

Mayor is accused as angry councillor challenges accuracy of the July town council meeting record

NEW TWIST IN 'GREEN' SAGA

Report by John Mitchell

IN yet another astonishing twist, the saga of Hythe Town Council's controversial plan to build a community centre on the Green has plunged deeper into acrimony with an accusation that minutes of a recent meeting were not accurate.

Now town mayor Eileen Bailey has denied she tried to deceive anyone over a confidential meeting with developers who want to build a supermarket on the Prospect Road car park.

She was speaking after another heated debate on the issue at the latest town council meeting. Councillor Maurice Maisey challenged the minutes of the meeting held on July 20 claiming they were inaccurate concerning a question by Councillor Wendy Harris to Councillor Bailey.

Ms Harris said she had heard meetings had taken place which linked plans to build the community centre on the Green with a separate plan to build a supermarket on the car park.

Mr Maisey told Mrs Bailey: "Every councillor is aware these minutes are not a true record of what was said at the meeting."

"You signed those minutes and I believe you may have committed an offence."

Mrs Bailey replied: "That's your opinion but I believe other councillors are entitled to their opinion."

'Inducements'

The official minute recorded by town clerk Des Knowles was made after what he said was routine consultation with Mrs Bailey and Councillor Geoffrey Partridge, chairman of the council's finance and general purposes committee.

It said Ms Harris asked if Mrs Bailey met with Shepway council about development of Prospect Road car park and if any financial inducements were offered to resite the community centre on the Green.

But Mrs Bailey said she thought Ms Harris had asked if she had attended a

meeting with developers at Shepway and replied she had not.

Mr Partridge confirmed there had been meetings with the supermarket developer but said no money had been offered.

Explaining the reply she had made on July 20, Mrs Bailey said she had attended a confidential meeting with developers at Hythe but didn't mention it because the question was about Shepway.

'Difference'

But Mr Maisey insisted Ms Harris had not mentioned Shepway and only asked if meetings had taken place about the Green as a proposed site — a claim borne out by *Herald* reporter Bryher Golding Barrett's shorthand note of the debate which features no reference made to 'Shepway' by Ms Harris in her question.

Mr Knowles said in his original draft he didn't mention the word Shepway. But he told the *Herald*: "That's not to say Shepway wasn't said. I don't do shorthand and do not record every word — only key words and phrases."

"Because I do that we discuss what was correctly said and if there is a difference we put it right."

Mrs Bailey told the *Herald* after last Thursday's meeting: "The minutes weren't changed. I thought it was as I heard it and eight of my fellow members agreed."

She added: "I had no intention whatsoever to deceive anybody; I am not in the habit of lying. I didn't lie about this."

Mr Maisey asked for a recorded vote about the minutes being correct.

Voting for the minutes being correct were councillors: John Pearson (Con), Chris Capon (Con), Timothy Hogg (Ind), Geoffrey Partridge (Con), John Spencer (Con), Peter Colman (Con), Susan Finch (Con), Arthur Bailey (Con) and Eileen Bailey (Con). Against: Mark Botting (Lib Dem), John Schoner (Con), Mary Done (Lib Dem), Maurice Maisey (Ind) and Joan Maisey (Ind).

Councillor Wendy Harris (Lib Dem) wasn't at last Thursday's meeting because she was ill. She said: "I'm absolutely amazed some councillors can sit in a meeting and vote to agree on something which wasn't said."

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