021 10:02 am

To: Cllr Elise Wilson; Cllr Mark Hunter; Cllr Mike Hurleston; Cllr A Charles-Jones; Cllr Gary Lawson

Subject: Private and Confidential

STRICLY PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

Dear Group Leader & Cllr Lawson,

I write to inform you at that at 17.04 yesterday evening I received an email from Reach plc, the owner of MEN Media, the publisher of the Manchester Evening News (MEN) threatening legal proceedings in relation to the informal council meeting on 20 May 2021.

In that regard I refer to Vicki's email to you of yesterday at 13:58 in respect of the options for the way forward regarding access to the meeting for the press and public. Vicki has received the notice of motion from Cllr Hunter and unless agreement to access is confirmed by each of you by 12 noon today then democratic services will write to all councillors this afternoon giving notice of that notice of motion.

I will be responding to the email from Reach plc later today and meanwhile have arranged to have a barrister on standby should any proceedings be issued by them that necessitate attendance at court.

Kind regards,

Pam

Pam Smith

Chief Executive, Stockport Council

Tel: 0161 474 3001

Email: xxx.xxxxx@xxxxxxxxxx.xxx.xx

<http://www.stockport.gov.uk>

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From: [Cllr Mike Hurleston](#)
To: [Vicki Bates](#); [Cllr Mark Hunter](#); [Cllr Elise Wilson](#); [Cllr A Charles-Jones](#); [Cllr Gary Lawson](#)
Cc: [Pam Smith](#); [Helena Parker](#)
Subject: Re: Informal Council
Date: 19 May 2021 11:53:13

Thanks Vicki

I have no objection to public and press being “ present”

Kind regards

Cllr Mike Hurleston
Conservative Councillor
Bramhall South & Woodford
Leader of the Conservative Group

From: Vicki Bates <~~x@xxx~~>
Sent: Wednesday, May 19, 2021 10:47 am
To: Cllr Mark Hunter; Cllr Elise Wilson; Cllr Mike Hurleston; Cllr A Charles-Jones; Cllr Gary Lawson
Cc: Pam Smith
Subject: RE: Informal Council

Dear Group Leaders and Cllr Lawson

Cllr Hunter has asked me to share with you a copy of the motion that will be circulated to all councillors this afternoon by democratic services if I do not receive confirmation from each of you by 12 noon today that you agree to the public and press being present at tomorrow’s informal council meeting.

Kind regards
Vicki Bates

Strategic Head of Service & Monitoring Officer
(Legal & Democratic Governance)
Corporate and Support Services
Legal Department
Stockport Council
Room 325
Town Hall
Edward Street
Stockport
SK1 3XE

Direct: 0161 474 3219 / 07815 715 625

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Please note that in light of Government guidance around Coronavirus, all Legal Services and Democratic Governance colleagues are currently working from home. We have a skeleton staff attending the office, by exception and only where absolutely necessary. Wherever possible, please avoid posting documents to us and use electronic communication instead. If you must post a hard copy document, please email the recipient, so we can arrange for post to be collected.

From: Vicki Bates

Sent: 18 May 2021 13:58

To: Cllr Mark Hunter <xx@xx>

Cc: Cllr Elise Wilson <xx@xx>; Cllr Mike Hurleston <xx@xx>; Cllr A Charles-Jones <cllr.a.charles-@xx>; Cllr Gary Lawson <xx@xx.uk>; Pam Smith <xx@xx>

Subject: RE: Informal Council

Dear Cllr Hunter

Thank you for your email.

The informal council meeting is called the informal council meeting because it is not convened under the Local Government Act 1972 hence, for example, there not being a requirement for an agenda 5 days in advance, hence that we can hold the meeting on Microsoft Teams and hence why the public and press are not entitled to attend as of right.

As confirmed yesterday it is up to the meeting whether it wishes to open itself up to the public and press. I note your intention that you wish to formally move that the public and press be entitled to be present.

If you wish to formally move such a motion then please can you or Jason submit a motion to Damian in writing that the informal council meeting can be open to the press and public (via webcast).

There are then two options as to the way forward:-

1. All group leaders and Cllr Lawson agree in advance of Thursday evening's meeting that the meeting will be webcast; or
2. The motion will be the first item on the agenda and if there is any dissent then it will move to the vote. There will be no need to amend the agenda. We will however notify all Councillors by email that this will be the first item on the agenda.

Kind regards
Vicki Bates

Strategic Head of Service & Monitoring Officer

(Legal & Democratic Governance)

Corporate and Support Services
Legal Department
Stockport Council
Room 325
Town Hall
Edward Street
Stockport
SK1 3XE

Direct: 0161 474 3219 / 07815 715 625

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From: Cllr Mark Hunter <[xx@xx](#)>
Sent: 18 May 2021 10:33
To: Vicki Bates <[xx@xx](#)>
Cc: Cllr Elise Wilson <[xx@xx](#)>; Cllr Mike Hurleston <[xx@xx](#)>; Cllr A Charles-Jones <[cllr.a.charles-xx@xx](#)>; Cllr Gary Lawson <[xx@xx](#)>; Pam Smith <[xx@xx](#)>
Subject: Re: Informal Council

Vicki,

Thank you for your reply.

Having checked the constitution, I can find no specific reference to the Informal meeting being in private. Please can you point me to where in the constitution it says this?

In the circumstances, it is my intention to formally move that we do allow press and public to be present at the start of the meeting. Your guidance on precisely how this might be done in a correct and appropriate manner would be very much appreciated.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Best wishes,

Mark

From: Vicki Bates <[redacted]>
Sent: 17 May 2021 18:24
To: Cllr Mark Hunter <[redacted]>
Cc: Cllr Elise Wilson <[redacted]>; Cllr Mike Hurleston <[redacted]>; Cllr A Charles-Jones <[redacted]>; Cllr Gary Lawson <[redacted]>; Pam Smith <[redacted]>
Subject: RE: Informal Council

Dear Cllr Hunter

Thank you for your email.

The purpose of the informal council meeting (as set out in the constitution) is to give Members an opportunity to discuss, in private, and resolve any business that could cause any political disagreement at the Annual Council Meeting so as to preserve the main purpose of that meeting, namely the ceremonial appointment of the First Citizen, the new Mayor, and in order to safeguard the reputation of the council. The opening up of the informal council meeting to the public and press could undermine the purpose of the private meeting and set an unwanted precedent for the future.

It is however, a matter for the meeting itself to regulate how it wants to conduct proceedings, namely, whether it wishes the public and press to be present.

Kind regards
Vicki Bates

**Strategic Head of Service & Monitoring Officer
(Legal & Democratic Governance)**

Corporate and Support Services
Legal Department
Stockport Council
Room 325
Town Hall
Edward Street
Stockport
SK1 3XE

Direct: 0161 474 3219 / 07815 715 625

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recipient, so we can arrange for post to be collected.

From: Cllr Mark Hunter <[xx@xx](#)>
Sent: 14 May 2021 14:42
To: Pam Smith <[xx@xx](#)>; Vicki Bates <[xx@xx](#)>
Cc: Cllr Elise Wilson <[xx@xx](#)>; Cllr Mike Hurleston <[xx@xx](#)>; Cllr A Charles-Jones <[cllr.a.charles-xx@xx](#)>; Cllr Gary Lawson <[xx@xx](#)>
Subject: Informal Council

Dear Pam & Vicki

Please find attached a letter regarding next week's Informal Council meeting.

With regards
Mark

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From:
To: [Cllr Elise Wilson](#); [Cllr Mark Hunter](#); [Cllr Mike Hurleston](#); [Cllr A Charles-Jones](#); [Cllr Gary Lawson](#)
Subject: Reach plc
Date: 19 May 2021 11:55:31
Attachments: [External MOST URGENT LEGAL NOTICE Stockport Council Meeting May 20.msg](#)
[RE External MOST URGENT LEGAL NOTICE Stockport Council Meeting May 20.msg](#)

Dear Group Leader and Cllr Lawson,

Please find attached the correspondence received from
and our subsequent reply sent from Vicki Bates, responding in her capacity as the
Council's Monitoring Officer.

You will note from our response we have made it clear that any decision relating to
public and press access to Thursday's informal council meeting is a Member
decision.

Kind regards,

Pam

Pam Smith

Chief Executive, Stockport Council

Tel: 0161 474 3001

Email: xxx.xxxxx@xxxxxxxxxx.xxx.xx

<http://www.stockport.gov.uk>

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From: [Cllr Elise Wilson](#)
To: [Pam Smith](#); [Cllr Mark Hunter](#); [Cllr Mike Hurleston](#); [Cllr A Charles-Jones](#); [Cllr Gary Lawson](#)
Subject: Re: Private and Confidential
Date: 19 May 2021 11:58:41
Sensitivity: Confidential

Pam,

The Labour group has no objections to allowing the public and press access to tomorrow's informal meeting of councillors. However to allow officers to make arrangements ahead of the meeting I'm happy to agree this now rather than wait to decide in the informal meeting itself.

Thanks,

Elise

Get [Outlook for iOS](#)

From: > on behalf of Pam Smith

<xx@xx>

Sent: Wednesday, May 19, 2021 10:02:34 AM

To: Cllr Elise Wilson <xx@xx>; Cllr Mark Hunter

<xx@xx>; Cllr Mike Hurleston

<xx@xx>; Cllr A Charles-Jones <cllr.a.charles-

@xx>; Cllr Gary Lawson <xx@xx.uk>

Subject: Private and Confidential

STRICLY PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

Dear Group Leader & Cllr Lawson,

I write to inform you at that at 17.04 yesterday evening I received an email from Reach plc, the owner of MEN Media, the publisher of the Manchester Evening News (MEN) threatening legal proceedings in relation to the informal council meeting on 20 May 2021.

In that regard I refer to Vicki's email to you of yesterday at 13:58 in respect of the options for the way forward regarding access to the meeting for the press and public. Vicki has received the notice of motion from Cllr Hunter and unless agreement to access is confirmed by each of you by 12 noon today then democratic services will write to all councillors this afternoon giving notice of that notice of motion.

I will be responding to the email from Reach plc later today and meanwhile have arranged to have a barrister on standby should any proceedings be issued by them that necessitate attendance at court.

Kind regards,

Pam

Pam Smith

Chief Executive, Stockport Council

Tel: 0161 474 3001

Email: xxx.xxxxxx@xxxxxxxxxx.xxx.xx

<http://www.stockport.gov.uk>

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From: [Pam Smith](#)
To: [Vicki Bates](#); [Caroline Simpson](#); [Michael Cullen](#)
Subject: Fwd: Private and Confidential
Date: 19 May 2021 12:18:38
Sensitivity: Confidential

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From: Cllr Elise Wilson <xx@xx>
Sent: Wednesday, May 19, 2021 11:58 am
To: Pam Smith; Cllr Mark Hunter; Cllr Mike Hurleston; Cllr A Charles-Jones; Cllr Gary Lawson
Subject: Re: Private and Confidential

Pam,

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Thanks,

Elise

Get [Outlook for iOS](#)

> on behalf of Pam Smith

<xx@xx>
Sent: Wednesday, May 19, 2021 10:02:34 AM
To: Cllr Elise Wilson <xx@xx>; Cllr Mark Hunter <xx@xx>; Cllr Mike Hurleston <xx@xx>; Cllr A Charles-Jones <cllr.a.charles-xx@xx>; Cllr Gary Lawson <xx@xx.uk>
Subject: Private and Confidential

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Pam

Pam Smith

Chief Executive, Stockport Council

Tel: 0161 474 3001

Email: xxx.xxxxx@xxxxxxxxxx.xxx.xx

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From: [Cllr A Charles-Jones](#)
To: [Pam Smith](#); [Cllr Mark Hunter](#); [Cllr Mike Hurleston](#); [Cllr Gary Lawson](#); [Cllr Elise Wilson](#)
Subject: Re: Private and Confidential
Date: 19 May 2021 12:27:10
Sensitivity: Confidential

Pam,

I have replied separately to Vicki but for the record, the Independent Ratepayers group have no objections to the meeting being in public.

Many thanks,

Anna

Cllr Anna Charles-Jones | Heald Green Ward

From: Cllr Elise Wilson <[xx@xx](#)>
Sent: Wednesday, May 19, 2021 11:58:39 AM
To: Pam Smith <[xx@xx](#)>; Cllr Mark Hunter <[xx@xx](#)>; Cllr Mike Hurleston <[xx@xx](#)>; Cllr A Charles-Jones <[cllr.a.charles-xx@xx](#)>; Cllr Gary Lawson <[xx@xx.uk](#)>
Subject: Re: Private and Confidential
Pam,

The Labour group has no objections to allowing the public and press access to tomorrow's informal meeting of councillors. However to allow officers to make arrangements ahead of the meeting I'm happy to agree this now rather than wait to decide in the informal meeting itself.

Thanks,

Elise

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> on behalf of Pam Smith

<[xx@xx](#)>
Sent: Wednesday, May 19, 2021 10:02:34 AM
To: Cllr Elise Wilson <[xx@xx](#)>; Cllr Mark Hunter <[xx@xx](#)>; Cllr Mike Hurleston <[xx@xx](#)>; Cllr A Charles-Jones <[cllr.a.charles-xx@xx](#)>; Cllr Gary Lawson <[xx@xx.uk](#)>
Subject: Private and Confidential
STRICLY PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

Dear Group Leader & Cllr Lawson,

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I will be responding to the email from Reach plc later today and meanwhile have arranged to have a barrister on standby should any proceedings be issued by them that necessitate attendance at court.

Kind regards,

Pam

Pam Smith

Chief Executive, Stockport Council

Tel: 0161 474 3001

Email: xxx.xxxxx@xxxxxxxxxx.xxx.xx

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From: [Vicki Bates](#)
To: [Pam Smith](#); [Michael Cullen](#); [Caroline Simpson](#)
Subject: FW: Informal Council
Date: 19 May 2021 12:58:00

Kind regards
Vicki Bates

**Strategic Head of Service & Monitoring Officer
(Legal & Democratic Governance)**

Corporate and Support Services
Legal Department
Stockport Council
Room 325
Town Hall
Edward Street
Stockport
SK1 3XE

Direct: 0161 474 3219 / 07815 715 625

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From: Cllr A Charles-Jones <~~xx@xx~~>
Sent: 19 May 2021 11:19
To: Vicki Bates <~~xx@xx~~>
Subject: Re: Informal Council

Dear Vicki,

We had a group discussion yesterday evening which suggested that if this issue went to a vote, our group would give 2 votes for allowing the press/public, and one abstention. Therefore, on that basis we do have a majority view that the press and public should be permitted.

Many thanks,

Anna

Cllr Anna Charles-Jones | Heald Green Ward

From: Vicki Bates <[redacted]>
Sent: Wednesday, May 19, 2021 10:46:32 AM
To: Cllr Mark Hunter <[redacted]>; Cllr Elise Wilson <[redacted]>; Cllr Mike Hurleston <[redacted]>; Cllr A Charles-Jones <[redacted]>; Cllr Gary Lawson <[redacted]>
Cc: Pam Smith <[redacted]>
Subject: RE: Informal Council

Dear Group Leaders and Cllr Lawson

Cllr Hunter has asked me to share with you a copy of the motion that will be circulated to all councillors this afternoon by democratic services if I do not receive confirmation from each of you by 12 noon today that you agree to the public and press being present at tomorrow's informal council meeting.

Kind regards
Vicki Bates

**Strategic Head of Service & Monitoring Officer
(Legal & Democratic Governance)**

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From: Vicki Bates
Sent: 18 May 2021 13:58
To: Cllr Mark Hunter <[redacted]>

From: [Kirsteen Roe](#)
To: [Vicki Bates](#)
Cc: [Michael Cullen](#);
Subject: RE: Draft press release.... as discussed
Date: 19 May 2021 13:27:42

Thanks

 has already contacted us to say he understands the informal council meeting will now be webcast and he is asking us for a statement. holding him off by asking what his deadline is.

We will put ours out as a news item and simple/factual text on Democracy social media to say "The Informal Council meeting will be webcast. Webcast link to be provided prior to the meeting." With link to our news item.

All the best
Kirsteen

Kirsteen Roe
Service Director – Citizen Focus

Tel: 07967 673484
<http://www.stockport.gov.uk>

I may at times send and respond to emails out of hours - there is no expectation for you to do the same.

It is important to keep yourself and others safe from coronavirus - keep 2 metres away, wash or sanitise your hands regularly and wear a face covering -
www.stockport.gov.uk/coronavirus

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From: [Vicki Bates](#)
To: [Kirsteen Roe](#)
Cc: [Michael Cullen](#); [Pam Smith](#); [Caroline Simpson](#)
Subject: RE: Draft press release.... as discussed
Date: 19 May 2021 13:30:00

Hi Kirsteen

Please see below for sending once I have confirmed all councillors have been updated – in next 5 mins

Informal Council Meeting to be Webcast

Following the [results](#) of the local elections held on Thursday 6 May 2021, a Leader and Cabinet is due to be appointed at the Council Meeting on Tuesday 25 May 2021. This decision about the council's political leadership for the coming year will be formally taken at the Annual Council meeting on Thursday 25 May 2021 at 2.30 pm.

Prior to the Annual Council Meeting an informal Council Meeting will be held on 20 May 2021 at 6pm. Political Group Leaders of the Council have decided that the informal Council meeting will be webcast.

(add in link to webcast)

From:
To: [Vicki Bates](#)
Cc: [Caroline Simpson](#); [Chris Walker](#); [Michael Cullen](#); [Pam Smith](#)
Subject: Re: External: MOST URGENT: LEGAL NOTICE Stockport Council Meeting May 20
Date: 19 May 2021 14:07:30

Dear Ms Bates

thank you for your email . I note that you say that my claims were "without foundation" and I was writing I under "several misapprehensions and misunderstandings" .

MEN is delighted that Stockport Council has agreed with and has acted upon the principle (as set out) that *"Transparency and openness should be the fundamental principle behind everything councils and other local government bodies do"* by webcasting the meeting.

Yours sincerely

On Wed, 19 May 2021 at 10:52, Vicki Bates <xxxxx.xxxxx@xxxxxxxxxx> wrote:

I refer to your email to Pam Smith, the Council's Chief Executive of 18 May 2021 at 17.04 requesting a response by 11.00 on Wednesday 19 May 2021. As you will appreciate this unilaterally imposed timescale demanding a response within less than 2 working hours' is completely unreasonable.

I am the Council's Monitoring Officer and Strategic Head of Service (Legal and Democratic Governance) and am responding on the Chief Executive's behalf due to the (entirely unwarranted) threats of legal proceedings contained in your email.

Not only is the tone of your email wholly inappropriate, your claims are without foundation. It would appear that you are writing under several misapprehensions and misunderstandings (set out below) and as such your correspondence is premature and unnecessary:-

1. the Chief Executive has not made any decision to refuse access to the press or public to the meeting on 20 May 2021;
2. as stated to your colleague by email yesterday, the decision rests with the members attending the informal council meeting as to whether the press and public can attend via webcast. There are ongoing discussions in respect of that between members. In the event that an agreement is not reached prior to the meeting then the inclusion of the press and public will be

the first item on the agenda for the meeting on 20 May 2021 for discussion and decision;

3. however, as previously stated, as the meeting is an informal meeting, not convened under the 1972 Act, or any other legislation, it is not open to the public or the press as of right (like many other informal meetings that take place at the Council between members and/or officers). It is not a decision making body. The Annual Council Meeting on 25 May 2021 will be webcast and is where the decisions will be made that were discussed on 20 May 2021. This process is certainly not "*anti-democratic and secretive*" but is part of the Council's Constitution which is agreed (and adopted) by all 63 members at the start of each municipal year.
4. your references to various legislation are incorrect and not relevant as they relate to meetings of decision making bodies; the informal council meeting is not a decision making body;
5. your reference to the Cabinet Meeting of the Kensington & Chelsea Borough Council is again not relevant as that was a meeting of the Cabinet formally convened pursuant to statute which the Council sought to exclude the public from and hold in private.

Finally, I note your reference to making an application to the High Court (in respect of a decision which currently rests with members) in respect of which the Council's rights remain reserved and in respect of which we put you on notice that our costs will be sought from you on an indemnity basis should you choose to (misguidedly) proceed in that way, together with a wasted costs order.

Please note that I am instructed to accept service of proceedings by email on behalf of the Council.

Yours sincerely

Vicki Bates

Strategic Head of Service & Monitoring Officer

(Legal & Democratic Governance)

Corporate and Support Services

Legal Department

Stockport Council

Room 325
Town Hall

Edward Street
Stockport
SK1 3XE

Direct: 0161 474 3219 / 07815 715 625

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From:

Sent: 18 May 2021 17:03

To: Pam Smith <xxx.xxxxx@xxxxxxxxxx.xxx.xx>

Cc: Caroline Simpson <xxxxxxxxx.xxxxxxx@xxxxxxxxxx.xxx.xx>; Democratic Services <xxxxxxxxxx@xxxxxxxxxx.xxx.xx>; Vicki Bates <xxxxx.xxxxx@xxxxxxxxxx.xxx.xx>; Monitoring Officer <xxxxxxxxxx.xxxxxxx@xxxxxxxxxx.xxx.xx>;

Chris Walker <xxxxx.xxxxxx@xxxxxxxxxx.xxx>

Subject: External: MOST URGENT: LEGAL NOTICE Stockport Council Meeting May 20

Dear Ms Smith

I refer to your refusal to allow MEN's local democracy reporter to attend the "informal" Stockport Council meeting for elected Councillors on May 20.

I understand your reason for this is that it is not convened under the Local Government Act 1972 and therefore the public do not have the right to attend.

This anti democratic and secretive stance not only contravenes government guidance on transparency and openness in local government

e.g. "Open and accountable local government

A guide for the press and public on attending and reporting meetings of local government"

which states

"Transparency and openness should be the fundamental principle behind everything councils and other local government bodies do"

but also is contrary to the intentions of paragraph 3 of "The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012"

Paragraph 3. "Subject to regulation 4, a meeting of a decision-making body must be held in public."

None of the exceptions in regulation 4 apply in this instance

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2012/2089/regulation/4/made>.

Please also see

“Open and accountable local government

A guide for the press and public on attending and reporting meetings of local government”

page 8

It is a legal duty for the local government body to follow the new provisions. If a local government body's existing Standing Orders are not fully in line with the new legislation, in the short-term, we recommend they simply waive the relevant provisions of those old Standing Orders which could be taken to inhibit the new reporting rules, and then take steps to update formally its Standing Orders.

I understand that a motion will be moved, debated and voted upon regarding a new council leader. Therefore, it will be our submission as a meeting of a decision body, describing the meeting as “informal” does not exempt you from your obligations to hold the meeting in public either legally or morally. .

It is vital in a free and democratic society that the decisions and discussions of elected officials are open to public scrutiny.

You will be well aware of the attempts by Kensington and Chelsea Council to exclude the public and the Press from its meeting following the Grenfell fire

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/jun/29/grenfell-survivors-barred-from-council-meeting-about-fire>

Please confirm that you will reverse your decision to exclude the Press from this meeting and communicate this to those on the email list by 11am Tomorrow (Wednesday 19th May) .

Failing such a confirmation MEN Media reserves its rights to take further immediate action to secure legal access to the meeting.

I look forward to hearing from you by return . MEN Media's rights are fully reserved , including but not limited to the right to make an urgent application to the High Court

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From: [Vicki Bates](#)
To: [Cllr Janet Mobbs](#)
Subject: RE: External: Summons for the Informal Council Meeting, Thursday, 20th May, 2021, 6.00 pm
Date: 19 May 2021 14:18:00

Hi Cllr Mobbs

Yes, it will still take place via Teams.

Kind regards
Vicki Bates

**Strategic Head of Service & Monitoring Officer
(Legal & Democratic Governance)**

Corporate and Support Services
Legal Department
Stockport Council
Room 325
Town Hall
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Stockport
SK1 3XE

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From: Cllr Janet Mobbs <xxxx.xxxx.xxxx@xxxxxxxxx.xxx.xx>
Sent: 19 May 2021 14:18
To: Vicki Bates <xxxxx.xxxx@xxxxxxxxx.xxx.xx>
Subject: Re: External: Summons for the Informal Council Meeting, Thursday, 20th May, 2021, 6.00 pm

Hi Vicki

Thank you for the information. Does this mean that the meeting will go ahead via Teams as planned?

Thanks

Cllr Janet Mobbs

Councillor for Reddish South

From: Vicki Bates <xxxxx.xxxxx@xxxxxxxxxxx.xxx.xx>

Sent: Wednesday, May 19, 2021 1:34:01 PM

To: All Councillors List <xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx@xxxxxxxxxxx.xxx.xx>

Cc: Michael Cullen <xxxxxxxx.xxxxx@xxxxxxxxxxx.xxx.xx>; Damian Eaton

<xxxxxx.xxxxx@xxxxxxxxxxx.xxx.xx>; Pam Smith <xxx.xxxxx@xxxxxxxxxxx.xxx.xx>; Caroline

Simpson <xxxxxxxx.xxxxx@xxxxxxxxxxx.xxx.xx>

Subject: RE: External: Summons for the Informal Council Meeting, Thursday, 20th May, 2021, 6.00 pm

Dear Councillor

Please note that further to the email below regarding the informal council meeting tomorrow at 6pm, Group Leaders have agreed that the informal council meeting will be webcast.

Kind regards
Vicki Bates

**Strategic Head of Service & Monitoring Officer
(Legal & Democratic Governance)**

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From: Democratic Services <xxxxxxxxxxx.xxxxxxxx@xxxxxxxxxxx.xxx.xx>

Sent: 17 May 2021 19:02

Subject: External: Summons for the Council Meeting, Thursday, 20th May, 2021, 6.00 pm

Councillor,

The agenda for the informal meeting due to take place on Thursday, 20 May 2021 has now been published.

Please note that while the agenda lists all the items that are due to be considered by the Annual Council Meeting, the only items that need be discussed are those where there is likely to be disagreement or which would result in political debate.

It is currently planned that the sole item of business for discussion at the meeting will be Agenda Item 11 – 'Cabinet Leader (Leader of the Council)'.

The Summons for Council Meeting, Thursday, 20th May, 2021, 6.00 pm has just been published.

You can view this document when connected to the internal network using the link: [Summons details on intranet web site](#)

To see the publicly available information, follow the link: [Summons details on public web site](#)

Meeting venue: Webcast - Remote Meeting

The following items are included in the summons:

No. Item

1. Election of Mayor
2. Investiture of the Mayoress with her Badge of Office
3. Vote of Thanks to Past Mayor and Past Mayoress
4. Appointment of Deputy Mayor
5. The Deputy Mayoress to be invested with her Badge of Office
6. Vote of Thanks to Past Deputy Mayor and Past Deputy Mayoress
7. Minutes
8. Mayor's Announcements
9. Declarations of Interest
10. Report on the Election of Councillors
11. Cabinet Leader (Leader of the Council)
12. Deputy Cabinet Leader (Deputy Leader of the Council), the Cabinet, and the Allocation of Responsibilities
13. Allocation of Places on Committees in Accordance with the Proportionality Rules

14. Appointment of Scrutiny Committees and Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee
15. Appointment of Ordinary Committees, Area Committees, Working Parties and Other Member Bodies
16. Representation of the Council on Outside Bodies
17. Appointment of Leaders of Political Groups
18. Council Meetings
19. Business Programme
20. Constitution and Scheme of Delegation

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From:
To: [Michael Cullen](#); [Kirsteen Roe](#); [Vicki Bates](#)
Subject: RE: External: Informal council meeting
Date: 19 May 2021 16:15:17

Hi

Here is the coverage in the MEN:

<https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/common-sense-prevailed-crunch-stockport-20632690>

thanks

For a print / design project please visit our portal at:

[Print and design portal](#)

From: Michael Cullen <michael.cullen@stockport.gov.uk>
Sent: 19 May 2021 14:05
To: Kirsteen Roe <kirsteen.roe@stockport.gov.uk>

Subject: RE: External: Informal council meeting

Hi Kirsteen

No the link is still not working – ok as I went direct to the website and I can see it is there – strange!!

Michael Cullen
Deputy Chief Executive (Section 151 Officer) - Stockport Council
Interim Chief Finance Officer – Stockport CCG
Stopford House, 2nd Floor
Stockport
SK1 3XE
Tel 0161 474 4631
Mobile 07866 999 917
<http://www.stockport.gov.uk>

From: Kirsteen Roe <kirsteen.roe@stockport.gov.uk>
Sent: 19 May 2021 13:54

To: Michael Cullen <xxxxxxx.xxxxxx@xxxxxxxxx.xxx.xx >

Cc:

Subject: RE: External: Informal council meeting

Ok – strange. It's working for Vicki now. Can you try again?

FYI

All the best
Kirsteen

Kirsteen Roe
Service Director – Citizen Focus

Tel: 07967 673484

<http://www.stockport.gov.uk>

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From: Michael Cullen <xxxxxxx.xxxxxx@xxxxxxxxx.xxx.xx >

Sent: 19 May 2021 13:53

To: Kirsteen Roe <xxxxxxx.xxx@xxxxxxxxx.xxx.xx >; Vicki Bates <xxxxx.xxxxxx@xxxxxxxxx.xxx.xx >

Subject: RE: External: Informal council meeting

Hi Kirsteen

I just got the same message as Vicki? It may be that I am in the office?

Michael Cullen
Deputy Chief Executive (Section 151 Officer) - Stockport Council
Interim Chief Finance Officer – Stockport CCG
Stopford House, 2nd Floor
Stockport
SK1 3XE
Tel 0161 474 4631
Mobile 07866 999 917
<http://www.stockport.gov.uk>

From: Kirsteen Roe <xxxxxxxx.xxx@xxxxxxxxxxx.xxx.xx>

Sent: 19 May 2021 13:49

To: Pam Smith <xxx.xxxxx@xxxxxxxxxxx.xxx.xx>; Michael Cullen
<xxxxxxxx.xxx@xxxxxxxxxxx.xxx.xx>; Vicki Bates <xxxxx.xxxxx@xxxxxxxxxxx.xxx.xx>

Subject: RE: External: Informal council meeting

To confirm the link has been tested and is working – we are not sure what the issue was that Vicki encountered.

All the best
Kirsteen

Kirsteen Roe
Service Director – Citizen Focus

Tel: 07967 673484

<http://www.stockport.gov.uk>

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From: Kirsteen Roe

Sent: 19 May 2021 13:42

To: Pam Smith <xxx.xxxxx@xxxxxxxxxxx.xxx.xx>; Michael Cullen
<xxxxxxxx.xxx@xxxxxxxxxxx.xxx.xx>; Vicki Bates <xxxxx.xxxxx@xxxxxxxxxxx.xxx.xx>

Subject: FW: External: Informal council meeting

FYI

It is on the web now

<https://www.stockport.gov.uk/news/informal-council-meeting-to-be-webcast>

Damian will tweet a general message and has set up a link to the webcast so we will update our news page with this link

All the best
Kirsteen

Kirsteen Roe
Service Director – Citizen Focus

Tel: 07967 673484

<http://www.stockport.gov.uk>

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