

RESPONSE TO Mr CREE QUESTIONS AT COUNCIL MEETING 30TH JANUARY 2019

Q – Mr Cree - I have two short questions relating to Item 4.1: To discuss and agree the Councils consolidated 2019/20 Budget. Under Item 168.1 of the full SPC meeting dated the 15th January 2018 councillors were to 'To confirm Budget and Precept request to HDC'. Councillor Rodney Goldsmith and Councillor Sarah Sullivan asked during that meeting how was it possible for councillors to confirm the 2018/2019 budget if they were not permitted to actually see the final budget figures and they therefore objected. My first question is 'By making their legitimate concerns known were Councillors Goldsmith and Sullivan acting as diligent and responsible councillors?' At the full SPC meeting dated the 18th June 2018 I asked why there was no budget set aside for the Steyning neighbourhood plan when in fact, unknown to myself, residents and most councillors, a budget of £16,400 had at some time been allocated in Line 4073. Councillor Muncey, the then joint leader of the Steyning neighbourhood plan later stated that she had no recollection of any figure of £16,400 ever being discussed during budget formulation. My second question is 'Under Line 4073 was I acting as a diligent and responsible resident by bringing the Council to proper account in the public interest on the previously undeclared £16,400?

Response:

Cllrs. Sullivan and Goldsmith attended an all-councillor budget meeting on the 11th January 2018 where the budget was discussed and figures for the precept agreed.

The overall budget and precept was subsequently agreed at the full Council meeting of the 15th January 2018 by 11 for and 1 against. The minutes state there were 12 attendees so I cannot confirm which of the two councillors objected.

The clerk has already responded to you on the background to this decision, on the 12th February 2019.

You are entirely entitled to take the view that both you and the Cllrs. mentioned acted diligently and responsibly, but it would be inappropriate for me to single out any Councillor, when the Council acts collectively. Or, for that matter any member of the public, over other members of the public.

RESPONSE TO Mr CREE EMAIL 16TH JANUARY 2019

In Item 5.1 of the Agenda it states that Councillor Lloyd is 'to provide examples of scapegoating to resident.' I have two further examples for Councillor Lloyd.

1. Councillor Lloyd is SPC Chairman and volunteered to become a full member of the Steyning Neighbourhood Plan (NP) Steering Group. He was therefore in an ideal position to ensure that the Steering Group had a locum minute taker since early 2018, that NP minutes were presented to the SPC on time and also to fully report NP progress directly to the SPC when other Steering Group members were not able to be present at SPC meetings. There is clear

evidence on the audio record that he distanced himself from these failings, an example of scapegoating others.

2. In March 2018 the SPC FoI Panel and other SPC councillors made a submission to the Information Commissioner's Office that scapegoated three diligent SPC councillors and three Steyning residents for the past failings of the SPC and in particular the failed SWAB neighbourhood plan. The false allegations made within that submission were not made available to Steyning residents or even to the individuals concerned. If the SPC is confident about the factual content of what they have written they should make that content available to the public in full without delay. If they are not prepared to do so then it will simply confirm that they have chosen to cover up their own failings by scapegoating six Steyning residents to the ICO in secret.'

If my short piece of correspondence is not read out then that fact will simply add to the evidence of SPC selectively scapegoating.

I find it ironic that I am accused of scapegoating others when his email is a blatant attempt to do the same thing. He states: *'there is clear evidence on the audio record that he distanced himself from these failings...'* Is there? This is his opinion. I suggest that members of the public listen to the recording and form their own opinion. I have never distanced myself from any involvement with the NP committee and I suggest that this is a clear attempt by him to impugn my integrity in front of my fellow councillors and members of the public.

Further evidence of the scapegoating of me: In a recent letter to certain Councillors who formed an FOI panel, he made a number of statements which included the following; ".....whether he has been instructed by the current SPC Committee Chairs, Councillors Lloyd,(he goes on to include 3 other Councillors' names).. to keep that important correspondence from you even though you have equal standing as a duly elected SPC councillor."

Then goes on to state: "It is notable that the names of Councillors Lloyd, (I have redacted the other Councillors' names) are missing from that list even though it is very probable that one or more of the them were directly involved with the detailed drafting of the contents of the submission to the ICO."

Both these statements are I believe libellous as he provides no credible evidence in support of his allegation against me and relies solely on conjecture and innuendo and in doing so is again, I suggest, attempting to impugn my integrity in front of my fellow Councillors and members of the public.

For the record, I have never, I repeat never, instructed the Clerk to withhold correspondence on any matter to do with the ICO submission as in fact, I had no involvement with it, nor with the FOI panel. The first I knew of the submission to the ICO was after it had been submitted - to which the Clerk will attest.

This resident knows very well, as he has threatened legal action against individual Councillors before, the law of the land applies equally to all and I shall expect a full apology and a retraction of his allegations against me.

As to the remaining part of the question; He is also aware of the council's attempts to resolve the minute taking at the Neighbourhood Plan committee meetings and our search for a locum. This has only just been resolved and the 'locum', will clerk the next meeting.

Furthermore, it was discussed that the chair or, Vice-Chair would appear at all Council meetings and where they have not been able to, either Cllr. Trundle – who had volunteered to take the minutes or, I, would speak on the NP process.

On the second question, he states the following: *"In March 2018 the SPC Fol panel and other councillors made a submission to the Information Commissioners Office....."*. The letter from the ICO was sent to all those mentioned in the submission and, under instruction from the ICO, was Private & Confidential.

On the issue of scapegoating, I was also asked by another resident to provide some evidence of this. At Full Council in December 2018 the following question was asked:

'Since SWAB collapsed, I have been scapegoated for its collapse and I assume item 4 is going to be more of the same. At Thursday's Bramber council meeting it was said that the AiRs housing survey evidence upon which SWAB based all its work was fundamentally flawed and that this had been pointed out in December 2016 (by HDC's Senior Neighbourhood planning officer –Norman Kwan) and these same flaws had been pointed out by me two years previously – Cllr Muggridge ignored this and pressed ahead. In the light of this Statement from HDC, will SPC now distance itself from the false claims by Cllrs Muggridge and Northam that HDC did not criticise SWAB's work or approach or evidence?'

Again, a Councillor is being singled out for blame without any credible evidence, but more importantly this resident is fully aware that Cllr. Muggridge was one member of the SWAB steering group which comprised members from Ashurst, Bramber and Wiston. So, accusing Cllr. Muggridge of personally ignoring a comment made by a member of the public without credible evidence that he did so, or was able to single-handedly, is scapegoating that Councillor.

Cllr. Muggridge resigned 11 months prior to HDC's alleged statement.

There has already been a full rebuttal of the rest of the allegation contained in the question in an attachment to the minutes of Full Council of December 2018. However, for the record: At no time had HDC criticised SWAB and I have had that confirmed by the NP coordinator at HDC.

Any allegation that SWAB collapsed because of the threat of judicial review or, incorrect procedures is misleading and not true.