

# STATEMENT

of

**Councillor Steve Siddons (Labour)**

Friday 17<sup>th</sup> February 2017

I think that we've seen over the last few weeks a 'ground swell' view coming from members of the public and from the two Town Councils in the Borough, expressing a view that they have little or no confidence in the way that the Conservative administration at SBC do business. And that's manifested itself in many different ways, and the Labour Group feel we have to recognise that feeling and express our concerns.

The problem with the Conservative administration, in our view - and we have said this for a long, long time - is that they are simply not open and transparent in the way they do business. And what that creates is a feeling of mistrust amongst the public, and our view is that most of the business that the Council transacts can be open and transparent.

There are certain aspects of confidential, commercial confidentiality, where you may have to keep certain pieces of information private, but the majority of the business the Council does can be open and transparent.

The public are<sup>[sic]</sup> not stupid. They<sup>[sic]</sup> will understand if you explain to them properly, in a measured way, why decisions are being made in the way they are. But if you keep those things secret, then that creates a mistrust and rumours spread.

There's a feeling that the Council is doing something it shouldn't be doing.

And certainly I can only speak for the Labour Group, but we have a huge amount of integrity in the work that we do. We don't like being tarred with this same brush. And so we are saying to the Conservative administration *"You need to change. You need to do something about this"*.

And if you can't do something about it, then it's time that we had a different administration - a different Leader and Cabinet - because the ones we have got are being felt that they have not - are not - doing the job properly.

So the problem that we have is that there are 25 Conservative Councillors and there are two Independent members who are on the Cabinet payroll - so they have got their support - and,

at best, the Opposition have<sup>[sic]</sup> 23 members. So if it comes to a straight vote of confidence we would lose it.

And I am not interested in 'gesture politics'. I want to make a change to the authority, and that can only be made if all good people come together. So it is not just the Opposition but it is some members of the Conservative Group that<sup>[sic]</sup> have also got concerns and fears for the future that they come together, with us, and vote this Leadership and Cabinet out of office - replace it with a new one. That's what we want to see. And we want to see it done properly, not just simply 'gesture politics'.

Is that what this move from the Labour Group is - a bit of a rallying cry? It's a call from the Labour Group to all good people who are members of this Council, who have integrity and support what's right, to really look at the deficiencies and say, "*Is this really the way that this authority should be doing business?*", and think very hard about that, and come with us. And at that stage, when we are sure we can gain a majority, we will call for a Vote of No Confidence in this authority.

Do you believe that the Cabinet has lost the trust of the public?

We do believe the Council has lost the trust of the public it is clear from the things that are on social media. The two Town Councils who have had a Vote of No Confidence. They have lost the trust and, erm, it is time that they stood aside and let a new fresh approach take over the running of the authority.

Is this, if you like, first of all obviously a combination, a bit of a snowball. First there was the Futurist the decision on that, then recently the two Town Councils in Filey and Whitby. And now yourself, as well ... no confidence.

Think: the Futurist is a good example of how not to approach what is a major and sensitive project for the Borough, particularly for Scarborough Town. It's clear from the public reaction that there are<sup>[sic]</sup> a huge amount of people who have a great love for the Futurist and they deserve to understand the real reasons why, why the Council is planning to demolish it.

It's about making sure that everybody understands what the truth is about the building - whether it's capable of sustaining a future; the condition of it; whether it is past its best and can't be recovered.

That debate has not really been had its almost as though we know best what's best for the Borough we will make the decisions and we will make them not necessarily wholly in secret, but with as little information as possible, eh, in the belief that people will just accept that, and clearly they do not, and that is being shown in a ground swell of opinion that is being raised, and I think it is just a good example of how not to do business.

If they had been more open and transparent in the way they had approached this particular issue, then I am sure they would have had much more support from more people would understand the reasons why they feel the project needs to go in the way it does. They never got that and you saw that when that went to Full Council on the 9th January, I have never seen as many people in the public gallery, spilling out side and watching it on TV.

We have never had that many people taking an interest in, er, an individual project. I wish that they did, but in this particular case, er, the opinions were not listened to. They went ahead with the view that they have always had; that it should be demolished.

Really, any clearer understanding of what the future holds for the building, there is no contract in place for a replacement. There is no detail - and we said this at that meeting, but our voices were ignored and they went ahead the way that they did.

As you mention, there one of the main reasons this fall out happened the way it did sort of happened. What would the Labour Group have done with regards to that? What the Labour Group would have done? They would have engaged with the public. We would have explained what we were doing; the reasons why we come to the view that things have to be done, and then enter into a debate.

Clearly, not everybody can have their own way on these things. There will be a view in one direction and a view in another. But I do believe that if people understand the reasons why you feel you have to do things the way you do, you will get much more support than you will by simply ignoring their views and ploughing ahead doing what you want to do.

So my call would have been for us to have that proper debate. We would not have pleased everybody but at least people would have understood why we made the decision we did. So ultimately from this call of no confidence what is it that you want from this. We want this Conservative administration to recognise that they have not done well for this borough over the last few years.

There are many examples of that lack of vision for the Borough; poor spending decisions; Benchmark; the Futurist; the town centre cinema; tourist information centre; the list goes on, and it all comes down to a lack of transparency and openness in the way business is done.

So we're saying The time has come for you to stand aside and let someone else do the job that should be done. And to actually bring us into the 21st century and to properly engage with the public who deserve to know why decisions are being made the way they are.

There are very difficult times at the moment; Local Authorities are in difficult straits and some really difficult decisions have to be made. But we make those decisions together with the public. And that way I feel we can have a much better relationship with the people of this Borough.