

# Mayor defends use of closed sessions

CASSOWARY Coast Mayor Bill Shannon has defended the council after an accusation it was discussing too many agenda items in closed sessions.

Former Johnstone Shire deputy-mayor George Pervan made the claim after causing a commotion in a council meeting on Thursday by demanding to speak and, when told he was breaching meeting protocol, branding the local authority a "one-man band" led by Cr Shannon.

Mr Pervan told councillors they were "not heard, not seen". Outside the meeting, he said he was concerned about the number of items that were being discussed behind closed doors.

Cr Shannon lashed out yesterday about the outburst. "If anything, it will remind ratepayers,

if they'd forgotten, why Johnstone Shire Council was dismissed," he said.

Breaches of protocol were among the concerns when Local Government Minister Andrew Fraser sacked Mr Pervan and all seven other Johnstone Shire councillors two-and-a-half years ago.

The dismissals also followed council infighting, its sacking of the chief executive officer and allegations of bullying and biased decision-making.

The present council has recently averaged one confidential agenda item a meeting.

Cr Shannon said councillors were following the Local Government Act in discussing items behind closed doors when they involved legal cases or "factors that may enable an individual to gain financial benefit if known".

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