

Cllr Sandra Holliday's Speech –Annual Council Meeting

Thank you Mr Mayor and can I congratulate you too on your appointment as mayor and I know that you'll do our town proud. I feel a little bit shocked and saddened with some of the comments made by some members and whilst not wanting to take up too much time I'd like to make the following points. Following the Council meeting in June 2020, and having run the email that has been spoken about past Rowena Hay with no adverse comments, I emailed all Lib Dem council colleagues individually from my personal email address following an acrimonious Lib Dem group meeting on 16th June 2020. Whilst not marking the email confidential it was never intended for it to be made public or shared outside the group. On 18th June I received an email from the Lib Dem Standards Office notifying me of an anonymous complaint made against me. On 19th June I had a call from the Gloucestershire Echo asking me to comment on my email which was leaked to them. They would not divulge the source. The then leader of the Council and Lib Dem group leader, Steve Jordan, told me that he did not find my email to be outrageous and considered that the leaking of the email was more serious and I think I can put my hand on my heart and say that at no time did I defend the comments made by a certain member in the chamber at that time. The complaint against me was heard in March and sanctions applied. The case was heard internally and by independent members of the Liberal Democrat national party. The outcome was accepted by myself and it's disappointing that Councillor Wendy Flynn is chosen not to accept it also. Both Councillor Flynn and myself are members of the same party. This was an internal matter within the Liberal Democrat Party which Councillor Flynn's tried to make greater than it is and cause a rift due to her as the complainant not seeing to accept the ruling. This illiberal attitude is against our party values. I have not been excluded or expelled from the Liberal Democrat Party. I have stepped back from the Liberal Democrat council group for a period of time. I remain as has been said as an aligned councillor continuing to do the best for the residents of my ward. I issued an apology in February to the Cheltenham Lib Dem council group and have further apologised unreservedly. I can do no more. As we know the appointment of mayor and deputy mayor are not political appointments but are based on length of service and as we've heard I've been a councillor since 1996, I've served as deputy mayor for the past 2 years carrying out a diverse range of engagements when the mayor was engaged on official duties elsewhere. It is deeply disappointing then that these roles have been made political. I'm not sure what support I will get from members present but when I was told that Councillor Flynn had issued an ultimatum that she intended to make a statement unless I withdrew my nomination, I felt that this was intimidation, blackmail and is bullying. And I feel it's important to stand up to bullies. I realise the consequences of the outcome should members not support me but going forward I would urge tolerance and understanding when dealing with others who have a different opinion to you. Sometimes there is no right or wrong. Sometimes the meaning isn't clearly articulated. Be kind to each other, you'll gain a lot more. Thank you Mr Mayor.