

Is £5,000 wrongful payment matter closed?

by Francis Bennion

Mr Colin Poole, the new Exmouth Town Clerk, has given an ominous indication of his mindset. In the first newsletter he has compiled (published in your issue of 15 March 2012) he first manages to be rude to those who have been justly concerned over the wrongful payment of £5,000 to the Tourist Information Centre. Then he says of this scandalous misuse of public money that an external investigation has been held, by someone unspecified. He adds: 'the conclusion is that it was entirely accidental'. In fact this was not the conclusion.

The true conclusion, which I found after reading the report of the investigation on the Exmouth Town Council's website, was that the payment was made 'due to a flaw in the Councils purchase/payment process' (note the missing apostrophe). The report is in many ways unsatisfactory. It does not identify the persons or body who carried out the investigation. It contains a dire warning against reproducing any part of it. The only human being mentioned by name is Thomas Westcott, who is said to own all the information contained in the report. This turns out to be a firm of chartered accountants and tax advisers.

The report raises numerous other concerns. And Mr Poole has the cheek to end his piece by saying 'the matter is now closed'! As a barrister I would say that the matter is just beginning to be opened.

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References:

None