

Call To Account – Councillor Keith Day

For the attention of Members of the Shadow Dorset Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee. 06 December 2018

I would like to add the following two items to the information being considered regarding the ‘call to account’.

**Item 1. An attempt to obtain accurate information.**

*A brief outline/background.*

I am a County, District and Town Councillor for Bridport.

I have been and still am involved with the 'transfer of assets' saga which came to an abrupt stop at a Shadow Executive meeting on 17 September.

As this particularly involves Bridport and the enormous amount of work that has taken place to come to an agreement with WDDC, I felt it necessary to follow-up and establish why we had reached this point.

I had organised a ‘call-in’ petition regarding the decision – with a reasonable degree of support, but this was eventually rejected by the Shadow Monitoring Officer (Jonathan Mair).

It was unfortunate that I was not advised by Democratic Services or the Shadow Monitoring Officer that I could have applied for a ‘call to account’ in place of the ‘call-in’ – and saved several weeks.

*The ‘Problem’.*

On 17 October I visited Rebecca Knox in her office at DCC. It was an impromptu visit as I was speaking at another Committee meeting that afternoon. I asked why we had not been able to progress the ‘transfer of assets’ matter and was there another way forward?

I was told that Mr Stephen Hill (WDDC Strategic Director) had been told well in advance that the process he was following was not going to work and the way forward was to have it broken into smaller modules. Needless to say I was somewhat surprised at this statement and concerned that all the work undertaken so far – by so many – could have been avoided. Taking Rebecca at her word I said that I would raise the matter at the full District Council the following day.

*Consequence.*

At WDDC full Council on 18 October, I challenged Stephen Hill to explain Rebecca's comments. (This was following our party pre-meeting where it was accepted that I should voice my concern at full Council).

Stephen Hill refuted the allegations and said he would not have allowed so much work to continue - if he had known. (A stance he maintained after the meeting when I visited him in

his office). This public confrontation resulted in embarrassment to both Stephen Hill and myself.

***Follow-up.***

At this stage it was clear that the information given by Stephen Hill and Rebecca Knox could not be reconciled. I felt it necessary to get to the reality of the situation and consequently I wrote to Jonathan Mair the Shadow Monitoring Officer (in confidence) asking for his advice on how I should determine the facts.

After several prompts over about 10 days, Jonathan Mair still did not give me the advice I sought, but told me that the matter would be subject to a 'call to account'.

**Item 2. Shadow Executive Committee 17 Sept. – original decision making process.**

Assuming that Cllr Knox (as Leader) had already determined at the time of the Shadow Executive Committee meeting that there was a more acceptable approach than that suggested by WDDC, why was this alternative not recommended as part of the Shadow Executive Committee resolution - rather than simply 'not supporting' the proposals?

There appears to be a degree of ambivalence and inconsistency in the proceedings to date.

I do hope you will be able to achieve clarity. Not just for me, but for the Councils and all the people involved. Perhaps more importantly, to ensure that such occurrences are not repeated, thus preventing further damage to the trust between the Shadow Executive and sovereign councils in the lead up to the implementation of the new Dorset Council.

*Keith Day*