

Hello Jonathan
Cc Emma, David and Sue for information

As you will be aware as of today (or so I've been told) I am no longer a Councillor, though I do remain a resident of the Borough. There are however a few issues that I felt I needed to update you on or bring to your attention before I log out of my emails for the last time.

Council meetings and complaint to the police

- As you know I didn't get back to you following your response to the concerns I raised with regards to the Borough Council meeting in March and the cancellation of the scheduled April meeting. I had drafted a response which I am still prepared to share with you if you want to see it but I held back from sending it while I took advice on some of my concerns by which time other issues had come to light that were of a more pressing nature. This led to stop using my Councillor emails and to withdraw from any and all engagement with Council Officers except in a public forum.
- I believe the police spoke to you last week about the offences I reported to them regarding Council meetings. While I am not going to say anything about those offences in this email, as I don't know who may be able to read them, I hope you understand why these issues led to me preferring not to communicate with anyone in the Council. As yet I don't know what action the police and CPS will take but this is an extremely serious matter that I am not prepared to let rest. Should you wish to discuss this with me please don't hesitate to give me a call.
- I also intend to submit a formal complaint under the Code of Conduct about Cllr Hay's behaviour towards me during the last Council meeting and the video that was made by the Council for Local Democracy Week which implied that Cllr Francis and myself behave badly and shout in meetings which is something I have never done. This was an official council video and several members of the public have already expressed their concerns about the way it was cut to show certain people in a bad light. I am also aware that a number of members of the public have complained about the way the Mayor treated me.
- I began drafting the complaint which included a significant amount of evidence about the intimidation I had been subjected to by Cllr McCabe but this was taking quite some time. Cllr McCabe regularly abused his council position and used council resources in his attempts to exert power over me. I told the Monitoring Officer about this in a phone call and I believed she understood why it would take time for me to finalise my complaint but it wasn't long before I realised there was no point in bothering.
- In October meetings of Borough Council returned to the Council Chamber. This was the first meeting after my resignation from the Labour Group and the Monitoring Officer had checked whether I remained a Labour Councillor or whether I was to be identified under some other category. As I was, and still am, a Member of the Labour Party I remained a Labour Councillor throughout my term of office.
- When I arrived for the first meeting in the Council Chamber I noticed my seat had been changed and I was now in the front row. I had no concerns with this initially as it actually enabled me to sit more comfortably which given my reasonable adjustments have never been made for any meeting outside of Temple Park was something of a relief.
- Unfortunately for me I didn't check where other people were sitting when I came into the Council Chamber and either I didn't notice Cllr McCabe or he arrived after me. I was upset as this meeting was held just days after the death of my friend, mentor and former Mayoress Sue Forster but attended as I had a motion on the agenda.

- It was only after speaking to a motion that I realised Cllr McCabe was now sitting almost directly behind me. Although there was a row in between there was no one allocated to this seat meaning Cllr McCabe was not only sat directly behind me but was towering directly over me whenever he got up to speak. This was extremely intimidating and made me feel incredibly uncomfortable in meetings. It also made me think there was no point in submitting a formal complaint if this is what happens when the Council has been told by the police that Cllr McCabe needs to stay away from me.

Issues during the election

- During the election a number of current Councillors have been extremely offensive to residents and myself on social media. Cllr Gibson was extremely nasty towards one Councillor because she lives in Jarrow and was awful to several others. He also said I belonged at a Tupperware party rather than a political party. Again I believe complaints have or are being submitted in relation to this.
- Cllr Purvis was even more offensive towards several members of the public and even told lies about [REDACTED] who is no longer around to defend herself. [REDACTED] are extremely upset about this and despite asking for her to withdraw the comments and apologise in the same forum as the comments were made Cllr Purvis had done nothing to rectify the situation. Complaints under the Code of Conduct are likely to be made about this behaviour but [REDACTED] have no confidence that this will be dealt with properly as complaints against this particular Councillor never make it past the informal stage.
- Former Leader of the Council Iain Malcolm has been actively campaigning in at least one Ward in the Borough. He has been telling residents that he will be exonerated of all charges against him and that he will be back as Leader of the Council next year. Cllr Leask who is the councillor he was campaigning on behalf of has also been telling residents that she only stood again to keep the seat warm for him and that she will stand down prior to next year's elections. While this in itself is not breaking any rules the fact that Mr Malcolm, the brother of sitting Councillors Ed Malcolm and Susan Traynor has been collecting postal votes from elderly people in the Ward to supposedly post on their behalf is at the very least inappropriate and potentially a breach of election rules. I have also been told that Cllr Ed Malcolm did the same thing in Simonside and Rekendyke Ward. Given that there have been allegations in the past that Mr Malcolm took postal votes, opened them and only submitted the ones that voted the way he wanted them to I have concerns that this has happened again. Someone needs to check if either of the Malcolm brothers entered sheltered or other older people's accommodation owned by the council or managed by South Tyneside Homes and determine whether they did take away postal votes. I know Labour Group Councillors offered to deliver postal votes for people in other Wards and this is totally unacceptable.

As I have tried to say to you on a number of occasions I have little or no confidences in the majority of Councillors, a number of senior council officers or the council as a whole.

Today I have been informed by several people that there is a special meeting of the Labour Group tonight to change the Community Area Forums (CAFs). This is clearly because the Labour Group know longer have control of one of the CAFs. If this is allowed to happen it will be seen as an attempt to subvert democracy and will, once again, bring the whole council into disrepute. As a resident of this Borough that is not something that I am prepared to sit silently by and allow to happen and I will, if I believe Officers are being complicit in this, be reporting the Council to the Secretary of State and the Local Government Ombudsman.

When you were appointed I genuinely hoped things would change. I had heard good things about you from friends and colleagues in other areas who said you would do the right thing. Unfortunately this has not been my experience. You have taken things at face value, accepted the things you are told by the Leader, the Cabinet and Senior Officers without ever questioning why people in this Borough are so distrustful of the Council.

I love my town, for the last four years I have worked hard with honesty and integrity to change things for the better even when it put my own health and wellbeing at risk. I was a very popular Councillor with local residents as is demonstrated by the cards, messages, phone calls and flowers that I have been receiving since Thursday, I chose to stand down as a Councillor for the sake of my family, but that that doesn't mean I won't continue to hold the Council to account. And if this means sharing speaking out publically when something isn't right then I won't hesitate to do so even if that means putting my neck on the line again.

Should you wish to discuss any of the above with me I can be contacted by email at [REDACTED] or on [REDACTED].

I wish you the best of luck going forward – I think you're going to need it.

Regards

Angela Hamilton LLB (Hons), MCIPR

Co-operative Council of the Year 2019.

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