

NORTON-ON-DERWENT TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Extra-ordinary meeting of Town Council held in the Council Chamber, 84b Commercial Street, Norton-on-Derwent on Monday 12th June 2023 at 7pm.

PRESENT Councillors; D Keal (Mayor), M Brampton, P Farndale, R King, D Lloyd-Williams, A Spencer, H Spencer, S Shaw and J Vale.

IN ATTENDANCE C Eade (Assistant Clerk)

APOLOGIES Councillors L Burr MBE, and I Conlan.

PUBLIC Four members of the public

23/23. EXCLUSION TO THE PUBLIC/PRESS

Members discussed whether the circumstances of the meeting warranted the exclusion of the public and press.

RESOLVED – That all members agreed that the public could stay.

24/23. INTRODUCTIONS AND PROCEDURE

Members and Public in attendance each took turns to introduce themselves and all were informed of the council's complaints procedure and the format of the meeting.

25/23. GROUNDS FOR COMPLAINT

The complainant put their complaints to the town council, and then councillors were given the opportunity to ask questions to the complainant. The complainant was given the opportunity to have last word.

The complainant and members of the public left at 7.45pm.

26/23. PRIVATE DISCUSSION

Members discussed each of the eight complaints and resolved as follows: -

1. There is no service level agreement with the council in terms of complaints and response times which does not help members of the public to be able to make complaints. (This should be open and transparent, and complaints should be embraced, not responded to in such a way as the Mayor / Councillors have done so far to me).

Council response:

The council has followed, promptly and without deviation, its own complaints procedure. The council agrees that the procedure would be improved by specifying timescales and that the council web site should draw attention to the ability to make complaints. The council is acting to implement these points. The complaint is therefore accepted on these points and action is being taken.

2. You as a council have been discriminative to me in terms of my disability and have offered me no empathy whatsoever in my response. (You also have shown so far as two councillors/Mayor, you are completely out of your depth

when such a complaint comes to yourselves, you can't handle it and instead of taking time to consider a more empathetic and reasonable response, you start going on personal crusades /agendas to try and explain yourselves but are only making matters worse).

Council response:

This complaint should be referred to the Monitoring Officer.

3. The Mayor on behalf of the council/councillors covered up a number of serious issues at a council meeting last year and no feedback was ever provided back to me on these issues.

Council response:

This complaint should be referred to the Monitoring Officer.

4. The councillors have not carried out a fair and transparent co-option application and the meeting minutes show this (published online). (You are making things up as you go-along and have tried to 'dig-yourselfes' out of this since, with inaccurate information. It is simply not acceptable to say "we will have a policy going forward" and then effectively hang someone out to dry when you conveniently look for someone else to fit into your 'group'). As I said, I believe there is no-chance of me ever becoming a councillor for the reasons already explained.

Council response:

To confirm that the council does not accept that its co-option procedure has been unfair or that councillors "are making things up as you go-along". While the written policy is yet to be formulated and recorded, the council sought to act in precisely the way determined for the preceding co-option when the election did not result in a full council. At that time it was made very clear that the council sought to achieve maximum publicity in order to attract a field of candidates. The council was not satisfied that this was done for the current co-option and for that reason instructed the clerk to further publicise the vacancy. The council is following the relevant statutes and its own policies in every respect. The complaint is therefore rejected.

5. The Mayor/councillors have insinuated on at least one occasion on email to me that I should have been getting updates from the clerk directly of which as professionals in our household we don't work that way and keep business and personal matters separate and you should know that will mean a conflict of interest. (It is my belief that at least one person in this group is trying to discredit the clerk / set him up to whom I have a personal relationship with. For the benefit of all parties in any responses, I am married to Stuart, and he is my husband).

Council response:

This complaint should be referred to the Monitoring Officer.

6. I believe the Mayor to be dishonest and has not declared a personal / knowing friendship with the most recent appointment. (I also believe you all as councillors were not even told of all the points, I raised last year of which you should have been, in your position as councillors which again is dishonest by the Mayor. If you have been told all the issues, please advise what they are).

Council response:

This complaint should be referred to the Monitoring Officer.

7. I am concerned that your email systems may not be safe (only on what you have been saying) but I also believe these points about emails are a 'smokescreen' as many of you have been in post long enough, yet some have not even been composed correctly, emails not being copied to all recipients. (It is my belief that these excuses of not responding to emails are in fact most likely lies. Why is it you don't have the 'technical information? Staff are working - you are really hanging yourself out to dry here, aren't you? What sort of a show are you running as a councillor Mr Brampton?).

Council response:

To confirm that the council acknowledges that problems have been experienced with email services. It is a concern for the council and may lead to the clerk being asked to find an alternative provider or make changes in the way members of the public contact councillors.

The council is acting on this matter, but it would be interference in the work of officers for councillors to be directly involved in this uninvited. The council accepts that there is some validity to the complaint, but asserts that it was an administrative failure that could not have been anticipated and is being dealt with.

8. I believe (at least some of) the councillors are in each other's pockets.

Council response:

The council rejects the claim that "councillors are in each other's pockets".

27/23. ADDITIONAL COMPLAINTS

All members agreed to not respond to two further complaints as these had not been received in writing prior to the meeting.

28/23. RESPONSE TO COMPLAINANT

All members agreed to the responses to each of the complaints points and that the formal response is to be issued to the complainant within 7 days of the town council receiving the complaint.

Meeting closed at 9.05pm.