

Ian Bigwood

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 26 February 2012 19:19
To: Ian Bigwood
Subject: Re: Community Governance Review

Dear Mr Bigwood

Thank you for providing the information relating to the Governance Review, I have circulated this to my councillors for their information. Please note the following comments regarding inaccurate points in the main theme, ie affordable housing, raised by many of the emails/letters you have received.

One of the parishioners' emails received contains a statement which has absolutely no truth in it. It relates to the co-option of the councillor after the last election. It states the councillor was 'co-opted back on because he was in favour of a contentious issue'. This is totally inaccurate and the following should be taken into account.

- a. Only councillors, the clerk and candidates attended the selection meeting so it is difficult to know how they came to their conclusion.
- b. The co-opted councillor (Cllr Campbell) was ***unanimously*** appointed on 1 June 2011 by ***all*** eight of the other members of the council in view of his experience and knowledge of current legislation having served on the previous council.
- c. The statement as to the reason for his co-option could infer that he was guilty of pre-determination on an issue, this is not the case and I provide an extract of the minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly held on 11 April 2011 to clarify the position:

'In response to a question as to why the PC had voted in favour of the affordable housing in Peshurst when 72% of the village were against it the Chairman (Cllr Sellings) stated he had taken advice from Sevenoaks into account when voting.

Cllr Campbell stated that whilst he appreciated what members of KPG were saying, he could see nothing else on offer, all previous sites put forward by KPG, the PC and others had been inspected and discounted, Forge Field was the only site on the table for consideration. It had been Cllr Campbell who had requested the breakdown of areas in the survey and when he had checked the results it was obvious those that lived closest had provided the most objections which would naturally be the same in relation to any site offered. The actual split was 58/42% across the parish, had it been 80/20% for example it would have been a different story. Cllr Campbell considered on a 58/42% split his decision was fair. The survey result was not a material planning consideration, the application would be checked against all policies and Cllr Campbell supported the formulation of a planning application to see a sensible reasoned argument.'

Cllr Campbell has a very sharp analytical mind and is one of the few councillors I know that takes a great deal of time and trouble to read through the vast array of paperwork we receive from the various government departments each time they alter a policy or come up with a new one. A statement which casts a slur on such a hard working and diligent member of the council cannot go unanswered.

Taking the above into account I must also point out that, contrary to many of the statements made in the emails/correspondence you have received Penshurst does in fact effectively have six councillors ie Cllrs Mrs Broad, Broadhead, Campbell, Carson, O'Shea and Frederick and Fordcombe has three, Cllrs Cass, Horsford and Townsend. The final co-option completed the team when Cllr Campbell was co-opted to fill the Fordcombe vacancy, although he in fact lives in Penshurst and was previously a Penshurst representative.

With regard to the inclusion of members of the PC on the Steering Committee, it would be unacceptable that such a project would not include representatives of the parish, the initial members consisting of three Penshurst councillors and one Fordcombe member. Members of the Estate and the design team attended and it must also be pointed out that SDCllr Paddy Cooke also served on the committee, as well as members of the school staff and Governing Body, representatives of the Medical Practice, various departments at SDC and WKHA together with a member of the Police to provide information on safety for the site. You will see that the full range of stakeholders were involved at various points.

As well as the original exhibition, Lesley Bowles of SDC held a number of workshops in both Penshurst and Fordcombe to enable as many parishioners as possible to have access at the pre-planning stage, she also attended a PC meeting with Janet Ranson of WKHA to answer questions from those attending. Neil Gunn of the Environment Agency attended two meetings to discuss plans which might have affected the parish and consequently the site in question. The PC's website has also carried a great deal of information. I trust this gives an indication as to the level of information the PC tried to make available in addition to the open sessions at the PC meetings.

It would be appreciated if you would make this communication available with the other papers submitted relating to the Governance Review.

E M Divall (Mrs)
Clerk to Penshurst Parish Council