

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

JS yes, it is helpful to know the background. Can I take you to the 20th January this year, when I believe you attended an Eastern Area committee meeting. Have you been on that committee since you have been elected.

JM yes

JS I believe both Cllr Watts and Cllr Sharratt were also present at the meeting

JM yes

JS one of the items that was on the agenda, I presume you subsequently saw the minutes.. Minute no. 48 – there is a request for financial assistance for Gregson Lane Cricket club.

JM um

JS do you recall Cllr Sharratt declaring a prejudicial interest and leaving the meeting

JM I do indeed I was very surprised that he did because I didn't realise why, he stood up and said I have confidential information ... oh no I have been told things in confidence .. the thing is with Tom he is a bit of a drama queen and he walks out at any occasion and .. ok let him go if that is what he wanted to do. I have prejudicial interest in this whatever. I mean, what Tom has been told in the Old Oak, which is where this has been given from , is nothing like what was truly happening. What happened was that it wasn't actually for Gregson Lane Cricket team, at all. They went because the guy who was the secretary was doing the paperwork for it, it was a charity match in aid of Derian House , this house for kids with cancer, and just the once the Gregson Lane team and their hated rivals the Houghton team, who were like a couple of hundred yards away, had got together for this charity match, which Billy Beaumont was going to be playing in and all that , and it was all in aid of Derian House. They asked me to umpire it, because I am a league umpire – you have to be registered at Lords to be a proper umpire because I don't know if you know if anybody gets hurt in a cricket match now, they don't claim against the cricket club or the groundsman, they claim against the umpire and I have to be registered and I have this card to say whatever. So they asked me to umpire and that were that. Then we

had the meeting asking for, well because it was costing, it was going to cost us about £400, or should I say the hall was £100 for the day, plus £100 for insurance in case we wrecked it and then it was like nearly £100 for St Johns and so forth – so they asked for £400. I had no sort of, I was not going to benefit in any way at all, I mean the only benefit I get was to stand in a field all afternoon for no pay you know and I didn't think there was anything, but when Tom went out, so I just said outloud, I said look I know about this, it is about a cricket match, I know about it being, I am being asked to umpire it, for nothing and Barry Yates says oh you don't have to leave the meeting, he is chairman, you don't have to leave the meeting, you are alright you just don't vote on it then. So what I did was actually we had the committee and I had to stand in the corner like a naughty boy at school and just listen to it all and then they decided it was all too much and in the end they ended up giving them £200. Anyway I wasn't involved in the voting or anything. Now even today I don't think I would have treated it any other way, it was Sharratt that made a drama out of it, it was nonsense – he had no need to go out, it was nothing to do with the committee it was nothing to do with the club and the game wasn't even taking part on our patch it was on Chorley it wasn't on South Ribble and its just him, the way he is. So it was absolute nonsense and why on earth Dave Watts has complained about this I do not know.

JS the interest you declared therefore to the meeting was that you had been asked to actually umpire the match, and that was the extent of the interest that you told them

JM yes

JS but I understand that you have a close connection with the club. You have umpired for them

JM yes, I am their umpire

JS right so you regularly umpire for them

JM well that meeting was well before the beginning of the season. This season I am their umpire

JS and is that declared in your register of interests

JM sorry I am not with you

JS have you registered a your association with the club with the council

JM no I haven't. you are telling me something I don't know about

JS I am not telling you it is necessary that you should do, I am just asking whether you had previously registered. So the other point is that this application had been put together by a working party from the cricket club and is it correct that you were part of that

JM Yes. They subsequently asked me yes, because they didn't know the opposite number over the fence, if you like in Chorley, David Dickenson, so I said I would get hold of David Dickenson, get him involved and probably we, well we ended up with both mayors turning up unfortunately I think they hardly ever played or watched

JS but you didn't tell the committee on the 20th January that you had been at least in part responsible for submitting this application

JM no. I hadn't they had asked me to umpire and we had sat there in the Oak just kicking it around the very first time and this happened after that and of course Sharratt came asking what happened in the Oak and went horlicks over this cricket match thing and told him bits about it, so the following meeting I mean the thing hadn't got going then really.

JS well the question I am asking you and I understood you to have said initially "yes" you were involved in putting the application to the committee in, so

JM oh I told them how to go about it, yeah

JS well you told them the procedure, did you suggest to them what they might actually say in it?

JM no. Barry did – that's Barry Yates came in, he's the chairman of Eastern Area

JS but you did not think that you should tell the committee that you had discussed with the cricket club the putting in of the application, how they might formulate it, or whatever you did discuss with them

JM well, don't forget up to having an hour last month I , had , this standards thing, I had had no training at all on it: like I say I might well have got it wrong if you like, but I honestly couldn't understand why Tom had gone out, I mean he was nothing to do with it anyway and I understood, that you have to get either some pecuniary advantage, or some benefit to yourself before you have to say I have got an interest. I mean, like I say the only interest I have got is to stand in a field, without being paid for the day and that's it.

JS well the paragraph 6a states that you must not use or attempt to use your position as a member improperly to confer on or to secure for yourself, or any other person an

advantage. Now you understand the reason for that. It is not just so that you might get financial benefit, but a relative, a friend, a cricket club

JM well Gregson aren't getting it that's the whole point, everything is to Derian House.

JS but they are getting £200 from the committee

JM no they are not. They have to pay £100 for the hall, £100 for insurance = in fact, with, alright with it being washed out we would have stood with an hour or two to go I think we would have had to stick our hands in our own pockets because we were losing and we just about got over – and I don't know exactly how much over, I don't know but that was mainly through the raffle

JS but without the council's £200 then you would have been £200 worse off, wherever that money went

JM oh yes, I'll grant you that

JS so you must understand that you, its not just yourself who must not benefit from your position, but other people who are associated with you

JM I am sorry I don't accept that. The only people who were going to gain at all were Derian House, nobody is going to get a happeny of it

JS that's not the question I asked. I asked do you accept that you must not do anything which gets an advantage for someone closely associated with you

JM well if .. that , yeah if that is the way it was, yeah I do I do ...

JS well if in this case a friend of yours had been the umpire and he said the only way I am going to get paid is if you get the council to give us a grant : now you would say then -well I hope you would say then- I cant go before the council and try and get a grant so my friend can get paid for umpiring.

JS right. I see what you mean. All I can say I mean then it is not perhaps to you I should apologise but I do, seeing as you are here. What has thrown me, lets be fair, a couple of days after Tom Sharratt who went ambling out or whatever, went to Paul Abbott who is the secretary and said to him I am sorry we could only get you half of what you wanted, because they asked for £400 and they gave them £200, he said I'll give you the other £200 out of County. So surely as far as I can see that makes everything alright. He is vastly experienced: he has 18yrs on the council, so if he is offering to give him half out of his county money, I mean what had I done wrong.

JS you will appreciate I don't know what took place between Cllr Sharratt and someone else

JM er no but will you ask him for me Sir

JS but that was after this

JM what. No it was within days I found that out

JS but that was after the 20th January

JM oh yeah, yes, a couple of days after yeah

JS yes. But it didn't affect your behaviour on the 20th January. Do you recall going to a meeting with the club secretary, I think it is a Mr Rooney, and Cllr Sharratt at the secretary's house in January 2007

JM well, was it the two of us in his house

JS well, do you recall having a meeting with the cricket club secretary at which yourself and Cllr Sharratt were present in January 2007

JM 2007, there was one about, where they were talking about .. well I mean I was still a Toad then

JS well let me tell you the reason that Cllr Sharratt says that he declared a prejudicial interest was because of a meeting that took place at which you were present in January 2007 with the cricket club secretary

JM Oh I know who you mean now. Its not secretary it's the guy .. what is his name .. I am all scatty .. well Tom asked me along it was to do with .. they were talking about the idea of trying to get to buy some land to put .. to have their own pitch on .. it was like a watching brief for me, because like I say I was still a Toad and I wasn't involved with cricket team either. Tom just asked me along and I say, there was he and I, Barry didn't go neither did Mick Higgins but this was over buying some land

JS right well you say that in 2007 you weren't involved with the cricket club, were you not umpiring for them then

JM no

JS so how long have you been umpiring for them

JM I did Houghton about 4 years ago for a season, then a couple of seasons out, I did a couple of matches last year when they were desperately stuck, and I have only just gone as their umpire and registered this season.

JS so you do recall this meeting. You see Cllr Sharratt says that there was considerable discussion, or there was discussion about the financing and development of the club

JM no, just about buying the field. I don't remember any more than that

JS have you recollected the name of the person from the club that gave you this information, do you know who it was from the cricket club that was telling you about buying the land

JM yes,,,,,, I ... oh heck ...

JS well perhaps rather than delay the interview now, if you can find that out

JM yes, I will do it has just gone a blank

JS now lets move on. The information that you

JM Stuart Cross

JS Thank you.

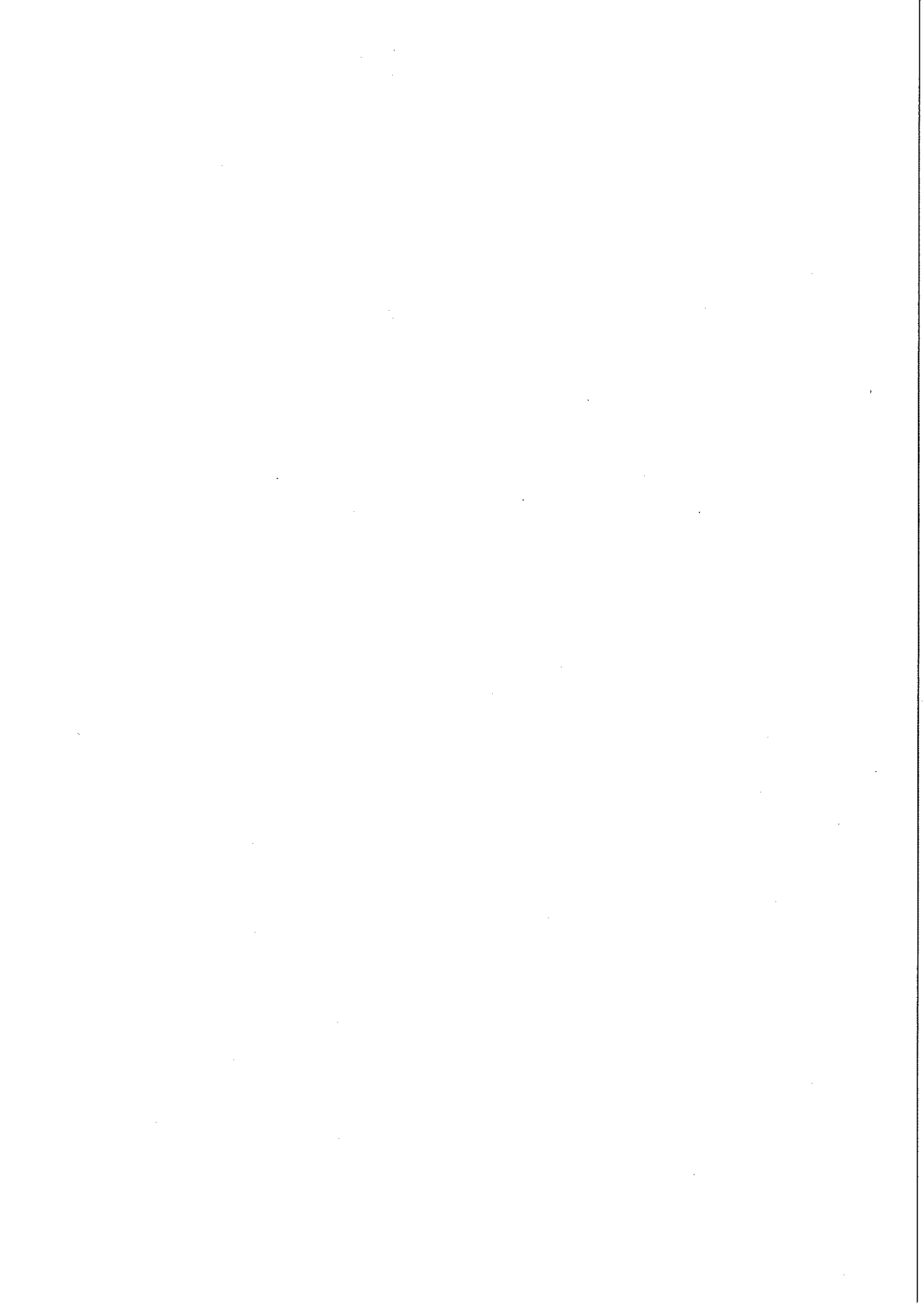
JM Ayy and his son plays as well, Yes Stuart, it was at his house

JS so you had been invited as a local Cllr but at that point you had no connection with the club. So why did Stuart Cross want to tell Cllrs about buying the field, what relevance did that ...

JM I think it was how to go about it, and I suppose could ... you see Tom is a County Councillor don't forget; he would be able to help them, more than I would and I suppose at that time he was probably nurturing me if you like. I say I joined half way through the thing and I was only in for a couple of years. It was a heck of a long time ago that. I wasn't really in any position to help them, I mean I wasn't on planning or anything

JS well that is why I am struggling to understand why this person would tell you, well why he would bother contacting two Councillors who weren't involved with the cricket club simply to tell them he was buying a piece of land or ..

JM well Tom used to go to their end of season dinners, you know as a sort of .. I don't know, I don't know what he had done for these to go to the do at the end of the season. I did the odd matches when they were stuck, when Ray couldn't do it, and it was mainly I was trying to get my garden done, but the odd time I was only doing it Its only now I am registered for the full season, my name is in the thing at Lords and everything



JS Cllr Sharratt is adamant that the information that he recalls being given at that meeting had such a bearing on this event of 4th May that he didn't feel able to stay in the meeting.

JM its absolute nonsense.

JS that's all I want to ask you about that incident. Before we move on is there anything else that you feel is relevant to that incident that ...

JM No. you have just knocked me bowling with this thing about this meeting at Stuart Cross's because it was purely and simply about buying a bit of land and I cant remember anything else apart from that ... and what would we do and that and so forth. I mean I had almost forgotten going to it and it certainly didn't register with me, regardless, I mean I had done the odd match for them, and they knew I was a Councillor and of course that is why they asked Tom, but I cant .. honestly I cant see any relevance whatever in that meeting and the meeting at Eastern area committee

JS I will take a view on it when I have had chance to think a little more about it, and perhaps read the transcript ... but how would I get in touch with Stuart Cross.. is he contactable through the cricket club

JM Well yes, he is playing tomorrow .. there is a home game against Houghton ... they are hated rivals .. and well should I give him your number

JS yes if you could give him mine or you could give me his

JM well, I don't have his number, I don't deal with him. The secretary Paul Abbott I have got his

JS well if I could give you a card afterwards, perhaps you can ask him to contact me

JM yeah I will it doesn't make any sense this

THE REMAINDER OF THE INTERVIEW
IS RELEVANT ONLY TO THE OTHER
COMPLAINT -

D WHELAN -

