

OPEN LETTER

9<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2020

To: Mr Ajaz Ahmed: Conservative Regional Chairman for the South East

By email:

Cc: Alfred Friday: Vice President of Spelthorne Conservative Association

By email:

#### **RESIGNATION OF CLLR MRS HARVEY FROM MEMBERSHIP OF THE CONSERVATIVE AND UNIONIST PARTY**

Dear Mr Ahmed

Since my teen years I have been a Conservative voter and was privileged to have my formative years during the Thatcher decade. I witnessed how Lady Thatcher transformed the finances and future of our country despite the mess it was in when she took over. She provided me with the example that substantial changes can be achieved with the right political leadership and dynamic. This I believe, has moulded my views going forwards and equally gave my husband Cllr Ian Harvey the inspiration that he too could transform Spelthorne by bold courageous and innovative strategies.

I have been a paid-up member of the party for over 10 years and It was a great honour and privilege to be elected a Councillor in May 2019 in my home ward. I have worked hard in the meantime devoting many hours to learn the role quickly and have been deputy Chair of Planning, serve on the Local Plan Working Party, have sat on Overview & Scrutiny and since December 2019 have been a Cabinet member with responsibility for the Asset Management portfolio.

Early on in November 2019, following the return of Mike Brennan to the role of Interim Association Chairman, it quickly became clear that major fissures were again developing in the Spelthorne Conservative Group and the atmosphere quickly became hostile. Indeed, in an email to me regarding this dated 26<sup>th</sup> Nov 2019 our MP Kwasi Kwarteng stated to me 'don't worry, I too am concerned about the intimidatory atmosphere'.

A number of formal representations were made under the Conservative Party's complaints process during which formal mediation took place, which regrettably was fruitless.

Following a failed vote of no confidence in the Group Leader early in January; a faction of the group refused to back the Leader; as is expected in such circumstances and embarked upon a course of action to hound him out of office by following a sustained and escalating campaign of bullying and intimidation directed at him and other members of the Group.

Consumed by their agenda to undermine, these councillors failed to attend the annual most important February Full Council Budget Setting meeting, where a budget must be approved for the next municipal year. Furthermore, they could not even be bothered to be present during the formal debate which followed after receiving a petition signed by 5000 of our residents regarding our Green Belt and emerging Local Plan!

Indeed, these Councillors, since the Covid-19 crisis begun, focused their time on plotting to take control of the council, in the knowledge that all of the other councillors are busily trying to save

lives. At a time when the council is working long days, seven days a week, across party lines, to support residents through the pandemic, it has been constantly undermined by the actions of this malign group of Conservative councillors. Whether distracting council officers and responsible councillors from the task at hand by feeding misinformation to the media, spreading false rumours in the community, or failing to attend briefing meetings.

It is this unconscionable behaviour and transparent attempt to take advantage of the Covid-19 emergency for their own personal gain in power, that I find completely and utterly reprehensible and I cannot be associated with. I volunteered to be a councillor to serve my local community and make a real difference, I did not sign up to be subjected to a constant barrage of abuse and the consequential stresses and strains this brings on my family.

The response from the CCHQ and some senior Surrey Area Conservatives to address matters within their mandate has been ineffectual and they clearly hold the responsibility for the loss of control of Spelthorne Borough Council!

The Conservative Party is not my religion; I am a committed Christian and my personal standards of integrity means that I can no longer countenance being associated with the Spelthorne Conservative Group and Association and must therefore resign henceforth from the Conservative Party.

Yours sincerely

Helen Harvey

Councillor for Sunbury East Ward

Cabinet Member for Asset management and Regeneration