

## **Chiefs barred me from meetings**

Jun 29 2007

**by Sandy McKenzie, Evening Gazette**

A BAN has been put on a Middlesbrough councillor attending meetings of Erimus Housing's area forums.

The forums are a place for tenants, local councillors and Erimus officers to discuss local housing and environmental issues.

Councillor Brian Hubbard, an independent councillor in the Beckfield Ward, has been told to no longer attend area forum meetings because some tenants complained of "his negative and disruptive behaviour".

Cllr Hubbard is bewildered at the action taken by Erimus, which took over Middlesbrough Council's 12,000 homes in 2004.

Cllr Hubbard said: "If Erimus have had complaints about me, why have they not come to me and discussed them? There is nothing in the minutes of the meetings saying I have been disruptive."

He had appealed against it but that has been dismissed and he has approached the housing ombudsman.

"Erimus has set a dangerous precedent," he said.

Park End independent councillor Kevin Morby said he would no longer be attending forum meetings, as a protest against Cllr Hubbard's ban.

"I thought we lived in a democracy," said Cllr Morby.

Susie Thompson, Erimus's director of housing, said: "Councillors attend these meetings by invitation, not by right. Therefore, if residents at the meetings feel they are being undermined or the meeting is being taken over by someone who is not an Erimus Housing tenant, they have the right to ask that person not to attend.

"Residents had complained about Councillor Hubbard's behaviour and asked for him not to attend any more meetings. We are committed to resident involvement and meeting the needs of our residents where possible and therefore we made the request on their behalf," she said.

Erimus said Cllr Hubbard can still raise concerns with them by contacting Erimus or by using its One Stop Shop to deal with queries.