

-----Original Message-----

From: contec [mailto:contec@btconnect.com]

Sent: 25 June 2009 11:12

To: Rowe, Gill

Subject: STANDARDS BOARD.24-06-09

To: Standards Committee. WLBC
Ref.INV 2 -LG5/13-Decission 2.

Statement in support of District Councillor Doreen Stephenson

Complaint from Cllr.Marilyn Westley alleging breach of Code of Conduct by Cllr.D.Stephenon

- 1) Failed to treat Parish Clerk with respect
- 2) Accused the Parish Clerk of using delaying tactics with regard to the submission of tenders.

I attended the meeting of H.P.C. held 7th.August in my capacity as Parish Councillor. During the meeting I sat next to Cllr.D.Stephenon and could hear and see the proceedings quite clearly.

In considering if Cllr.D.Stephenon was disrespectful towards the Clerk the following details are relevant.

- Mrs.Westley who did not attend the meeting and appears to rely largely on the minutes written by the complainant and hearsay.
- The Clerk who is a J.P. left the meeting in a visibly shaken condition and looked quite ill.
- Within hours of the meeting the Clerk sought legal advice from WLDC on procedure for making a complaint. It may be the case that the Clerk had a complaint in mind before the minutes of the meeting were created.
- At no time during the meeting did the Clerk present the minutes for initialling by the Chairman.
- Several members of the public questioned as to why 5 or more estimates had been sought as this would only delay the process and in any case 3 estimates usually suffice.
- Cllr.D.Stephenon did not suggest that the Clerk was using delaying tactics in fact she merely asked why the estimates had not been brought to the meeting.

In my view Cllr.D.Stephenon was not disrespectful towards the Clerk and in fact only spoke to her briefly. Others in fact admitted to remarks alleged to have been made by Cllr.D.Stephenon.

Cllr.John Stephenson
24th.June 09

Note.

The meeting of 7th.August was poorly conducted and from the outset the public were incensed by the Chairman's attitude and asked to know the reasons for this about face on what had been agreed 6 months previously. The Chairman referred to a paper, which was apparently to be handed out **after** the single resolution was voted on. The paper had not been circulated with the Agenda and Summons to the meeting and at least 3 members were unaware of the existence of this document. A number of residents, knowledgeable in meeting procedures, were of the opinion that the Chairman was exceeding her authority. A guide to proper procedure for Chairman was handed to the Clerk, but she did not attempt to guide the Chairman. Unfortunately from that point on the proceedings could not be considered to be a proper council meeting as the Chairman had lost control.

Note

E-mail from Clerk to Terry Broderick

It is clear from the text that the Clerk was still disturbed by the events at the previous days meeting of HPC. As a close observer, with notes, I wish to submit the following comments.

1) The Clerks unfounded use of the term "Mob rule" is unfortunate. The people of Halsall gathered to question the behaviour of their representatives who seemed intent on acting against the publics clearly expressed wishes.

Use of the word " Tirade" shows bias; there was no tirade. Cllr.D.Stephenson explained that as the elected representative she had a duty to ensure that the public were informed.

2) The statement that Cllrs to not understand their duties is derogatory and insulting.

3) Two members of the public asked questions that were not properly answered.

4) The petition was not slapped on the table; this is deliberate choice of words to give a false impression of aggressive behaviour. Cllr.D.Stephenson was asked about the usefulness of a petition and she thought it might have some impact with the council. In the event the Clerk appears to suggest there is some fault with such an expression of public feelings.

6) The public were highly incensed and Cllr.D.Stephenson twice attempted to calm the situation and was each time told to stop. On the third occasion Cllr.D.Stephenson said as the elected representative she would have her say.

7) Untrue.

8) Cllr.D.Stephenson asked questions only. No accusations were made, but the question remains why did the Clerk not bring the estimated to the meeting.

9) The comments regarding the Trust, Parish Council and Pete

Cooley shows a lack of understanding that she earlier accuses others of.

The remark about fire officers seems pointless in the context of her complaint.

September Meeting of HPC.

Cllr.D.Stephenson brought a number of amendments to the minutes of the August meeting including a denial that she had accused the Clerk of delaying tactics at the August meeting.

At a vote the members against the MUGA voted en-block and the amendment was defeated. This has resulted in minutes that do not correctly record the meeting.

Note

After the September meeting it was revealed that Mrs.Atherton did not resign and was " still our legal advisor". The claim that Mrs.Atherton was in some way forced out of her position as RFO to Halsall PC. , as an aftermath of the meeting 7th.August, is deliberately misleading and the attempt to link this to Cllr.D.Stephenson alleged conduct is deplorable.

Cllr.John Stephenson

24-06-09