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Angus Young
Hull Daily Mail

An Open letter

Dear Angus

Further to your three articles published Thursday and Friday of last week referring to the behaviour of certain East Riding of Yorkshire Councillors, although you make brief references to Councillor Andy Strangeway`s attacks on some members of the Conservative group and you did include a small mention of wrongdoing by some Conservative Councillors, nevertheless your three articles concentrated on discrediting Andy Strangeway following his appearance before the standards committee.

In joining up the dots you have unfortunately omitted to include those that would form a more accurate and comprehensive picture. It is correct that the allegations against Councillor Andy Strangeway were upheld whereas those against the Leader of the Council, Councillor Parnaby were rejected but the bigger picture shows a completely different story.

Last year Councillor Andy Strangeway wrote an open letter to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Parnaby asking him to answer five questions each referring to hospitality or gifts which had not been declared in the register of interests.

Councillor Parnaby was of course unable to provide any answer to any of the questions without either lying or confirming that he was in breach of the Code of Conduct by not declaring these previously. Unfortunately for Councillor Parnaby, Councillor Strangeway`s main aim as a councillor is as his website indicates “ Probity in Public Service” and therefore he is never going to accept Councillor Parnaby`s refusal to answer these or all the other questions on which he has remained silent and nor should he have to. Councillor Parnaby can of course remain silent if not doing so would incriminate him but by doing so he obviously cannot prove his innocence and it follows most people would only conclude his guilt.

Previously councillors who have challenged the leader, being mainly conservatives, have been kept in line by bullying, deselection or loss of allowances from committees, the Conservative group having previously been likened to being run on similar lines to that of North Korea. The East Riding is littered with some excellent previous councillors who have not been prepared to put up with this appalling behaviour and have regrettably resigned.

Unfortunately again for Councillor Parnaby, Councillor Strangeway is not so easily dealt with, as an independent he cannot be whipped, is not interested in lining his own pockets and will always challenge wrongdoing. He may well be guilty of not treating some council officers with respect but why should he respect those who are paid huge six figure salaries to maintain standards within county hall and then choose to turn a blind eye to corruption or even lie in order to protect Councillor Parnaby.

Throughout last year many very serious allegations were made against Councillor Parnaby from non-declarations of several items in the register of interests in breach of the code of conduct, chairing *behind closed door* meetings which decided promotions and hundreds of thousands of pounds to council officers without declaring that they were in fact his close personal friends and the well evidenced **criminal offence** of not declaring for twelve years his company's involvement in the supply of services to his own council.

Given that these offences are as serious as any that can be envisaged Councillor Parnaby has throughout this period kept absolutely silent on all these matters, refusing even to deny anything. Your article indicates he soon found his tongue in order to lead the attack dogs on Andy Strangeway for two very minor offences in order for him to make the most of a situation in which for once he would not be compromised.

The other Conservative Councillors, some themselves with very dubious histories, having never publicly questioned Councillor Parnaby over his corruption, queued up to bully Councillor Strangeway in order to help their leader's cause in removing this thorn in his side by accusing Councillor Strangeway of making up stories and unfounded allegations. If allegations cannot actually be denied by Councillor Parnaby and he is surely aware that a legal route would only support his growing number of accusers, it follows that most people would believe them to be true.

A more honourable and less insensitive person would by now have realised that it is time for him to go before more reputations at County Hall are ruined for those subordinates having to lie in order to protect him.

One thing that can be clear is that Councillor Strangeway is a hound with a strong sense of smell for corruption and the accused silence will not put him off the scent.

Yours sincerely

Peter Robinson