

SOUTH RIBBLE BOROUGH COUNCIL**Meeting of the Council – 20 July 2016****Question to the Leader (1) – Cllr Ken Jones**

At the Special Council Meeting held on 27th April 2016 to discuss the temporary closure of the A&E Department at Chorley & South Ribble Hospital, Cllr. Ken Jones declared a prejudicial interest, made a personal statement and then withdrew from the meeting for the remainder of the discussion of this item. His statement said:

“I am a Public Governor of Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, elected by the members of the Trust and currently in my sixth year of service. The Trust owns and operates Royal Preston Hospital and Chorley and South Ribble Hospital, together with other health facilities serving the people of this Borough and further afield.

Approximately three years ago the Governing Council of the Trust had cause to review the Trust’s Constitution. At the time the Constitution allowed for four appointed governors to represent the four local authorities which the Trust serves directly, namely Lancashire County Council, Preston City Council, Chorley Borough Council and South Ribble Borough Council. The attendance record of these four appointed governors was examined and found to be so poor as to be almost non-existent, with potential impact on meeting quorum. Consequently one of the changes proposed to the Constitution was to abolish the three second tier appointed posts, leaving only the appointment made by Lancashire County Council.

The amendments to the Constitution progressed through all stages of authorisation, a lengthy process, and no representations of any sort were received until at the meeting where the changes were to be finally ratified when a number of local authority representatives attended to complain about their loss of representation. The changes were ratified nonetheless. At this point Lancashire County Council appointed the Council Leader County Councillor Jennifer Mein to the remaining appointed governor post and CC Mein has had an honourable attendance record ever since.

Chorley Borough Council subsequently raised a formal complaint with the Trust’s regulator Monitor. Monitor advised the Trust that as it was standard practise to include appointed governors from all relevant local authorities, this particular change should be reversed.

The change back was made last November and all authorities notified. Preston City Council appointed a senior councillor who attends regularly, Chorley Borough appointed its Council Leader Councillor Alistair Bradley, but no response has ever been received from South Ribble Borough Council, despite regular reminders over many months.

Yesterday a full meeting of the Trust’s Council of Governors was held with the active participation of the three other local authority appointees. Again, South Ribble was absent and it was confirmed that no communication on this subject has yet been received.

Members will draw their own conclusions as to the diligence with which the current administration of this Borough is tending to the health interests of its citizens.”

At the next Council meeting on 18th May the Leader, under the item Matters Arising, explained that a search of the relevant records confirmed the Council had been invited to appoint a Governor, but complained that the manner of the invitation was confusing and had led to the invitation being overlooked.

Subsequently the Trust was informed the Leader would be appointed as the Council's Appointed Governor. A few days later the Trust was informed the Leader would not now be the appointee and a substitute would be appointed "in a fortnight". Last week the Trust was told the appointee would in fact be the Leader, but "she wouldn't attend regularly and would send different deputies instead".

This arrangement infringes the Trust's constitution, as has already been pointed out to another local authority appointed governor.

'Can the Leader please confirm if she has resolved this ongoing saga which has brought about great embarrassment to this Borough with us having no representation at the most crucial of times? Who is representing us, and why did she feel it appropriate to change the nomination in the very unprofessional manner she did?'

Question to the Leader (2) – Cllr Ken Jones

Also on 18th May the Leader was asked a question regarding the Catering Service at the Civic Centre, having been given advance notice of the question. The question was:

"When the new arrangements for the Catering Service were agreed by Cabinet in September 2013 a figure of £25,000 per year was quoted to provide the residual catering service.

The actual total payments, excluding VAT, made to the Catering Contractor (Moss House Farm) have been:

£9,938.50 (part-year: 2013/2014)

£29,432.95 (2014/2015)

£29,644.37 (2015/2016)

Total: £69,015.82

The Council's constitution states that all procurements with a cumulative value of over £75,000 shall be classed as High Value Procurements and must be put out to tender. As this limit will be breached in a matter of weeks, when is the Leader proposing to initiate the tendering process?"

The High Value Procurement limit of £75,000 has now been breached, as has the Council's own constitutional Contract Procedural Rules and public sector procurement regulations, and yet the Catering Service has still not been put out to tender. Does this not place the Administration in an ultra vires position?