

Authorities urged to name those who have received summonses

16 councillors pursued over council tax bills

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Robbie Robertson when he was mayor of Peacehaven

SIXTEEN Sussex councillors received reminders or court summonses for not paying council tax last year but some local authorities are refusing to name them, including Brighton and Hove.

Two of the councillors were taken to court by their own employers with Lewes District councillor Robbie Robertson claiming paying council tax was at the bottom of his financial priorities.

Cllr Robertson, a former mayor of Peacehaven, also said he chose to go through the courts before paying the £973 he owed to see how the system worked.

But while some Sussex councils were prepared to name non-paying councillors, Brighton and Hove City Council refused to do so for the one councillor who received a court summons for 2015-16.

The council refused to name the councillor after a request by Private Eye.

But union leaders are calling for the authority to name the councillor, who eventually paid up before their day in court, as a matter of public interest.

Brighton and Hove also issued a reminder to a second councillor who paid before being issued with a summons while Chichester, Mid

Sussex, Eastbourne, Hastings and Rother councils all had to remind councillors to pay their due.

Cllr Robertson, who represents Peacehaven West ward and also works in the Brighton and Hove City Council mayor's office, said: "I went down the court route and then I did pay it. I wanted to see how the system worked and it works extremely well.

"I didn't pay it one month because council tax was the last priority to pay.

"I paid my rent and I paid my water but there wasn't anything left for council tax.

"If people can't afford it, they can't afford it."

Rother District Councillor Genette Stevens of Rye ward, the second councillor named, said: "

If I hadn't paid any council tax at all I would understand but this was a genuine overlook. I thought I had paid.

"I get lots of letters. I didn't even see the court summons.

"I had a lot going on last year. I became a councillor, my uncle died, I had lots of things going on in my life and I was running a pub as well."

GMB branch secretary Mark

continued...

cont

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COUNCILS and their action against non-paying councillors:

Chichester City Council one reminder

Mid Sussex District Council one reminder

Brighton and Hove City Council two reminders, one summons to unnamed councillor, paid before court appearance

Lewes District Council five reminders, one summons to Robble Robertson for £973.55, councillor paid after court.

Eastbourne Borough Council, three reminders

Rother District Council, three reminders, one summons to Gennette Stevens for £136, councillor paid after court.

Hastings Borough Council, one reminder

Turner said: "Absolutely there is a public interest to know which councillor this is.

"You could argue that this is a case of bringing the council into disrepute. You wouldn't necessarily condemn someone for not paying it if they couldn't pay it.

"But you could consider it hypocritical for a councillor to stick their hands up in February and vote through a rise if they won't pay their council tax."

A Brighton and Hove City Council spokeswoman said: "The council does not comment on cases covered by data protection."

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