

From Councillor T. E. Sharratt

14 Coupe Green, Hoghton, Preston PR5 0JR; 01254-852978

9 April 2009

The Chief Executive,
South Ribble Borough Council,
West Paddock,
Leyland PR25 1DH.

Dear Chief Executive,

COUNCILLOR JAMES MARSH: FAILURE TO DECLARE INTERESTS

I am reminded that under the code of conduct any councillor who fails to report misconduct by another member is himself guilty of misconduct. I am therefore obliged to inform you that when an application from Gregson Lane Cricket Club for a £400 grant was considered at a meeting of South Ribble Borough Council's Eastern Area Committee at Bamber Bridge Methodist church on 20 January 2009 Councillor James Marsh failed to declare three interests. This is what happened:

1. I immediately declared an interest and left the room, since I had been given confidential information about the club's intentions for its future development when I attended a meeting with club officials in January 2007. Councillor Marsh attended the same meeting and was given the same confidential information about the club's future. On January 20 he did not declare this interest to the area committee, remained in the room, and took part in the committee's consideration of the application. Since I was out of the room I am unable to say how far he participated in that consideration; nor can I say to what degree he may have discussed the application with his party colleagues beforehand, individually or together as a group, or influenced their ultimate decision.
2. The minutes record that he declared that he had been invited to act as an umpire at the charity cricket match on May 4 in support of which the application had been made. That may have been true but he did not declare that he has been an umpire for Gregson Lane Cricket Club for many years and is closely associated with it.
3. In preparation for the cricket match, which was arranged jointly with Hoghton Cricket Club, a four-man ad hoc working party was established to formulate the application. Councillor Marsh was a member of that working party, attended meetings, and played a full part in drawing up the application. When the area committee considered the application on January 20 he did not disclose his close involvement in its preparation; he therefore sat in judgment on his own application.

While I was out of the room I waited in the lobby of the church, where I could neither see nor hear what happened during the committee's consideration of the application. However, the leader of the council, Margaret Smith, and you yourself were both present in the room and can testify as witnesses.

Please let me know what action you propose to take.

Yours sincerely,

TOM SHARRATT