

This document has been prepared by Cllrs Breslin and Marshall and outlines an issue that we wish the council's internal auditors to address. We believe there has been an irregularity in the lettings of council properties.



This matter may need to be passed to external organisations at some point but we believe it's in our best interests for there to be a speedy but thorough internal investigation in the first place.

Dunoon Community Council has for many months been taking a strong view against the proposed Bachan Burn Wind Farm on the hills above Dunoon. A number of their community councillors are vehemently against wind farms, especially this one. The community council decided to hold a public meeting which they knew the developer would not attend and that meeting was, quite clearly, one that demonstrated the anti-wind farm views of the community council. The meeting was to be held in the Queen's Hall on Friday 13 March 2015.

Cllr Breslin received an email from the secretary of Dunoon Community Council on 17 February and this is reproduced below:

From: Willie Lynch [mailto:dcc_secretary@yahoo.co.uk]
Sent: 17 February 2015 13:22
To: Breslin, Michael
Subject: Public Meeting

Mike, would you be so kind as to book the Queens Hall for 13 March 19:00-22:00 for a public meeting regards the Dunoon Wind Farm (PNE call it Bachan Burn), please.

Your help would be much appreciated.

Willie Lynch

Secretary

Dunoon Community Council

Cllr Breslin replied the same day as follows:

On Tuesday, 17 February 2015, 14:17, "Breslin, Michael" <Michael.Breslin@argyll-bute.gov.uk> wrote:

Who is organising this please Willie?

Michael Breslin

Independent Councillor, Ward 7 Dunoon

The reply came the same day as follows:

From: Willie Lynch [mailto:dcc_secretary@yahoo.co.uk]
Sent: 17 February 2015 16:52
To: Breslin, Michael
Subject: Re: Public Meeting

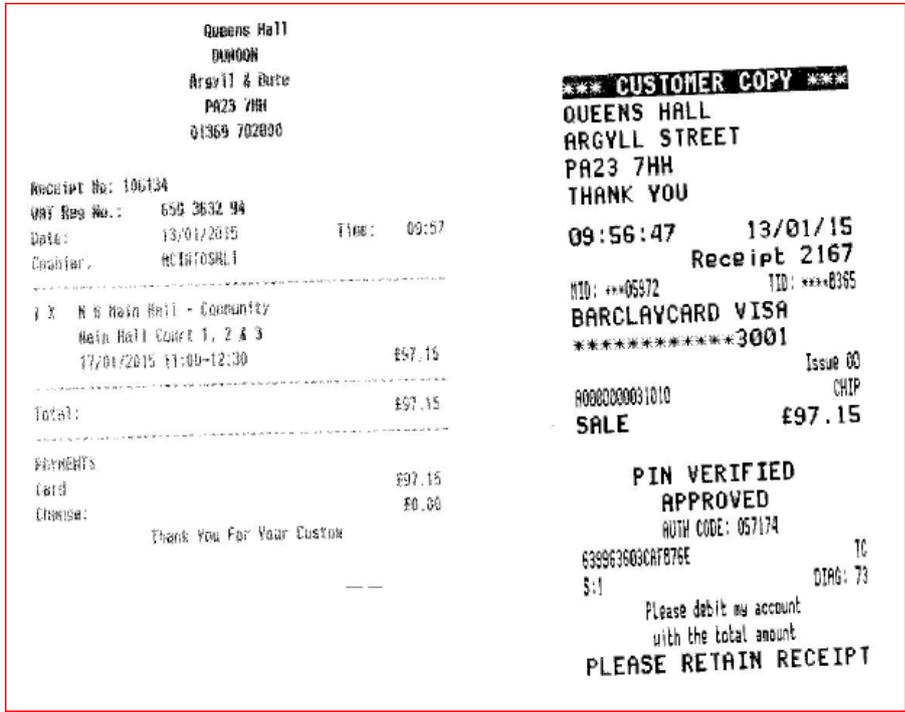
DCC. Its the second attempt to try and get one off the ground

Willie Lynch

Secretary

Dunoon Community Council

The reason Cllr Breslin asked who was organising this was because he was surprised by the question being asked since there didn't seem to be any reason why Dunoon Community Council could not book this themselves. Cllr Breslin had made a booking earlier in 2015 for another public meeting, on 17 January 2015, in connection with the proposed community buyout of Castle Toward. Cllr Breslin had made that booking in the Queen's Hall personally and paid for the hall and equipment hire up front as would normally be expected. The receipt for that booking is pasted below.



The booking being requested by Dunoon Community Council would have been more expensive as the hall hire was longer and there was also the same PA equipment needing to be hired.

On 18 February Cllr Breslin replied to the community council secretary as follows:

On Wednesday, 18 February 2015, 10:25, "Breslin, Michael" <Michael.Breslin@argyll-bute.gov.uk> wrote:

Willie, I assume you're asking me because you assume there won't be a charge for this? I doubt that's the case at all. In fact, on the Castle Toward issue, I booked and paid for the hall in advance.

Regards

Michael Breslin

The reply from Mr Lynch came the same day, as follows:

From: Willie Lynch [mailto:dcc_secretary@yahoo.co.uk]
Sent: 18 February 2015 11:56
To: Breslin, Michael
Subject: Re: Public Meeting

That was my assumption. Dick booked it previously for me.

Willie Lynch
Secretary
Dunoon Community Council



CLlr Breslin then forwarded the above correspondence to the manager of the Queen's Hall the same day, as follows:

From: Breslin, Michael
Sent: 18 February 2015 12:45
To: Whyte, Lorna
Subject: FW: Public Meeting

Lorna, see below please. Is this correct that a meeting for Dunoon CC booked by me would be at no charge?

Thanks

Michael Breslin

The reply from Lorna Whyte was clear and exactly as expected:

From: Whyte, Lorna
Sent: 18 February 2015 13:59
To: Breslin, Michael
Subject: RE: Public Meeting [OFFICIAL]

Classification: OFFICIAL

Hi Michael

Donald MacVicar, Head of Service for Community and Culture, had informed us previously that no Community Councils are given free hire of a Council premise, therefore there will be a charge for your booking.

Kind regards

Lorna Whyte

The reply to Lorna was as follows:

From: Breslin, Michael
Sent: 18 February 2015 14:14
To: Whyte, Lorna
Subject: RE: Public Meeting [OFFICIAL]

Thanks Lorna, that is what I thought.

Regards

Michael Breslin

The same day Cllr Breslin forwarded the reply from Lorna Whyte to Mr Lynch with the following covering words:

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From: Breslin, Michael
Sent: 18 February 2015 14:15
To: 'Willie Lynch'
Subject: RE: Public Meeting

Willie, I asked Lorna Whyte and she said:

Hi Michael

Donald MacVicar, Head of Service for Community and Culture, had informed us previously that no Community Councils are given free hire of a Council premise, therefore there will be a charge for your booking.

Cllr Breslin did not get a reply from Mr Lynch and heard no more about the matter. However, after a meeting in the library in the Castle House on 4 March, he passed by the Queen's Hall and dropped in to ask if the booking had in fact been made. The member of staff behind the desk looked at the booking system and said that yes, the booking had been made and that the costs were to be recharged to Cllr Walsh's office. Cllr Breslin left the Queen's Hall and discussed this by telephone with Cllr Marshall.

On the evening of the meeting Cllrs Breslin and Marshall both attended the meeting but Cllr Walsh did not. At the end of the event Mr Lynch made a point of publicly thanking Cllr Walsh but did not specify why.

At the April meeting of Dunoon Community Council the treasurer, identifying spend in the preceding month, mentioned the costs of the advertisement in the Dunoon Observer but made no mention of any payment for the let of the Queen's Hall.

The concern for both councillors is as follows, assuming that the costs were recharged to some account held by Cllr Walsh's office:

- There was the loss of a 3 figure sum to the council and from an organisation that could well afford to pay for the let of the hall.
- There was a clear irregularity given the ruling from the head of service.
- Cllr Walsh has ingratiated himself with the community council by doing something that no other councillor was able to do.
- Cllr Walsh, by doing what we believe he did, made a statement of support for the opponents of the wind farm, despite the fact that the council would be a statutory consultee for the planning application. Given his position as both ward councillor and council leader, this is unacceptable.

We ask that this matter is investigated promptly, reported back to ourselves as complainants, and appropriate action taken.

Cllr Michael Breslin

Cllr Bruce Marshall