

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW CLLR JIM MARSH

JS are you happy to proceed with the interview?

JM no its fine.

JS if we do go on and you want a break at any point, just indicate

JM thank you.

JS can I first ask you how long you have been a councillor?

JM nearly four years

JS so the last election was the first occasion that you were elected

JM no no what happened was half way through the last session a chap who was a, one of the bosses of Preston North End, he got promoted and he had to say he couldn't carry on any more, a guy called Warren Bennett. So I was approached by the local party then, which is called the Idle Toad party and asked if I would replace him with being a sort of well known person in the village if you like, being a cricket umpire and one thing and another. So I said yes, go on , and it was more of a laugh than anything else but I did, I got voted in, I beat the conservatives and the labour and the lib dem and err subsequently I stayed with that until just before the last election when I had an unholy row with a guy called Tom Sharratt who was like the owner, leader and everything – it is a one man band pretty much the Idle toad thing, I had an unholy row with him and I left and so rather than just leave them in the lurch I was prepared to be an Independent because we were only three months off the next election you see, there was no time they could have had a bye election. And in that time a friend of mine called Peter Molyneux who is one of the conservative councillors, rang me up and said come and sit with us. I said, well I don't know, and then Margaret Smith who is the leader of the party rang up and said come and sit with us you will be ok. Which I did and then subsequent to that two, they must have kept their eye on me for two or three weeks, they said would I like to stand as the conservative candidate where I live. I said I just wish my mum had been alive she would have been thrilled to bits with that and that's what I did and I won the election against the Toads. The funny thing about this was when I had been asked to go and sit with the conservatives, the following night, Tom Hanson whose door this stuff went through, he rung me and asked me would I like to join the labour lads, so it was not as if I was unwanted, you know

A discussion re the 2nd complaint took place

JS lets move onto the other item we need to discuss. This relates to your delivering the council's Forward newspaper. I believe this took place on the 17th March

JM Right

JS and was this the first time you had delivered the council newspaper or ..

JM no. I had been doing it three years

JS and how many do you deliver roughly

JM 1600. 1646

JS and I believe you get paid 10pence a copy

JM well yes, but if you get taxed you get 8p

JS now perhaps you can just tell me what happened on the 17th , when you were delivering the newspaper

JM Yes. Peter Molyneux who I referred to earlier he was the guy who asked me to come to the Tories, he is standing as County in the election next week against Dave Watts and he said would I take him some leaflets round and I said of course I will. So this is what I do now I am retired, I take things round for one thing and another. Anyway I am doing round Bamber Bridge and I thought well, what I will do I will take .. I will take Peter's because it is only for a stretch it is only for 70-80 I did on that particular patch – there was the bit that was his I'd dump them off and there was a little alarm bell tingling a bit that is why I brought this in so I will show you just what I did. The only reason I will show it to you ... this .. I will pick up one or two out of the foyer .. normally that is full , right, so in these particular houses in this bit of Peter Molyneux's patch .. you get it out like that .. this in here, not ... I am an old engineer me .. I used to do ergonomics and stuff like that and the way to do would be to pile these up on the kitchen floor these things, insert these in before I set off and then away you go. But what I did .. I did that like that on top – one through the letter box and they fold like that so anybody who either wasn't in or wasn't looking or at work or whatever would come home and find the two things on the floor, but not connected and that is the way I did it and its I mean, I suppose I could have done .. left my bag at the end of the road, thrown the leaflets through, come back picked this up and done the same houses again, but the end result would be exactly the same with the two documents through the letterbox separate in the porch ... sorry I thought I had switched my phone off, let me make it quiet

At this point in the interview Cllr Marsh showed me the council bag which he was provided with to deliver the newspaper. It is clearly marked Forward. He stated that he had the papers in there, he also then put on a singlet with large pockets at the front in which he had the Conservative literature. His delivery method was to take a newspaper from the bag and a leaflet from his pocket which he placed on top of the paper and push them through the door simultaneously.

JS sorry I just lost my track with the phone going off. Yes. I appreciate but you say that little alarm bells were ringing

JM well, it thought, I certainly couldn't stick one inside the other because it might be perceived that the council were on the side of the conservatives or whatever and certainly not ... so I put them together and thought that'll be alright and errr I got them into Tom Hansons house I put that thing through and about .. I don't know about 10 – 15mins later my doorbell went and it was Martin OLoughlin ..

JS just before we move on can I ask you about that . you say someone coming home would just see two pieces of paper there and wouldn't know .. but what would you think if somebody who was stood in their front window as you came up the path, and then walked out and saw the two pieces of paper obviously delivered together – what would the perception of a member of the public be then do you think?

JM well I don't know, I don't think a member of the public would bother I don't think. I mean it is just so much more bump isn't it. I take your point... lets face it, after the phone call and everything else then and the enormity of it that's when it hit me, not til then, I was just trying to help somebody out

JS well it had caused you enough concern that you realised that you shouldn't put one inside the other

JM well that would have been naughty wouldn't it. I didn't do that

JS but you didn't think that somebody seeing you pull one out of your pocket an one out of your bag would effectively present the same view

JM we are getting into nonsense now aren't we .. where I could have shoved one through the letter, left me bag at the gate and then gone and got another and put that one through and that would have been alright would it. It was just as daft wouldn't it.

JS did you not think that as potentially there was a problem the sensible thing would be to discuss it with the monitoring officer, or Darren Cranshaw who is responsible for Forward or ..

JM No you see it is only .. he have only got a few things on my patch: I would do about 1600 of them and about 70-80 something like that and is just like a blip, just those few and take those through

JS so how many leaflets would you say you delivered

JM that's it, it is just those few on that bit of Bamber Bridge and the other part of Bamber Bridge is Barry Yates thing and I have done hundreds and hundreds of them. It is a dichotomy you see in part of Bamber Bridge is the like, the Eastern Area ... and it is a different line on the County election and it is just on that bit that ... where Peter's stuff is .. and I did those things with that. Then I went round when I had finished my things off

and I did the rest of them for Peter without obviously without carrying any of those because I had finished it. My first priority is to get those done, they have a strict timetable with those with these Forward.

JS I think you were two days late but I don't think the council are taking issue on that!

JM well I say there was a lot of stuff going on and whenever I do I will ring up Jim Lambert and say .. I may be late ... I am still quicker than anybody else

JS I just noticed on the delivery instructions it says 15th March. How many of these leaflets do you say you delivered at the same time as the paper

JM 70-80

JS and when you refer to delivering other conservative leaflets was that entirely on their own and with no other council paper

JM yes . its like I am doing when I leave here

JS and these leaflets which you delivered, related specifically to one candidate standing in a County election.

JM yes I 'll show you the same thing but with a different face you know. That's Barry Yates' one, as I am the co-ordinator, and the one had Peter Molyneux instead

JS right, so yes it is similar to the one you are showing me. OK thanks

Sorry I interrupted you before because I just wanted to clarify points on that. You said you got a call on your mobile from Martin O'Loughlin. Did you want to say something about that

JM he just said, actually I only just met him last night, that was the first time I shook hands with him after the meeting and said this is the face behind the threatening voice is it. Anyway we had a laugh. He rang up and he said Jim are you delivering the Forward paper. So I said yes. He said are you also delivering leaflets for the conservative party. I said yes I was putting, but I have finished now it was only a few, but I am just carrying on with the Forward. He said there might be a perception that the council are paying you to deliver conservative literature thereby showing a bias towards the conservatives. Well I said no that is nonsense and I explained quickly over the phone what I have just demonstrated to you with the bags and he said well .. I said I have finished now and I said look I hear where you are coming from I must admit and that was when I said the enormity of it didn't really kick in until he said that about a bias and I hadn't thought about that and I was getting paid for it. That hadn't registered. I said well I have finished now it was only a few, I have done those, I am just doing the Forward now and I said look I am hearing what you are saying. I will take this as a smack on the wrist and I am very sorry I said I have finished and I won't do any more. I said it will never happen again

I promise you. I hear where you are coming from and I am very sorry. He said alright and I thought that was fine. So that was that.

JS so you accepted once he had pointed it out to you that what you were doing was ..

JM it could be perceived as such yeah.

JS I think then the matter was in the local paper the Guardian 25th March

JM Yes they rang me up that night, asking I believe you have had your wrists slapped And I said yes, yes, whatever and I told them, to be fair with him, I think his name is Sam who did this he has pretty much got it right. I mean at the back of it a lot of it ... it is mainly like the old terms of engineering – like, try for better efficiency and things. I thought that was the most efficient way of doing it but obviously it has not gone down so well and Tom Hanson whose door I pushed it through, he rang Dave Watts and it was Dave Watts who rung the paper. It was Dave Watts who put the complaint in

JS OK, that is what I wanted to establish. You did not contact the paper – they contacted you.

JM No. they rang me at home

JS No. had you been seeking publicity or what had happened, it may have affected the seriousness with which your behaviour.....

JM I wanted to go and hide to be honest. I put my bloody size 10's in it for sure. Eh dear

JS that concludes what I want to ask you on the second part of the complaint

Is there anything you think we have not covered in that that you would like to put on the record

JM errr, no I don't think. I suppose the paper could have ... put round .. in a bit more depth perhaps it wouldn't have sounded so bad and they also stuck that hideous picture .. the only one that they have got here at South Ribble : they have got the information from here, with that photograph and stuff. But no. I don't think my contrition came through as I would have like

A comment re the 2nd complaint was made

.....and don't forget I haven't been on a course on standards yet. I went on one about three weeks ago for an hour but that was about declaring an interest, and after I finished with that I thought ahhh, well maybe ..

A comment re the 2nd complaint was made

JS so are you saying you didn't have any training on standards, and the code of conduct until ...

JM until after the event ..

JS until after BOTH these events

JM oh, did you get my email eventually

JS yes thank you

JM well the date is on there I've had an hour on that

JS and that is the only training you have ever had, you have never had any training prior to that

JM well we didn't do any type of training at all when we were in The Toads, we were discouraged from doing anything apart from going to Eastern Area and the main council meeting, all your work should be done amongst the people that is what Mr Sharratt used to say

JS so was training offered to you, and you decided not to have it while you were an Idle Toad

JM erm quite possibly but we weren't .. we weren't a normal party in any way shape or form we .. it was like renegades and it is only since I have joined the conservatives that I am going on line everyday and watching and going on these courses. I am on a couple next week, plus the fact I have now retired from work which is a biggun because in those days when I was a Toad I was still working in engineering you see. I am 65 now I don't do anything apart from council and deliver .. well I am not doing that now. ... and that sort of thing, and now I have more time. I mean I certainly didn't seek out anything but nobody said to me hang on you have got to go on this standards thing to know what you are doing.

JS thank you very much Cllr I am going to end the interview now at 11.40am

Signed as a true record of the interview

Dated