

## **STATEMENT of Michelle Donohue-Moncrieff**

**Monday 12th September 2016**

My name is MICHELLE DONOHUE-MONCRIEFF. I am 41 (forty-one) years of age. I live in Hunmanby, North Yorkshire. I am a Scarborough Borough Councillor. Until Thursday 8th September 2016, I was the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Democracy, Stronger & Safer Communities. As of today, Monday 12th September 2016, I learn, obliquely, that my delegated membership of the Police & Crime Panel for North Yorkshire has been withdrawn, by the Leader of Scarborough Council, Councillor Derek BASTIMAN.

The following Statement is true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

### **Preamble**

1. I had a difficult upbringing, having suffered from neglect and domestic violence in my teenage years. I have suffered from depression and mood problems (in particular around my menstrual cycle) throughout my adult life.
2. In 2010, Henry, my husband of eight years, during a biopsy at Scarborough Hospital which went wrong, suffered three cardiac arrests.
3. In the subsequent weeks, he was diagnosed with heart failure and bronchoaveolar cancer. The medical team advised that there was no possible treatment. I was forced by my employer to leave my job and became a full time carer for my husband.
4. In December 2010, Henry was admitted to Scarborough Hospital where we were advised that his cancer had spread to his liver and that he had days to live.

5. The conditions at Scarborough hospital were so disturbingly unsatisfactory that his sister fought to have him moved to St. Catherine's Hospice, where he died peacefully on 8th December 2010. The DWP has recorded my condition dating from this time.
6. After Henry's death, I returned to work but found the impact of grief and trauma from my experiences had affected my performance. I had contact with the Crisis Team and Community Mental Health Teams throughout 2012.
7. Throughout 2011, I was involved with many successful campaigns with our local Parish Council, Hunmanby PC, of which I was Chair, and I was asked to contest a by-election, as a member of the Conservative Party, for the Hertford Ward of Scarborough Borough Council.
8. I was duly elected to the Borough Council on 15th March 2012.
9. During the period throughout 2012, I progressed well in the Council and, in October, I returned to work in October 2012, in a temporary capacity, at Kingspan Ltd in Sherburn. My contract finished in February 2013. In parallel to this employment, I had carried out my duties as Councillor for the Hertford Ward without demurral or complaint. I was never criticised.
10. In May 2013, I secured a job at SWC Trade Frames Ltd in Scarborough as a Technical Estimator. In July 2013, the responsibilities of my role were expanded significantly. This led to my suffering from stress and taking time off sick in December 2014. I returned to work in February 2015, when the company split my role into two jobs. During this time, I was prescribed *Citalopram* to help with anxiety and stress issues.
11. During this period of employment, I was offered the role as Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Safer and Stronger Communities by the then Leader, Cllr. Tom Fox. This was in November

2013. Again, I carried out this role to the satisfaction of the Leader, with no concerns being raised about my performance.

12. Again during this period, whilst in full-time employment, I campaigned successfully for the Conservative party candidates across the country in Morley & Outwood, Stockton South and Brigg & Goole. I also planned and prepared my own Borough Election literature and worked with Councillor Godfrey Allanson on a successful campaign. I also assisted the Conservative candidate in the Borough Council candidate for Filey, Tony Viney, with canvassing and campaign issues.

13. In the run-up to the May 7th 2015 General Election, I advised Kevin Hollinrake and his election agent Nigel Knapton on issues in the Filey and Hunmanby area which were relevant to the success of his campaign in the Thirsk & Malton constituency. I canvassed with Kevin in both Hunmanby and Filey in a campaign which produced a 19,000 Conservative majority for Kevin Hollinrake MP.

14. On the same day as the General Election, I was re-elected as Conservative member for SBC Hertford Ward and I was re-appointed to my Cabinet Portfolio by the new Council Leader, Councillor Derek Bastiman. During this period I was suffering from physical exhaustion which, as I learned from discussions with my GP, was attributed to depression and I continued to use medication as prescribed.

15. Due to this, I was finding working full-time to be physically difficult. I was also struggling with intense menstrual cycle mood swings which was affecting my performance at work.

16. At this time, I had discussions with my employer about future pay rises, only to be told that they would not be available. During July 2015, a job was advertised by a local employment agency for a very similar role at SWC. Upon investigation, I found that it was my own role - but at a higher salary. I raised this with my employer who failed to give me a satisfactory

answer. I decided to resign my position. Before I left, I was asked to take on a temporary part-time contract which I agreed to. This arrangement lasted until 11th September 2015.

17. I decided to take some time out to focus on my Cabinet and Council work. I became more involved with my Portfolio and attended both the formal Cabinet meetings and the informal Cabinet meetings organised by the Leader. We made progress on many policy issues.

18. During this period, I became increasingly exhausted, even to the point of finding myself out of breathe using the Town Hall stairs. I became concerned that this was not straightforward depression and that there was an underlying physical problem with my health, as I had also lost a lot of weight.

19. In December 2015, I visited my GP and expressed my concerns about my health. The locum GP arranged blood tests and asked a range of questions about how I was feeling. A blood test revealed that I was severely anaemic and I was prescribed Iron tablets. I took this as a wake-up call and decided I should get myself together and apply for Employment Support Allowance (ESA). I submitted a backdated claim with the relevant information to the DWP.

20. I received a request for further information relating to my Council allowance payslip. I submitted this documentation and returned it as requested. Again I heard nothing. In February 2016, I again contacted the DWP who assured me they would look into it. Yet again I heard nothing. I decided to manage my finances as best I could from my Council allowance, a small pension I inherited from my late husband and a credit card.

21. As I had applied for ESA, I was able to get my prescriptions for *Citalopram* and Iron without charge.

22. In March 2016, this stopped as my claim was deemed unsuccessful.























