

Date of meeting: 17th August 2007

Attendees: Councillor Newnes and Thelma Warwick (Investigating Officer)

Purpose: To provide Councillor Newnes with the opportunity to respond to the allegation made against him.

Meeting notes recorded by Thelma Warwick

1. Thelma Warwick explained the purpose of the meeting and agreed with Councillor Newnes the manner in which the meeting was to be conducted. That is, all the information that has been gathered during the course of the investigation would be presented to Councillor Newnes to provide him with the opportunity to respond.
2. Thelma Warwick gave copies of the following documents to Councillor Newnes:
 - Notes recorded at the time of the meeting that Thelma Warwick held with Councillor McDonald on 12th July 2007.
 - Notes recorded at the time of the meeting that Thelma Warwick held with Councillor Hollingworth on 31st July 2007.
 - Council Minutes of the meeting held on 27th February 2007.
 - Conservative Group Minutes from the meeting held 19th February 2007.
 - Register of Members' Interests for Councillor Newnes pre the May 2007 election.

Thelma Warwick offered Councillor Newnes a copy of the tape recording made at the Council meeting held on 27th February 2007; Councillor Newnes declined.

3. During the course of the meeting the following were discussed:
 - the main points of the allegation; and
 - each point from the notes that Thelma Warwick has recorded from her meetings with Councillor McDonald and Councillor Hollingworth.

Councillor Newnes' recollection of events and his responses to Councillor McDonald's and Councillor Hollingworth's perspectives are included below.

4. Having read Thelma Warwick's notes from her meeting with Councillor Hollingworth, Councillor Newnes clarified that there were two Conservative Group meetings held in February 2007; on 19th and 27th. Councillor Newnes' perceptions and knowledge of the meetings is detailed below.

19th February 2007:

- Prior to the meeting Councillor Newnes had spoken with Councillor Fuller and Councillor Taylor regarding charging rent to Bromsgrove Rovers Football Club. Additionally, Councillor Newnes prepared a paper (dated 5th February 2007)

regarding Bromsgrove Rovers Football Club that he distributed to Councillor Hollingworth, Councillor Taylor and Councillor Fuller.

- At this meeting Councillor Newnes presented his paper to the Group. Councillor Newnes provided Thelma Warwick with a copy of the paper.
- Councillor Newnes stated that at the end of the discussion in relation to Bromsgrove Rovers the Group agreed that the club should not be charged rent.

27th February 2007:

- Councillor Newnes stated that he was not aware that a Conservative Group meeting was being held prior to the full Council meeting until he was making his way to the Council House when he saw and gave a lift to Councillor Blagg (around 5.40 p.m.).
- It was Councillor Blagg who informed Councillor Newnes that a Conservative Group meeting was taking place during the hour before the full Council meeting.
- Councillor Newnes stated that he had not been invited to this meeting and, accordingly, did not attend.
- On his arrival at the Council House, Councillor Newnes went virtually straight into the Council meeting.

5. Councillor Newnes' recollections of the full Council meeting are as follows:

- During the Leaders' Announcements the Leader read a letter regarding charging rent to Bromsgrove Rovers Football Club.
- The Councillor who sat by Councillor Newnes informed Councillor Newnes that there was a letter in pigeon holes that was, in part, in relation to Bromsgrove Rovers and rent.
- During a recess Councillor Newnes checked his pigeon hole and read the letter mentioned during the Council meeting.
- Councillor Newnes stated that when the meeting reconvened he was "very angry" and asked to see a copy of the 14 year lease that Bromsgrove Rovers has with the Council. Councillor Newnes pointed out that he is aware that an actual lease does not exist and that he understands that in order for there to be a peppercorn rent a lease may be for a maximum of 7 years.
- Councillor Newnes accepts that he should have declared a personal interest at the full Council meeting; however, he was angry and "didn't give it a second thought".
- Councillor Newnes does not perceive that he has a prejudicial interest as he has no financial gain from Bromsgrove Rovers Football Club.

6. Review of Thelma Warwick's record of her meeting with Councillor McDonald. Note that italics have been used to indicate Councillor McDonald's comments.

Point 5b: Councillor Newnes pointed out that he is unable to remember exactly what he said at the 27th February Council meeting. Councillor Newnes recalls that he referred to the youth structure as part of the development plan.

(Thelma Warwick asked Councillor McDonald who he recalled saying that if the football club had to pay rent it may fold. Councillor McDonald responded that he recollects Councillor Newnes special pleading on behalf of Bromsgrove Rovers.)

Point 6a: Councillor Newnes pointed out that he has attended more than one meeting with Kevin Dicks regarding Bromsgrove Rovers Football Club:

- One meeting was attended by Kevin Dicks, Tom Herbert (Chairman of Bromsgrove Rovers Football Club), Councillor Newnes, Councillor Hollingworth and Councillor Deakin and took place to look at potential outcomes. This meeting was held after the February Council meeting and, according to Council Newnes, "not a lot came out".
- Another meeting was held attended by Kevin Dicks, Tom Herbert and Councillor Newnes. According to Councillor Newnes, Tom Herbert said that he had been informed by someone from Wychavon Council that you could have a longer lease with a peppercorn rent. However, Tom Herbert had nothing in writing.

Furthermore, Councillor Newnes informed Thelma Warwick that he has suggested to Tom Herbert that another meeting should be called.

(Suggest that Kevin Dicks is interviewed. The rationale being that Councillor McDonald believes that Councillor Newnes and Mr. Herbert (Chairman of Bromsgrove Rovers) have had meetings with Kevin prior to the Council meeting and that Kevin would probably have suggested to Councillor Newnes that he should declare his interest.)

Point 6b: Councillor Newnes stated that Tom Herbert has been a friend since Tom Herbert joined Bromsgrove Rovers.

(At an event at Parkside School 2 – 3 years ago Councillor Newnes mentioned his friendship with the Chairman of Bromsgrove Rovers football club.)

7. Review of Thelma Warwick's record of her meeting with Councillor Hollingworth. Note that italics have been used to indicate Councillor Hollingworth's comments.

Point 5: Councillor Newnes explained that he does not gain financially from Bromsgrove Rovers as he is paid by private parties for the disco.

(One individual said that Councillor Newnes is paid by the club for the discos that he runs).

Point 6: Councillor Newnes perceives that the decision to overturn the outcome that the Conservative Group reached in relation to Bromsgrove Rovers at the meeting held on 19th February was made in the one hour meeting held on the 27th February.

(Councillor Hollingworth brought to Thelma Warwick's attention the fact that BDC do not give grants at all. Accordingly, the proposal to give a grant to Bromsgrove Rovers never went through the Chamber as Councillor Hollingworth refused to take it.)

Point 7: Councillor Newnes pointed out that prior to the start of the Council Meeting he had informed Councillor Boswell who was Chairing the meeting that he would be leaving early as he was going to Aberystwyth the next day

(At the Council meeting held on 27th February 2007 Councillor Hollingworth recalls that the discussion in relation to Bromsgrove Rovers took place as part of the Leaders announcements. Furthermore, he recalls Councillor Newnes being involved in the discussion and packing up and leaving the meeting before it was officially closed.)

Point 8: Councillor Newnes brought to Thelma Warwick's attention that a meeting took place after the May 2007 election that was attended by Councillor Newnes, Councillor Hollingworth, the Chair of the Conservative Association (Tessa Gillespie) and the prospective Chair of the Conservative Association (Alan Dent). The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the relationship between Councillor Hollingworth and Councillor Newnes.

According to Councillor Newnes, at this meeting he was asked to "walk away" from Bromsgrove Rovers. Furthermore, Councillor Newnes clarified that he was not taken "to task" by the Conservative Association.

(According to Councillor Hollingworth, the Conservative Association has brought Councillor Newnes to task over his relationship with Bromsgrove Rovers football club.)

Point 10: Councillor Newnes perceives that the Council should honour the peppercorn rent that has been agreed with Bromsgrove Rovers.

(Councillor Hollingworth perceives that Councillor Newnes has tried to achieve a financial gain for an organisation that he represents).

8. Councillor Newnes confirmed that he does not hold any roles, including committee roles, at Bromsgrove Rovers Football Club. Furthermore, Councillor Newnes stated that he has not been a member of the Bromsgrove Rovers Supporters Society for approximately the last 3 years.

Thelma Warwick pointed out that on Councillor Newnes' Register of Members' Interests dated 5th February 2002 membership of Bromsgrove Rovers Supporters Society is listed in section 13. Councillor Newnes said that he had forgotten to update the register in relation to his cancelled membership.

9. Councillor Newnes confirmed that he has been running a mobile disco for over 30 years and he has run discos at the Bromsgrove Rovers club premises. When hired to run a disco at the club premises the process is as follows:

- Private parties hire the club.
- If the customer asks about provision of a disco the club gives the customer Councillor Newnes' business card. It is the customer's decision as to whether or not they contact and hire Councillor Newnes.
- Sometimes the customer asks the club to contact Councillor Newnes on their behalf. In this instance the club provides Councillor Newnes with details and he contacts the customer.
- Councillor Newnes' contract is always with the customer not the club.

Thelma Warwick asked Councillor Newnes whether he has run discos when Bromsgrove Rovers Football Club has been the customer. Councillor Newnes responded that he has run the disco for the New Years Eve party on more than one occasion. Councillor Newnes pointed out that for these events the customer is Bromsgrove Rovers Supporters Society and that it is the Society who pays his fee not the Football Club.

10. Thelma Warwick asked Councillor Newnes about his role with the Bromsgrove Football Development Plan Committee. Councillor Newnes explained that in February the committee did not exist. Brian McGuinness from Bromsgrove Town Football Club called a meeting which was held at Bromsgrove Rovers Club to form a committee to "start the ball rolling". Councillor Newnes was unsure of the date other than the meeting was held on a Sunday. Councillor Newnes recalls that Rebecca Clayton a Sports Development Officer from the Council's Culture & Community Department attended. Thelma Warwick said that she would contact Rebecca to confirm the date of the meeting.

Councillor Newnes explained that in order to progress the committee and before a formal constitution was agreed Brian McGuinness had compiled the agenda and he had Chaired approximately 3 meetings.

When asked about the connection between Bromsgrove Football Development Plan Committee and Bromsgrove Rovers Councillor Newnes stated that he had previously tried to get the youth of Bromsgrove together and with Tom Herbert (Chairman of Bromsgrove Rovers Football Club) has held talks with the college.

Councillor Newnes explained that all football clubs need youth teams. Bromsgrove Town Football Club has an association with Bristol Rovers Football Club that has resulted in the youth of Bromsgrove playing under the auspices of Bristol Rovers.

One of the purposes behind the Bromsgrove Football Development Plan Committee was to set up youth teams that have links with both Bromsgrove Town and Bromsgrove Rovers football clubs so that promising players could be identified.

Additionally, NEW College is now running a two year course to train individuals in all aspects of football.

11. Thelma Warwick asked if Councillor Newnes would like to raise any further points that he considers as being pertinent to the investigation.
 - Councillor Newnes asked whether Councillor Hollingworth had made a complaint. Thelma Warwick explained that Councillor Hollingworth had informed her that he had. Councillor Hollingworth received the response from the Standards Board for England that they had received a complaint from another source that would be referred to the Council for local investigation.
 - Councillor Newnes' daughter plays football for Birmingham City Ladies. Next March when his daughter is sixteen years old Councillor Newnes is anticipating that she may play for England. The reason that Councillor Newnes raised this point is that he perceives that some Members have the opinion that his interest in Bromsgrove Rovers Football Club is linked to his daughter playing football. Councillor Newnes pointed out that his daughter plays in a higher league and that his interest in football development is for the benefit of the youth of Bromsgrove.
12. During the course of the meeting Thelma Warwick explained the reporting procedure for a local investigation. This included the fact that the determination as to if and when information in relation to the allegation and investigation is made public lies with the Standards Committee.
13. Thelma Warwick reminded Councillor Newnes that the meeting was confidential and clarified the next steps of the investigation. It was agreed that Thelma Warwick would send a copy of the meeting notes to Councillor Newnes for his review and that Councillor Newnes would provide feedback by 31st August 2007.

Contact: Councillor Newnes 07754 765522

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Councillor William Newnes

Date:

[ORIGINAL DOCUMENT SIGNED BY COUNCILLOR WILLIAM NEWNES ON 16TH SEPTEMBER 2007]