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# Legality of Jones' speech is questioned

PAUL FERGUSON

PETERSFIELD Town Council is facing complaints after allowing a political candidate to speak at a key meeting in the run-up to an election.

Last week's Annual Town Meeting saw police removing an activist and claims the meeting was illegal.

Hampshire Police & Crime Commissioner (PCC) Donna Jones had been asked to give an update on the return of the town's police station.

It seems the council was warned her appearance could be problematic due to 'purdah' restrictions on announcements that might affect an election campaign.

And Labour veteran Howard Linsley made his voice heard: "I believe this meeting is illegal," said the former Liss parish councillor.

"If you have a meeting during purdah, where



Donna Jones said a planning application to convert the former Barclays Bank unit on The Square has been submitted, and blamed the delay on leasehold arrangements. Her appearance was not without controversy, though

one candidate speaks, you have to, by law and

by protocol, invite all four candidates."

There were cries of 'let him speak' from a supporter before the independent councillor Jamie Matthews defended PTC and told Mr Linsley he had no right to speak, not being a parishioner.

The council has insisted the meeting was legal.

"We're not breaching purdah and we are not conducting a campaign meeting," said mayor, Cllr JC Crissey.

"The people in Petersfield are entitled to hear an update about their police station."

Martin Tod, agent for the Liberal Democrat PCC candidate, Prad Bain, told the *Post* that a complaint had been lodged.

He said: "If I was a Liberal Democrat taxpayer in Petersfield I would be angry because my taxes have just been used to promote Donna Jones, during an election period, and that's not right."