

"My name is Wendy Orme from the Parish of Littlethorpe.

As I have been asked by North Yorkshire County Council Officers to change my original statement. I would like to emphasise that my new version has no malicious motive, but is a matter of public interest and concern..

On the 12th November I attended a meeting of the Environment and Heritage Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

Questions are being asked about this Committee Meeting, the management by its Chairman, and the manner in which the decision was made not to adopt the proposal to investigate the serious shortcomings of the North Yorkshire Minerals & Waste Core Strategy, which necessitated HM Inspector Jonathan King to consider it unfit.

The purpose of this Meeting was to evaluate the Inspector's comments and concerns that the Minerals & Waste Core Strategy was primarily "unsound" and unfit to continue through the Hearings sessions – and as such should be withdrawn from Public Examination. The Inspector raised a massive 168 questions/concerns during the preliminary sessions. Yet it was apparent from this Meeting, not a single Member had been privy to this vital information.

North Yorkshire County Council's Mineral & Waste Core Strategy has been ongoing since 2004 – involving an enormous amount of time, public money and costly outside professional advice - so how come it got so far down the road to completion - and yet got it so wrong? Surely these discrepancies should have been identified and corrected months if not years before we got to this stage.

The Inspector was quite clear in his critique that the strategy was being engineered – not evidence based – engineered to fit what? Or suit whom?

The Executive has to be held to account on this one – the public has a right to know what is going on here, and a right to know what – as rate and taxpayers - this failure is going to cost them. Advisors tell me the cost to the public at the end of day could escalate to £2 million. The "real costs" over the last four years I am advised already point that this is likely - particularly as this fiasco has set the formulation of the final Core Strategy back by up to three years – and could result in a total of 7 years to complete.

There are far too many questions going on here, and those responsible have to be made accountable for this extraordinary muddle.

I will now move on to the nub of the matter, and that is, the decision by the Environment and Heritage Overview & Scrutiny Committee not to carry out an in-depth inquiry into the Core Strategy's failure is flawed. That, such wastage of time and money should be swept under the carpet, and merely noted for the record - "we must after all move on" to quote the Chairman as a reason not to instigate an inquiry - is a travesty to the idea of open and transparent management of public affairs, and an abuse of the electorates' money for which they are responsible. It is also contrary to the County Council's current adopted Constitution.

In addition, the Chairman's bias fell short of what one would expect, and would appear to be contrary to the Model Code of Conduct. There is a perception, by those acquainted with the relevant facts, that the decision taken that there should be no in-depth scrutiny into this failure of the Core Strategy was predetermined, to the Officers and Minerals Department's advantage. Be that so, this is an affront to the perceived idea of upholding and respecting the democratic process and representing the interest of the electorate – whose money is, after all, being misspent and wasted.

As I said at the beginning, the truth of the matter is of public interest – we have a right to a public audit and an independent inquiry as to what on earth has gone on here.

To support my statement I would like to draw your attention to your own Constitution, to which you are legally bound. It clearly supports the case for a full independent inquiry into this unnecessary matter had those responsible been doing their job properly. See Constitution

We seek the whole story, that's all

Thank you for the opportunity to speak for all those concerned about maintaining high principles of local governance, and I trust that, as our elected representatives, you will ponder and reflect upon this matter and address these concerns appropriately in the interest of public accountability.

WLO15/12/08.
