

## **Speech by Cllr Helen Harvey Seconding Motion of No Confidence in Cllr Boughtflower**

Cllr Boughtflower you took over from Cllr Ian Harvey after 4 ½ years at the helm late June last year, inheriting a council which was flourishing and what one opposition Cllr has declared in a number of Council meetings was 'The best run Council in the South East'. To use your favourite word 'fantastic'- there were 'fantastic' finances, a 'fantastic' record for our COVID response, 'fantastic' regeneration plans and with visionary and ambitious housing development projects leading the way in the 'build to rent sector' for the Council to deliver itself the much-needed new homes in our Borough.

... I could go on, but tonight, is not about Cllr Ian Harvey – although I expect that you Cons are going to continue to try and lambast and defame his name (one of the only things you appear to be good at)!

I believe it is the duty of opposition Cllrs to hold the current administration to account. Those who choose not to do that tonight are failing in their responsibility and are in effect propping up the Cons.

Cllr Boughtflower let us face it your Moribund administration is characterised by procrastination, deliberate delaying, refusing to take responsibility and indecision. Reading the historical minutes of Council meetings, they are characterised by deferment after deferment.

This has resulted in this council virtually grinding to a halt for the lack of decision making.

In Trying to appease everyone in a bid to hold on as long as you can, you have surrendered so much to your closet friends in the LibDems.

So far have you compromised the policies upon which you were elected, that you have led the Conservative Group to lurch so far to the left that Labour have nowhere to regress to now!

You have promulgated illegitimate reports and appear to have overseen the leaking of a very confidential document to your pet journalists in order to bring this Council's name and its Officer's into disrepute. Shame on you!

You are happy to take the money, in excess of £20,000 a year and yet, you are rarely available, take days if not weeks to respond, you don't attend meetings which the Leader is expected at for example the recent Annual Business Breakfast Budget Briefing for our local businesses.

You have used the council's press department to issue a myriad of politically biased press releases – such things were not seen in the previous administration and are well out of order.

You have used COVID as a convenient excuse for you to avoid being seen. Who exactly is running this Council? You never appear on video and when you cannot avoid speaking and attempt to read what Officers have drafted for you, listeners cringe with embarrassment!

If you cannot avoid answering we regularly hear someone prompting you in the background. Who is this? Are they elected Borough Councillors? You claim your administration is all about transparency, but it's the exact opposite of that in practice. **Words are easy, its deeds which bring measurable results which matter.**

Cllr Boughtflower I am ashamed to have witnessed you treating residents rudely and disrespectfully if they dare to challenge or question you. The public have a right to expect

their Council Leader to act with dignity and to set a good example. I have seen some of your social media which frankly repulsed me, so suggestive was it!

Facts speak for themselves and despite all your attempts to rewrite history the council's commercial investment portfolio has performed exceptionally well during COVID delivering 98% of rents collected. This revenue generation is not finite, it is designed to contribute £10m per annum - half of the Boroughs budget. Yet you have chosen to recklessly delay significant projects for no real justifiable reason and have cost and are still costing the rate payers of this borough I estimate a minimum of £15 thousand pounds a week and this has been going on since July!

I refer residents and the press to the significant document Council ECM 21<sup>st</sup> January Agenda in which is a report exploring the consequences of these delaying tactics. And yet despite this, Cllr Boughtflower you and your Cabinet still decided to continue with these deliberate delays until after the May elections!

There are big decisions which need to be made regarding the Local Plan, they cannot wait till after the May elections. Enough is enough... and this evening Cllr Doerfel has put his head above the parapet and is stating that he is willing to take on that responsibility and to take back control and get the plan back on track, so we meet the Ministry deadlines.

Regardless of the outcome of this vote tonight. Cllr Boughtflower its time to admit you are totally and completely out of your depth – do the residents of this Borough and your Group a favour, resign and make way for someone more able.

Speech by Cllr Olivia Rybinski in support of the Motion of No Confidence in Cllr Boughtflower  
4<sup>th</sup> March 2021:

Cllr Boughtflower

This Council is led by a minority Conservative Party and residents have urged us to call an ECM and change the Leader. I hope that the opposition listen to their residents and vote with me tonight.

I am concerned that Cllr Boughtflower is often too busy to attend important meetings, such as Overview & Scrutiny. Being a Leader of a Council requires many hours of time and a lot of effort. Residents have quite rightly pointed out that from his long speeches that he is not up to the job. They are rushed, unrehearsed and one wonders if they were even written by him. He has dismissed me as a cllr when I left his party, calling for my resignation, forgetting that residents vote for the name not the party when electing cllrs.

This last year has been a very difficult one for everyone, and I am proud that the administration team I was part of helped to build a sinking fund which has allowed this borough to become an example of "best in practise" during these unprecedented times. Even when the property market has struggled, our officers have worked tirelessly to recoup rent from our tenants. Spelthorne's sinking fund has unallocated pot of £40m, which is the best in the country. As Leader, I would have thought that Cllr Boughtflower would lift the spirits of our residents and give them confidence, after all, the figures prove we have done something right!

Yet time and time again, Cllr Boughtflower, his administration and the Conservative Association has focused on defaming some of the cllrs that worked in the previous administration. Cllr Boughtflower's speeches often refer to the past, forgetting that he was on Cabinet for much of the decisions made. Officers' time and tax payer's money has been used to investigate the property portfolio, it has been heavily scrutinised and Spelthorne Council have proven that due diligence has been done.

But it's time we stopped looking at the past and started looking to the future.

A climate emergency was rushed through by Cllr Boughtflower last year and yet only a small fund was set aside to tackle this with no big ideas and initiatives to take this forward; it seems this was done purely for political clout. I fully support a climate emergency being raised but in doing so you must have a plan to make real changes. Residents want to see their green belt defended properly, which is why the previous administration set aside almost £1m to fight the Green Belt in the local plan. We need someone to lead this borough through the climate emergency, with ideas and knowledge which I believe Cllr Boughtflower lacks. It raises the question whether he truly cares for the environment?

This Council needs a change of Leader urgently as he is not up to the job.

I do not believe the current administration has done anything significant in their months leading this council. I want to see an end to the Tory bully boys of Spelthorne, who spend too much time on Twitter and not enough time preparing for and attending meetings.

End

## **Ian Harvey speech In support of "Motion to remove Cllr Boughtflower as Leader of Spelthorne Borough Council".**

Thank you, Mr, Mayor.

It is sad that we are here today; because the fact is the residents of this Borough are the ones being failed by Cllr Boughtflower and his administration. I and colleagues have over the last few months received multiple emails. His administration is derided in the community. Rather than embark on a broad and vitriolic speech like he and his colleague Cllr McIlroy did last June, after my retirement as Leader, I thought I would try to be a little more objective and present this like a school report. Due to time constraints this is "headlines only".

### **So first, Attendance.**

Difficult to contact, long delays in getting responses, important meetings either missed or only part attended. 5 weeks to provide follow-on answers to Full Council. FAIL.

### **English**

Frankly listening to him reading reports, announcements, etc., is embarrassing. Numerous residents have commented disparagingly on this. Cllr Boughtflower is fortunate that he has not had to do this live in the Council Chamber. Also, negligible personally written emails, press releases etc. FAIL

### **Maths**

Figures just do not add up. Squandering over £9000 a week in interest alone on stalled projects plus all the other consequential inherent cost increases. New leisure centre only part funded. Changing the financial dynamic on numerous projects without, seemingly, considering or understanding the consequences. Stalling or opposing schemes which will make a substantial financial and socioeconomic contribution to our Borough not just now but for generations. So, he FAILS Maths but gets an A\* for hypocrisy.

### **Business Studies - what's that - FAIL**

### **History**

Repeatedly claiming credit for not just our strong financial position but also for projects and initiatives instigated under the previous administration. Clearly has no comprehension of the difficult financial position this Borough was in only 5-6 years ago. FAIL

### **Transparency**

Complaining about lack of transparency in my administration but is far worse. Decision to buy back the M&S lease was allegedly made by a committee of which one of its members did not know they sat on. Refused for many months to even recognise our

Group or allow us to sit on any Task Groups and even last Thursday failed to share his budget speech with us, which he did with some other oppositions Groups. FAIL.

### **Decision making and Leadership.**

Repeatedly demonstrated that he is unable or unwilling to act decisively and make decisions. Recently he proposed motions to spend multi millions of pounds then announced that he had not decided if he would support his own motions. This is mind-blowing. FAIL

### **Discipline and Integrity**

On record as saying a Councillor, struck off as a solicitor, is a good Councillor because he goes litter picking. Has at least two Cllrs within his administration who potentially have serious conflicts of interest, and another who appears to be receiving pecuniary advantage. FAIL

So, turning to some subjects he has excelled in:

### **Procrastination**

Managed to stall and delay most projects, including the Local Plan, which risks our Green Belt, our Key Worker homes development in Ashford and other key projects. A\*

### **Bureaucracy**

For those bureaucratically inclined, Cllr Bought flowers is a success, based on the number of new committees, task groups, panels and boards he has established; most of us call these talking shops. A\*

### **Overall**

Mr Mayor, schoolboys of many generations have dreaded their reports concluding with the phrase "could do better". I believe Cllr Boughtflower could not really do much better. In business terms he was "over promoted", with, I have no doubt, promises of support from those outside the elected Spelthorne Membership. He is clearly out of his depth.

The truth is it is not just Cllr Boughtflower who should be facing this motion, but his entire cabinet; however, this is how the Strong Leader model works. Ironically almost exactly a year ago Cllr Mitchell emailed me describing my cabinet as "lacklustre". If that was lacklustre, I struggle to think of a suitable adjective for this.

This has to stop now; the residents who entrust the running of this Borough to us deserve better.

I urge you fellow Members to do the right thing and support this motion to remove Cllr Boughtflower forthwith. Failure to do so could only be seen as a clear sign of support for this administration.

Thank you, Mr, Mayor.