

My name is Lindsay Simpson ,and along with Paul Abbott and Councillor Jim Marsh, Gregson Lane Cricket Club (GLCC), and Greg Gorrell, Hoghton Cricket Club (Hoghton CC), I was part of the steering committee organising a charity cricket match at Hoghton Cricket Club.

On the evening of Tuesday 13 January 2009, an informal meeting was held to set the event in motion. The only item that was down for discussion was the actual date for the event. This was in the hands of Greg Gorrell who had obtained information about availability of the ground and the village hall.

When I arrived at the Old Oak Inn, Jim Marsh asked if it was ok for Councillor Barrie Yates to sit in with us to see if there was any input he could offer. As Barrie was Mayor of South Ribble Borough Council at this time, I did not see any problem with him offering his advice.

He said that as the event was for the village's benefit that we might be able to obtain a grant. He advised Paul Abbott how to go about this in writing. This was done via GLCC. Cllr Yates did not at any time ask for specific donations of monies of any kind.

He offered to contact the Mayor of Chorley on our behalf and also said he had a barbeque which we could use if required. Cllr Yates then left and took no part in any further discussion that evening.

Further to my recollection of the meeting of 13 January, I wish to make the following observations:

I had been alerted quite shortly after the meeting that Cllr Sharratt had been heard to comment in the Old Oak, "There is more to this cricket match than meets the eye." Greg Gorrell also told me that Cllr Sharratt was in the Old Oak whilst we were meeting on 13 January. I cannot personally remember but Greg Gorrell is certain Cllr Sharratt was there.

Cllr Sharratt came to see me on three separate occasions, the last being 28 May 2009. He was trying to get information as to what Cllr Yates and Cllr Marsh's involvements were with the cricket match. At no time were any sums of money discussed at and at the last meeting, 28 May, my partner was present and agrees that Cllr Sharratt did not ask any specific questions about sums of money. I remember saying to Cllr Sharratt that he was looking for something that was not there. Although I cannot be certain of all that was said in these meetings with Cllr Sharrat, I know what I did not say nor, according to Cllr Sharratt, confirm.

For the record further meetings of the Cricket Match Steering Committee were held on: 21 January, 4 February, 18 February, 6 March, 25 March, 15 April and 21 April.

Cllr Yates did not attend any of these subsequent meetings.

I first became aware of Cllr Sharratt's allegations against Cllr Marsh towards the end of May. I spoke to Cllr Marsh who told me about John Stone and Stuart Cross. I spoke to Stuart Cross who told me that John Stone had telephoned him about GLCC. He reluctantly gave John Stone the information he asked for.

I decided to ring John Stone on Wednesday 3 June to clarify the situation. He assured me that the cricket match was not his concern. He also said that the grant application itself was not under investigation. I gave him information about the planning of the event and he thanked me for my honesty and openness. I expressed my concern that the charity cricket match was not to be dragged into a political arena.

When I was later told about Cllr Sharratt's new allegations against Cllr Yates, I realised that the cricket match was being used in a vendetta between the three councillors.

I contacted my solicitor, Derek Forrest, because I felt that Paul Abbott, Greg Gorrell and myself were being unwillingly involved in a council investigation. After conversations with John Stone and John Dakin, I agreed to send John Stone a copy of the "notes", which in fact was simply a task list, not in chronological order, from the meeting of 13 January, showing what individuals agreed to do. This was on the understanding that John Stone did not contact Paul Abbott who did not want to get involved. John Stone did not honour this understanding and wrote to Paul Abbott. I find this distasteful.

I have read John Stone's submissions about this case and have already commented on them.

At no time did I give John Stone permission to use any conversations we had as evidence, and what information he did use initially was very selective.

I had a frank conversation with John Stone on the evening of Friday 16 October. I asked him three times to remove my oral evidence from his first report. He kept saying he would "think about it" and finally hung up on me. This led to me having to formally write to him and SRBC on 17 October 2009, stressing my concern that he had used verbal evidence selectively without my express permission.

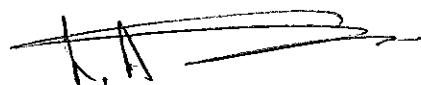
I note in his final report, section 6.6 and 6.7, he feels he must comment on my refusal to be interviewed and my access to his report. David Whelan, SBRC, was fully aware of this as it was after a meeting with him and Cllr Yates on 13 October that John Stone received a copy of my comments with my permission. John Stone is fully aware of my reasons for not wanting to give a formal statement. These were made clear to him on numerous occasions.

I will now comment on John Stone. I have found his methods of investigating these cases unprofessional and bordering on harassment. The Local Government Act is to

be used as a guide, not a weapon to try and gain an advantage in pursuit of information from private citizens.

I further formally request SRBC to make available to all interested parties, under the Freedom of Information Act, the full costs of this extensive investigation, including John Stone's costs separately itemised.

I have both Greg Gorrell and Paul Abbott's permission to represent them on behalf on the Steering Committee.


24.11.09,