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Campaigner claims officials are refusing him access to Hythe Green land files

COUNCIL RAPPED IN RECORDS ROW

Report by Bryher Golding Barrett

A CAMPAIGNER fighting to stop a community centre being built on Hythe Green claims the town council is not allowing him to see all the public records about the site.

Garry Muers, chairman of the Hythe Green Preservation Society, says he and other members have asked the council for files on the Green but claims the council has refused to let them see some of them.

But Town council clerk Des Knowles says members of the society have been allowed access to the documents they are entitled to see.

Mr Muers told the *Herald*: "I asked the council for all the paperwork written with reference to the Green which I think I am rightfully allowed to see but I was told I could not see any of it because it was lodged with the solicitor."

"The council is blocking our every move. How can we fight a battle if it is not letting us have the information we need? I want to see the deeds, the covenant and all the relevant dealings between the council and the Horton family who owned the Green in the first place."

"The council seems to be trying to thwart us through whatever means it can. I am backed by the people of Hythe but how can I fight my corner if I can't see records I am entitled to?"

Mr Muers, of Reachfields, Hythe, has now sent a formal letter of complaint to Mr Knowles.

But Mr Knowles insists everything has been done by the book. He said: "I have spoken to the Kent Association of Parish Councils and a Shepway District Council solicitor about this."

"We are not a principal council and under the Local Government Act we are obliged to have all the minutes and accounts available for public inspection but we are not obliged to give members of the public access to confidential files, letters and the like."

"I've told them they can have access to the title deeds and other documents as well as a gesture of goodwill, but those are with the solicitors in Ashford."

"I have told Mr Muers and his friends they can go to the solicitors to see them or arrange for copies to be faxed down. They have also been into the office and I have gone through some of the papers with them. I can't have any Tom, Dick or Harry going through the files because there are confidential documents in there which they are not entitled to see."

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RECORDS ROW

• From Front

"These people might feel that I am being obstructive but I am allowing them to see what they are entitled to see."

"The records are not being withheld and they are not being denied anything."

"I think they are looking for something that doesn't exist saying that the Green was left in trust for the people of Hythe. They want something to prove their case but there isn't anything."

• **HYTHE** Town Council's planning application for the community centre is now being advertised by the district council. Applications, plans and drawings can be viewed at Hythe Town Council's offices in Stade Street.

Any representations or objections to the plan must now be made within 21 days to: The Planning Manager, Shepway District Council, Civic Centre, Castle Hill Avenue, Folkestone.