



BRAMSHOTT & LIPHOOK PARISH COUNCIL

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Response to Liphook Herald Article Dated 22/11/13

The Parish Council has received a number of queries about the current Liphook Herald Headline Article entitled "Clerk is cleared of fraud". The article contains a number of inaccuracies. The Parish Council would like to make it clear that the Liphook Herald did not ask the Parish Council to comment before the article was published.

As the Council has previously reported the Clerk was suspended on 13 September 2011 when it became aware that there were serious allegations of bullying by the clerk, in addition to the existing allegations of financial mismanagement. These allegations of bullying had first been made in writing in 2009, but the Finance & Policy Committee had not taken any action at that time. When the Clerk was suspended he was alleged to have assaulted two of the Councillors, Dawn Hoskins and Eve Hope.

The Council commenced an internal investigation at the time but this was opposed by several members of the Council, some of whom were on the Finance & Policy Committee in 2009, and had also approved payments which had been made to the Clerk in May 2007 and November 2009. The Council was therefore advised that it must arrange for an independent investigation which was carried out by Mrs Karen Hill.

Following that investigation a disciplinary hearing was conducted by Miss Julia Homan. That resulted in the dismissal of the Clerk on 25 September 2012 for gross misconduct confirmed by letter dated 27 September 2012. Among the reasons given for this decision were

1. that the Clerk did assault Councillors Hoskins and Hope in the course of events on 13 September 2011
2. that individuals had been bullied and/or intimidated by the Clerk
3. that certain matters of financial mismanagement had taken place

Some of these matters were referred to the police. The police carried out a very thorough investigation of these matters and held a number of meetings with Parish Councillors. The investigating officer advised the Parish Council first orally, and then confirmed in writing that the Crown Prosecution Service had advised that the matter will not be taken further. If

however further evidence is provided at a later date the matter will be reviewed and a further decision will be made.

The level of proof needed in criminal proceedings is higher than for civil proceedings. In the oral discussions the investigating officer confirmed that a significant factor in the decision of the CPS that there was insufficient evidence to justify a prosecution at this stage was that six out of eleven councillors had approved the payment made in 2009 to the Clerk, and another ex-councillor refused to give evidence against the clerk.

The Council is still trying to obtain recompense for the money lost by the Council, with the help of its insurers. This has been and will be at no cost to the Council.

Finally the resignation of the Deputy Clerk referred to in the article is not connected with the complaints made against the former Clerk. The Council is very sympathetic to problems of sickness which have afflicted the Deputy Clerk and hopes she makes a speedy and full recovery.