



Brighton Council

11 July 2014

Politicians sit on their hands

BRIGHTON Council says Education Minister Jeremy Rockliff is being disingenuous or is poorly advised in claiming that Council wanted to close the farm school at Brighton.

General Manager Ron Sanderson said since 2010, Brighton Council had repeatedly told the Education Department that it wanted the school farm relocated to a site that conformed with local government by-laws, and had even identified potential farm properties that would provide a superior location.

However the Department and politicians had sat on their hands, forcing the Council to bring the matter to a head.

"For Mr Rockliff to now claim that Council is attempting to close the school farm is simply not true and to use his words, he needs to explain to the community why he, his predecessor and his Department had failed to act," Mr Sanderson said.

"It is interesting to note that now the matter has become public, Mr Rockliff is available to meet Brighton Council when we had been attempting, unsuccessfully, to arrange a meeting with him since the middle of May.

"He claims that the Government has significant concerns regarding the farm, but these concerns weren't there until yesterday.

"It is disturbing that he, as a Minister of the Crown, would describe the by-laws as 'rubbish' when he is responsible for upholding the laws of the land.

"Council is required to enforce these by-laws and all residents are required to comply. You can't have one law for the Education Department and another for the rest of the community."

Mr Sanderson said as Minister Mr Rockliff now had the opportunity to do something that his predecessors could or would not do and that is to establish the farm on an appropriate site for the long term. Clearly, there is strong public support for this.

"As it is we have attempted to facilitate the operation of the school farm and when this was no longer possible due to community concerns and complaints, not unreasonably given it 28 days to come up with a plan and a further six months to relocate the animals to another farm site.

"Brighton Council actually commissioned a study and report to find a better and compliant farm site, and I'm not sure we could have done more.

"It is a pity the Education Department and its political masters did nothing.

"It is now a bit rich for current and past politicians, who repeatedly ignored the by-laws and our

representations to resolve this matter, are now making ill-informed and incorrect claims.

"Brighton Council is more than happy to meet with Minister Rockliff and anyone else interested in developing a positive outcome, but it needs to be approached on the basis of relocating the farm animals to a proper farming location that is not in the middle of a residential area."

Mr Sanderson said suggestions that the Council was seeking to use the current farm site for development were mischievous and totally wrong.

"The land is owned by the Education Department, not Brighton Council, so any development will be determined by the State Government, not Council.

"The bottom line is that we are more than prepared to work with the Minister to resolve this issue. But he needs to stop politicking, get some factual advice and adopt a cooperative rather than confrontational approach."

SOURCE: Brighton Council Facebook page

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