

## **Tony Dixon**

---

**From:** "Tony Dixon" <afdixon@btinternet.com>  
**To:** "Cllr Gill Brown" <gillianannabrown@aol.com>; "Wendy Ashenden-Bax" <Wendy.Ashenden-Bax@arun.gov.uk>  
**Cc:** "Harold Hall" <haroldaubreyhall@aol.com>; "John Penfold" <john\_penfold@btinternet.com>  
**Sent:** 18 May 2008 16:39  
**Subject:** Concerns on impartiality

Dear Gill

FEH have, for the past 4 years been anxious to engage in serious discussion with the District Council on proposals for development at Ford airfield and we look forward to engaging in the Council's Select Committee procedure brought on by the government's decision to examine the concept closely to see if it could provide the basis for sustainable growth in the District.

We particularly welcome the Council's statement of the 8<sup>th</sup> May in which Councillor Tyler, Chairman Designate for the Committee says "This is going to be an open, professional and unbiased investigation...." and "The members of the Committee and I are all entering into this with completely open minds.....".

The spirit and intention behind that is unmistakable and public confidence in the committee's work will be determined by the extent to which it is true to those words and that spirit - will it be *seen* to have been approached with open minds and without bias?

We understand that Councillor Mrs Neno's recent by-election campaign may have been based, at least in part, on opposition to the Ford Eco-town proposals and that impression is supported by the way in which the new councillor quite properly declared an interest and left the Chamber when the subject was being considered at Council on 30<sup>th</sup> April.

Please may we see the election literature which was used in that campaign and may we have yours and Councillor Tyler's assurance that at no time, nor in any manner, did he assist the candidate in the campaign?

Since the words used in the Council's statement are attributed to him he will readily accept the importance of transparency in the process we are about to enter.

May we also have your assurance that no other Arun Member(s) participated, in any way whatsoever, in Councillor Mrs Neno's election campaign?

Councillor Dr Walsh has made a number of recent statements at Arun District Council and West Sussex County Council which we believe will be perceived by the public to imply his opposition to the Eco-Town proposals, for instance;

"this is less of eco-Ford and more of eco-fraud" (West Sussex Gazette 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2008, Bognor Observer 24<sup>th</sup> April 2008)

We are concerned that Councillor Dr Walsh's comments have, in effect, made his opposition to the Eco-Town proposals clear and that this has placed the integrity of the work of the committee in jeopardy.

At the Special Cabinet of 14<sup>th</sup> April 2008, Cabinet Members voted unanimously in favour of the recommendation that "the council, together with local organisations, mount a campaign against the principle of Eco-Towns in the District and also join any national campaigns of the same purpose".

This recommendation is specific to the district and can only mean a campaign against the Eco-Town proposals for Ford airfield.

We are concerned that the Cabinet Members involved have, in effect, pre-determined their position. Will they be declaring a personal interest in the event of any debate or vote on the Select Committee's report to Full Council?

We are also concerned that, according to the minutes of the Council Meeting of 7th May, Cabinet Members who have already voted to "mount a campaign against the principle of Eco-Towns in the District" took part in the appointment of the Select Committee members. May we have your comments on this?

The appointment of Members to the Select Committee did not appear on the agenda of the Full Council meeting of 30th April - and so we, as members of the public, left the meeting early.

We now understand that, although this matter did not appear on the agenda of the 30th April meeting, nor in the minutes of that meeting, that it was debated and agreed at that meeting - which all seems highly irregular.

We further note that the minutes of the 30th April meeting were not corrected at the meeting of 7th May - which would be the normal practice in the event of an error or omission. Instead the appointment of the Members to the Select Committee was minuted in the Council minutes of 7th May - though it did not appear on the agenda.

May we please have an explanation?

Was there any debate or discussion at either meeting and, if so, what was the nature of the debate or discussion and why was it not minuted?

We feel sure that you will understand our concern that the Select Committee process, and any subsequent debate or voting in the Council, must be guaranteed to be on an impartial basis.

We look forward to receiving your response to the concerns we have raised.

We further request that this letter and any subsequent response(s) are brought to the attention of the Select Committee.

Yours sincerely

Tony Dixon, Harold Hall and John Penfold  
Co-authors of the Ford Enterprise Hub concept