

Although this edition is a little 'focused' on one topic, it is so important we believe you would want to know more than has been published in other places. But we also look at other local and national issues, including: ● Town Partnership ● Conservation areas ● Shore Road safety ● NHS Dentists

World flat and nothing serious ever happens!

If you've been relying on the Advertiser or the Echo for your news you might be forgiven for thinking you were living on another planet. Both papers have failed to adequately cover the detail and the serious implications of the events surrounding the departure of former Conservative Councillors Wheeldon and Miller.

Disgrace of former Conservative councillor

While some of our local media seem to take the view that this is just an unfortunate turn of events, the truth is rather more serious than has been suggested. We believe we must bring matters to people's attention. How else can anyone know the truth? How else can we respect those in authority? Mrs Wheeldon is (or rather, was) a senior Tory councillor of 17 years' standing, who has been found guilty by an independent tribunal (the Adjudication Panel for England) of a number of serious offences. She has now been **disqualified for 12 months** — not suspended, as the Advertiser reported. A key difference is that she can't just take up her place again after 12 months; part of her disgrace is having to stand for re-election if she seeks public office again.

In disqualifying Mrs Wheeldon, the Tribunal noted that they wanted "to give a clear message to others that this type of behaviour was unacceptable".

In fairness, we should add that the Tribunal did record that Mrs Wheeldon would "clearly be sorely missed if she were unable to continue with her public service roles". But there is no denying that these aspects of her behaviour were unacceptable, and little redeemed by the Tribunal observation that it was "conscious of the culture within the Council where they condoned the use of bad language and accepted this level and type of behaviour as appropriate"

"The language that has been cited in this case would arguably be more worthy of a fishwife than a woman."

Report of Adjudication Panel



The charges of the Standards Board

These charges relate to issues surrounding a report into the landslide near Mrs Wheeldon's flat at Durlston. These are the charges of which Mrs Wheeldon was found guilty by the Adjudication Panel for England:

- attempting to influence the outcome of a matter in which she had a personal and prejudicial interest
- attempting to get council officers to change a report that would impact upon a matter in which she had a personal and prejudicial interest
- employing intimidating behaviour
- swearing ... and using offensive and inappropriate language.

*(We hesitate to print full details, but calling a council employee a f***** w***** is one example)*



Tory reaction — no shame, no remorse

The Conservative Leader of Purbeck District Council, Bill Trite said in his condemnation of the whole process: “I have been present at many enquiries and investigations, but never such an appallingly conducted mockery of a fair hearing as this.”

It is unbecoming for Mr. Trite to say that the Tribunal conducted a mockery of a fair hearing. Each barrister was given all the time they wanted to make statements and to question the witnesses who were

called. The Chairman, a qualified solicitor, conducted the proceedings in a legal manner. It may have been tedious but it was even-handed. It is extraordinary to find Mr Trite trashing the work of the Adjudication Panel by calling it a kangaroo court and even comparing proceedings to a “Soviet show trial”.

More seriously, he seems to be condoning the behaviour of a councillor who “repeatedly used foul language to those who are not able to respond” and who “used her position to secure an advantage for herself”.

We think he should consider his position, both as a councillor and as Leader of Purbeck District Council.

The Miller’s tale

Continuing this colourful Chaucerian saga, we come to the part of the Mayor, Mr Tony Miller. Only a few days after the Tribunal finished, the Mayor suddenly resigns, citing work commitments. Is it not strange that he has managed to juggle his other commitments for the last six years (of which he was Mayor for four) and yet chose to step down only a few weeks before a new Mayor was due to be elected? And not just to resign as Mayor, but also to give up his positions on both Swanage Town Council and Purbeck District Council. Did he jump or was he pushed?

The Tribunal did not believe what they were told

We can all sympathize with the pressures of work (the reason the Mayor gave for stepping down). But could his decision relate to what happened at the hearing of the Adjudication Panel? Did the meeting take place on 18 August 2003, at which Mrs Wheeldon was alleged to have called PDC District Engineer Mr Goater “an a*** hole” when she urged him to get the consultants report changed? The panel said that they were left with a stark choice of options. “Either the evidence of the two consultants, one officer and a member of the public were correct, or the evidence of The Respondent (Mrs Wheeldon) and the recall of one fellow member of the Council (Mr Miller) were to be believed.” The panel said that “despite conflicting evidence, we think it likely that the meeting did occur”.

After the judgement, a number of people saw Mr Miller confront the Chairman of the Panel, both in the hotel lobby and when she was trying to get into her car to leave. Did he later realise the consequences could lead to his own referral to the Standards Board for bringing his office into disrepute?

You must draw your own conclusions.

“The Tribunal is conscious of the culture within the Council where they condoned the use of bad language and accepted this level and type of behaviour as appropriate”

**“JE
NE REGRETTE
RIEN..?”**

If you wish to see the full report of the Tribunal, you may see a copy at Swanage library or download it from The Adjudication Panel website at:

<http://tinyurl.com/zxkl9>

Swanage Town & Community Partnership

This body meets regularly (within the wider framework of the Market and Coastal Towns Initiative.) Minutes of meetings will be available at the Swanage library and on the council website. If you feel that your organisation is not represented or you wish to find out more, contact Mike Hadley (on 427277) for more information.

Conservation consultation

While we are glad to see Purbeck District Council fulfilling its duty to review the conservation areas in Swanage, we were not impressed with the extremely limited time made available for consultation.

But apparently, there **will** be further consultation and noises have been made to try to ensure better notice is given next time.

Shore Road action

Following another accident in Shore Road, the town council has agreed to Councillor Mike Hadley's call for an early review of safety issues, to consider all options including traffic calming measures and/or longer periods of closure.



Liberal Democrats say NO! to ID cards

We continue to oppose these with vigour. Why?

First, surveillance. The ID card computer system would contain much information about each of us, more than in any other European country. Large computer systems constantly get personal details wrong. Every week one reads of people's struggle to get wrong information changed. The Liberal Democrat parliamentary spokesman says 'We are in danger of sleepwalking into an authoritarian state, which stores our personal data in case it might come in useful.'

Second, efficacy. The government arguments that ID cards will significantly reduce terrorism, crime, social security fraud and immigration problems have collapsed one by one.

Third, cost. A team from the London School for Economics has estimated this to be £19 to 24 **billion**, over ten years. That's equivalent to £400 of taxpayer's money for every person in the country. You will also have to pay up to £100 personally to buy your identity card!

Fourth, compulsion. Contrary to previous promises, you will need to get an identity card when you renew your passport.

Feeling down in the mouth?

Jaws dropped when many local people recently received a letter from Swanage Dental Centre telling them that NHS dental services will no longer be available from April 1st. Those wishing to stay in the NHS will have to travel, at least to Wareham, and probably further afield. Similar scenes are being played out up and down the country. How has this happened?

The current crisis in NHS dentistry began in the early 1990s with the Conservative government's decision to close two dental training schools and its cuts to dental fees. Despite a pledge by Tony Blair in 1999 that everyone would have access to an NHS dentist, the Government has been slow to take action. Over half the population of England is not now registered with an NHS dentist — a desperate situation now set to get worse. The British Dental Association warned that the new government contract was so unsatisfactory that nearly 60% of high street dentists would either reduce their NHS commitment or quit the NHS altogether on April 1st.

Speak up

Liberal Democrats called for action before, at and after the General Election. Belatedly, training places for dentists are being expanded. We call for a contract which, rather than pay dentists per treatment as at present, pays them for each patient on their lists as is the case with doctors. This will provide incentives for preventative dental care.

Unless the government sees sense, it will be a struggle to get another NHS practice to set up in Swanage. We must all speak up unless you want to go private or go elsewhere.



Membership Secretary,
Anita Chennell 01929 427986

Join the Liberal Democrats and help to make a difference

Liberal Democrats believe in principled government, and when not in power, in principled opposition.

“The Liberal Democrats exist to build and safeguard a fair, free and open society. We aim to disperse power, to foster diversity and nurture creativity. We believe that the role of the state is to enable all citizens to attain these ideals, to contribute truly to their communities and to take part in the decisions which affect their lives.”

Join us and help to make a difference. For more information, visit www.southdorsetlibdems.org.uk or contact the Membership Secretary, Anita Chennell.

Do you want to get in touch with us?

We can only support the ideas and needs of local people if we know what they are. Please call one of us, or send in your comments on the slip below.

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|-----------------------------|--------------|--|
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| <i>Membership Secretary</i> | | |

or visit our website at www.southdorsetlibdems.org.uk

CAN YOU HELP US?

You could help in many ways:

- delivering a few leaflets
- helping with clerical work
- assisting at elections
- displaying a poster at elections
- joining the Liberal Democrats
- making a donation

Please get in touch if you can help.



“I want to say....”

If you have something to say, call one of the people above or complete the details below and return to:

South Dorset Liberal Democrats, FREEPOST NAT 17885, Wareham BH20 6BR

(You don't have to provide your address details, but it's obviously easier for us to reply if you do)

Title: First name (or initial): Surname:

Address:

Telephone: (.....)..... Email:

I am concerned about

(If you want to say more, do please write or call)

“I am interested in supporting the Liberal Democrats” Please get in touch with me.