

Chairman's opening remarks to Yaxham Parish Council 15th June 2017

"Before we start on the agenda items there are a number of statements that I need to make to inform both my fellow councillors and the members present here this evening.

First it is with great sadness that I have received a letter from one of our long standing councillors – David Myhill. As you know he has been very ill and has had a number of operations. He now informs me that further operations are required in the near future. As such David believes that he can no longer carry out the role of parish councillor to the standard and in the manner that he would like. He has therefore tendered his resignation with immediate effect – this therefore will be David's last meeting. This was received after the agendas had been published for this meeting and therefore the process of appointing a new councillor will be an agenda item for the next meeting. In the meant-time the clerk and I will consult Breckland to ensure that we follow the regulations as required.

Can I therefore take this opportunity on behalf of all present, and on behalf of past council members and clerks, who have worked with David as a colleague, the deep debt of gratitude that this village owes to David for all his work over the years, and his crowning glory the establishment of the Yaxham Village Amenities Association and the creation of the Village Hall and the recreation field. Many others were involved, but it has always been David's untiring leadership and enthusiasm that has got things done – and it is a tribute to him that there will be the 40th Birthday Party of the YVAA in September – Thank you David.

Next – and on a different note – at the last meeting it was suggested that the Parish Charity Accounts be added to this evening's agenda. It is therefore only fair that I explain why it is not on this evening's agenda. On reflection, and taking advice, it became clear that this was not appropriate as the Parish Council has no formal responsibility for the Parish Charity. The matter should therefore be included on the agenda for the next Parish Charity meeting. Subject to discussion with the other Trustees outside of this meeting, the next Parish Charity meeting will be on 20th July and will be open to the public to attend.

Lastly, I feel I must remind my fellow councillors that under our Code of Conduct, that all of us have signed, there are specific clauses related to the treatment by councillors of our colleagues, our clerk, the public and others.

And I will read them out:

"1.3 As a Member of Yaxham Parish Council, your conduct will in particular address the statutory principles of the code of conduct by:

IX. Valuing your colleagues and staff and engaging with them in an appropriate manner and one that underpins the mutual respect between you that is essential to good local government.

X. Always treating people with respect, including the organisations and public you engage with and those you work alongside."

I say this because the practice has developed of councillors, or a councillor in particular, directly attacking the Clerk in these meetings and by aggressive and disrespectful emails between meetings. This must stop. The Clerk is an employee of the Parish Council. We are the Clerk's employer. We have the responsibilities that go with this. Bullying an employee is unlawful and could lead us to being taken to an employment tribunal. If you have an issue with the Clerk's approach then you take it up with the Chairman, without copying in the Clerk. It will then be for me to resolve if there is an issue, and to take advice from NALC and Breckland on how these matters are handled. The conduct of the Clerk is not a matter for open discussion in public in these meetings. If we conclude there is an issue to discuss we will exclude the public at the end of a meeting and discuss it, as provided under section 26 of our Standing Orders.

What I also say is that councillors, or rather a councillor in particular, attacking his colleagues and members of the public in these meetings, by email between these meetings, and in public documents must also stop. It is making a mockery of this council and turning meetings in to thoroughly unpleasant events. You have only just re-elected me as your Chairman. You know how I manage things. Whatever may occur in my private or business life, or that of other councillors, is irrelevant to Council business - unless it is a normal matter for the council to consider, or brings the Council into disrepute.

In future, if in my view a Councillor is at risk of being in breach of our duty as an employer or of our code of conduct then I will step in and require that councillor to stop. If he refuses then we will deal with this under section 10 of our Standing Orders - Disorderly Conduct."