

## Case ref. WC06/12 Roger Durie's comments on the report dated 9<sup>th</sup> August

The situation preceding Mrs Thornton's complaint was that she and two others (one of whom was neither a resident of The Knapp nor anything to do with The Knapp Tenants Association) have bombarded the Parish Council with aggressive and adversarial correspondence continually berating The Council and implying that no action had been taken to try and deal with parking issues in the area.

The reality is that we have worked hard to improve the situation but depend on the co-operation and support of other bodies (in this case Network Rail, First Great Western, Wiltshire Council and Aster Communities, the housing association now managing The Knapp properties).

The e-mail in support of Mrs Thornton's complaint was written by [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] This e-mail appears to add weight to Mrs Thornton's case if viewed by anyone not aware of his relationship but under the circumstances ought to be discounted because of his relationship

Mrs Thornton has pursued her campaign against the Parish Council as secretary of The Knapp Tenants Association. An organization formed by her but one that she has been unable to produce documentary evidence of its existence to The Parish Council, despite numerous requests. However, she was apparently able to provide Marie Lindsay with a signed copy of the constitution on May 9<sup>th</sup> but this has not been made available to the PC. We understand that the Chairman of the organization has now resigned, although once again we have not been formally advised of this.

It is interesting to note from Marie Lindsay's report that membership of The Knapp Tenants Association is deemed to be 'automatic' unless residents have opted out. This alone raises concerns about the validity of the organization and adds to the PC's concerns as to whether Mrs Thornton truly represents the number of residents she claims to. In her complaint she stated that the association had 49 members but in her statement to Marie Lindsay the number of members stated was only 30?

During the last twelve months four Parish Councillors and our clerk have resigned as a direct result of Mrs Thornton's behavior/actions and that of her associates. A number of members of the public have begun to attend our Parish Council meetings specifically to support the PC and monitor the behaviour of these people.

### **The Motion proposed**

The motion to warn Mrs Thornton that we would declare her vexatious if her behavior persisted was proposed and discussed under the first item on the agenda of our March 2012 meeting 'Bus route and station parking' - this being the subject of Mrs Thornton's vexatious behaviour. At this time I was not aware that we could exclude members of the public without having previously designated an agenda item as a 'confidential session' where it was clear the public could not be present.

At the time the motion was proposed by Councillor Raff in the main body of the meeting (**not under public discussion**) there were apparently only a few members of the public remaining (including Mrs Thornton). according to Colin Brinsden the clerk at the time. Mrs Thornton's claim in her complaint that 40 members of the public being present at that time is incorrect. The majority of members of the public recorded in the minutes of the meeting had left at the end of public discussion

### **Report section 7.29**

I contest the suggestion that taking the 'vexatious' motion reduced the public's confidence in me and brought the council into disrepute. I believe that the opposite is true and that the public welcomed the motion and the adoption of it. However, I do admit to being technically wrong by not excluding the public from this part of the meeting

### **Report Section 7.20**

This states that the implementation of the vexatious complaints policy is considered an unreasonable and excessive personal attack on Mrs Thornton – I consider this comment to be inappropriate and believe that most members of our community and the other members of the PC saw this as a defence mechanism against future harassment by Mrs Thornton. I am disappointed that Marie Lindsay appears to have been 'taken in' by Mrs Thornton when the majority of our residents have been able to deduce for themselves the type of person that she really is.

### **The Wider Picture**

Our Area Board Member Stuart Wheeler has attended numerous meetings where he has witnessed Mrs Thornton and her associates behaviour and has himself been subject to e-mail bombardment/harassment by them. He has also seen the upsurge in attendance of members of the public who are unhappy with the behaviour of Mrs Thornton and her associates.

In all her dealings with the PC (and with the media) Mrs Thornton has consistently been economical with the truth and this has been the cause of the public anger/frustration that is now evident against her and her associates