

Hibs' fans anger at Leith Councillor's online petition



Hibs' fans have criticised Leith councillor Lewis Ritchie who set up an online petition to attract support for the Easter Road club to become an accredited Living Wage employer without allowing the club to respond in advance.

Supporters flooded social media sites angrily responding to the councillor's actions whilst questioning his motive and congratulating the club for their quick response to the matter,

Had Mr Ritchie contacted the club in advance, he would have learned that the club already pay staff the living wage and his campaign elicited a strongly worded response from Hibs' chief executive Leeann Dempster which she posted on Twitter today.

Ms Dempster said: "Everyone at the club was surprised that a local, elected official chose to 'go public' before allowing any opportunity to respond.

"You sent me an email on February 22, which arrived in my email inbox at 4.12pm.

"Your Facebook 'petition' was launched on the same day at 3.59pm, in which you said you had written to me, and in response to comments gave the impression that reasonable time had been allowed for a reply.

"Hibernian took the decision some time ago to pay the living wage. All of our contracted staff now earn the living wage and that has been the case for more than a year.

"It is fair to say that we are very surprised at the way you

have chosen to go about this.

“You literally launched this campaign before your email hit our inbox. We also note that this petition focuses solely on Hibernian.

“There are a number of business in Leith and North Edinburgh, some of them larger employers than Hibernian, and it would be interesting to know how many of these you have dealt with in a similar vein?”

Mr Ritchie subsequently posted a copy of a letter of apology.

He said: “My intention had been to create some level of public interest on the issue so that my request to meet with me and representatives from the Accredited Living Wage initiative might have been met with more success.

“This approach has been criticised, with many suggesting that I should have waited for a response from the club before actively campaigning on the issue.

“As someone with nothing but respect for Hibernian and its supporters, I agree this would have been a better approach.”