

Supplement to the Minutes of the 27th April 2017 meeting of Rotherfield Parish Council

Chair's statement to the meeting whilst Standing Orders were suspended.

I am now suspending Standing Orders to deal with a matter not on the Agenda.

I am getting concerned about how we are operating as a Council, and also about the support I'm getting from you in my role as Chairman, especially since a Committee Chairman has told me that I no longer have the support of the majority of Councillors.

I feel like my role as Chairman in 2016-17 has been intentionally marginalised by two or three of you, who appear to be drifting away from upholding our Code of Conduct and the Principles of Public Life.

In recent months there have been instances involving these Councillors of: a Finance meeting (in my absence) being held illegally by not informing the public contra to Act of Parliament; Councillor verbal abuse of the public; false accusation among Councillors of voting bias and discretion fettering; Councillor bullying of the Parish Clerk; and major expenditure of over £2500 not being put out to sealed tender by majority vote.

I find this unacceptable. As Council Chairman, my role is to ensure that, as Councillors, we discharge our collective responsibility and duty to our parishioners in accordance with the Principles of Public Life . I plan to put an item on the May PCM Agenda to agree what actions we need to take individually *and* collectively to adhere better to our Code of Conduct.

It's important for the good governance of the Council that any Chairman has the support of Councillors, so I'd like to hear whether this Committee Chairman is speaking on your behalf.

David Thomas, Chairman Rotherfield Parish Council

27 April 2017

Key Points of the Councillor's responses to the above were as follows: -

- Concern and surprise was expressed to learn of the issues, of which some Councillors were unaware, and it was considered that these should have been dealt with openly.
- Consider that this was an inappropriate forum to express these views and that the statement had come "out of the blue" therefore Cllrs. had been unable to prepare a response.
- War Memorial expenditure. Actions regarding this had been "maverick". Considered that, whilst the aim of building a War Memorial in the Village was a worthy intention the project was becoming one of achieving "a War Memorial at

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any cost” and the final decision should rest with the Council. There had been a lack of communication regarding the project and that matters should be discussed more.

- Concern expressed that the Chair’s recent attendance at meetings and other Council events had been intermittent.

- Resignation of Chair. Vice Chair expressed concern that the Chair had forwarded to him an unsigned letter of resignation earlier in the week and had stated his intention to resign at this meeting. Clerk advised those present that, although the Chair had advised him of his intention to resign by telephone, he had not seen the letter nor had a signed copy been received by him. Vice Chair also indicated that Chair had informed him of an intention to resign in February of this year and had discussed the matter with him.

- Concerns expressed at the allegations regarding finance and considered that Vice Chair had been undermined on some matters; also, concerns with the way the Chair had treated some Councillors. Chairman should involve the Councillors and respect their views.

- “Major expenditure of £2500”. This related to the Speed Indicating Device (SID) which Chair stated he considered should have gone to full competitive tender. Cllr. Martin advised that quotes from suppliers other than the one finally chosen from SWARCO, had been obtained. Clerk advised that the Financial Regulations lower limit for tendering was £3K, investigation after the meeting confirmed that the cost to the Council of the device provided, after considering the VAT element reclaimed, fell under this limit.

**Supplement to the minutes of the 27th April 2017 Parish Council meeting
agreed at the 29th June 2017 Meeting of the Parish Council.**

Confirmed as a true record and signed at the 27th July 2017 Council Meeting.

.....Chair.....Date