

Council - 9th September 2021

Notice of Motion

Standing opposed to the censorship of Gabriella Hirst's 'An English Garden'

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council notes that:

Freedom of expression is essential to the arts: laws and rights exist which underpin this freedom.

The piece 'An English Garden' does not pose a risk to public safety, nor does it constitute hate speech in any way. The artwork is not in conflict with any UK legislation.

Our local history is of great importance to the residents of Southend, and unpleasant truths should not be concealed from public view.

The practice of censoring an artist on the grounds that their work criticises the UK Government is unethical, unacceptable, and highly dangerous.

The piece's censorship has received considerable national press coverage, so disgraceful was this.

The manner in which this matter has unfolded may well have been a breach of the spirit, if not the letter, of the Councillors' code of conduct.

Bullying and intimidation in this manner is utterly unacceptable, and measures should be considered to prevent this from ever happening again.

Local public support for the return of 'An English Garden' is overwhelming.

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council therefore resolves:

To condemn the censorship of art in this way.

To uphold the right of the artist for freedom of expression.

To work to the permanent reinstalment of Gabriella Hirst's 'An English Garden'.

To work in collaboration with Arts Council England to ensure that artists, exhibitors, and curators are protected in the future.

Proposer

Cllr Aston Line

Seconders

Cllr Martin Berry

Cllr Laurie Burton

Cllr Matt Dent

Cllr Stephen George

Cllr Anne Jones

Cllr Kay Mitchell

Cllr Cheryl Nevin

Cllr Kevin Robinson