

Squirrels Run

10<sup>th</sup> July 2015

Dear Mike,

Well I have now returned as a councillor for two months and I am sure that you will agree that I have been on my best behaviour. That being said I remain very critical of certain aspects of the Council's activities. Rest assured that I only want what is best for the parishioners of Stratfield Mortimer; if I am wrong on anything I will admit it and if I am right I will expect change. There are two ways that we can proceed. Either both you and Julian can work together with me in a mature manner or alternatively I will be raise controversial agenda items and write critical letters to auditors; we have the summer break in front of us and the choice is yours.

I append a number of possible heads for discussion:

**1 Procedures.**

Your three main procedures contain incorrect amendments and are poor. We had a verbal agreement that the Code of Conduct issues would be resolved within three months of my signing the acceptance of office form in May. I have offered to update them and that offer remains open.

**2.1 Confidential meetings.**

The manner that these are held are wrong and possibly make any decisions reached invalid. Errors include:

1. No public resolution to exclude the public - SO 30.1.
2. No reason given to exclude the public – SO 30.1.
3. Minutes of previous meetings are not circulated and merely read out.
4. Minutes are not agreed by members – statutory obligation.
5. There is no resolution to approve and the minutes are therefore not properly signed
6. Minutes are not properly numbered – statutory obligation.
7. Minutes are not written in accordance with sound Data Protection principles.
8. Important and controversial documents are not distributed and merely read out.

2.2 A difficulty is that I can see that things are carried out incorrectly, but I am reluctant to put forward proposals because they may be at odds with any recommendation from NALC. To get around both this and para. 1, I would like to be given the Council's access details to both the NALC and SLCC web sites.

2.3 I am considering taking the CLCA clerking qualification which must be a benefit to the Council; it will be unnecessarily difficult with access to the above.

**3 Breach of Financial Regulations.**

Regulation 7.2 refers to payment of salaries and states that they can be made outside the regular cycle *'providing that each payment is reported to and ratified by the next available Council Meeting'*.

Chieveley Parish Council's Financial Regulations were updated in 2014 and the wording of Regulation 7.2 is identical.

You are failing to report these payments at all and it is therefore difficult to see how the council can claim to have robust financial controls.

**4 Cost of Clerking.**

For 2014/5 the cost of clerking is broadly £33k, last year it was £27k and other councils of similar size are spending £10k. Am I the only person who thinks that this is totally unacceptable and that the public should be openly advised of the facts?

You may care to revisit my letters of October 2014 and March 2015. You can then reconsider whether there is any reason why I should not state this publicly on the MVP Facebook page.

**5 Clerk's pension.**

In 2007 the Clerk was on a 'money purchase' scheme with her paying 5% of her gross pay and the Council matching it. I now understand that this has been transferred to a 'final salary' scheme. I guess that this is the Local Government Pension Scheme which was introduced by Statutory Instrument in 2008. You may note that it is optional and not mandatory for Councils to join it. From CPALC I understand this is costing 30% of gross salary and that the Parishioners could have significant ongoing obligations. I give you advance warning of three questions that I will ask:

1. At the time Keith Davies was chairman and on matters such as this he by-passed the main council and took executive decisions through the FGP Committee. Did the full council authorise the joining of this scheme and did it appreciate the financial implications?
2. In order to join the scheme there needs to be a 'Statutory Resolution' which amongst other things has to be publically posted for 28 days. Was this ever done?
3. Have pension contributions been paid in respect of non-contractual overtime?

**6 Two possible criminal acts by the Clerk.**

I previously raised this with you. Is it still your position that the Council will take no actions and leave it to me? I find this extraordinary.

I sincerely hope that over the next six weeks we can discuss this in a rational manner.

Yours truly

Chris.