

What went wrong and who is responsible? Episode 6.

In Episode 5, we learned that Newby and Scalby Town Council decided to set up what they called an “independent investigation” into the Woodsmith Grant with the Town Clerk acting on behalf of the Council. We also learned that the person carrying out this “*independent investigation*” was Mr Ian Morris, the Northern Director of the Society of Local Council Clerks of which, it will be recalled, Mrs Marley is a member. In this Episode, we will examine the process by which the Maoni Report was commissioned and reported to the council before examining in some detail the report’s findings.

Perhaps now would be a good time for our readers to be introduced to the official minutes of Newby and Scalby Town Council. At the Extraordinary Meeting of the council held on 26 January 2024 in the Confidential Business part of the meeting (minute 24/24.1 - shown below) we find that Cllr Thompson made a confidential report “*which was **noted.***” Sadly, for undisclosed reasons, this report was not made available to the Employment Tribunal so we are unable to examine its contents but the minute goes on to **Resolve** (council speak for decide) “*that following a meeting with the Chief Executive of The Woodsmith Foundation, an external investigation was necessary to get an independent view of what had taken place as well as to protect the reputation and integrity of both the RFO/Proper Officer and the Council. Resolved that Maoni Consulting (Ian Morris) be appointed to carry out an investigation at a cost of £1000 plus any additional costs agreed by N&STC. Resolved that it be delegated to the Clerk to enter into and sign a contract with Maoni Consulting.*”

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24/24 CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS

24/24.1 **Resolved** that the Chairman’s confidential report be **noted**. **Resolved** that following a meeting with the Chief Executive of The Woodsmith Foundation, an external investigation was necessary to get an independent view of what had taken place as well as to protect the reputation and integrity of both the RFO/Proper Officer and the Council. **Resolved** that Maoni Consulting (Ian Morris) be appointed to carry out an investigation at a cost of £1,000 plus any additional costs agreed by N&STC. **Resolved** that it be delegated to the Clerk to enter into and sign a contract with Maoni Consulting. **Resolved** that the Clerk write to the Woodsmith Foundation confirming an external investigation had been commissioned and giving brief details of the scope thereof. As part of the correspondence the Clerk would place on record with the Foundation that in the period 1st June 2023 to 31st December 2023 it had not given any staff or councillors authority to hold meetings with Woodsmith or make offers on behalf of the Town Council. It was **noted** a further meeting would be held in February with the Foundation.

There is an old saying: “Laws are like sausages - it is better not to see them being made.” To that we might like to add the decision making processes of some local councils. Let us, once again, unpick what was going on here. Firstly, Chairman Thompson’s confidential report, under mysterious circumstances, was unavailable for disclosure to the Tribunal. Then we see that “*following a meeting with the Chief Executive of The Woodsmith Foundation*” an “*independent, external investigation*” was necessary “*to protect the reputation and integrity of both the RFO/Proper Officer and the Council.*” Perhaps, on reflection, we should have warned our readers in advance about that last sentence. We hope that you soon recover.

So, Newby and Scalby Town Council decided to delegate Mrs Marley to enter into and sign a contract with Maoni Consulting’s Mr Ian Morris, who is the Northern Director of the same professional association as herself. We have not forgotten that only a few weeks before this, the same Council decided to end “*without explanation*” the disciplinary proceedings against the same Mrs Marley. Sometimes, words fail even the author of this series so let us simply reflect upon the facts outlined above and await the outcome of the Maoni Report which, readers will be amazed to learn, was received by the council exactly one week after this dubious decision. Patience, dear readers as we await Episode 7 and the Maoni Report itself.