



Independent Health Concern



“WFDC Council & the Allocation of Responsibility.”

A modern tale of intrigue, suspense, horror & fact!

Quite a bit has already been written about this year’s Council AGM and the issues it raises about democracy in Wyre Forest. This sets out the issues from Health Concern’s perspective and gives a chronology of what took place – it is totally factual.

By way of background, after elections each year Council agrees an allocation of duties and appointments for the year ahead. It is usual for the major party, currently the Tories, to hold regulatory positions such as Chairs of Planning, Licensing, and Enforcement etc. It is also usual for Opposition parties to have Chairs & Vice Chairs of Overview & Scrutiny Committees – in fact it is Government guidelines that they do. These committees are “a” political and should not be influenced by the Administration, nor should they be politically biased in favour of the controlling party. They are there to “hold to account, scrutinise and be a critical friend” to the Administration. Not, apparently, or so it seems in the Tory Dictatorship of Wyre Forest.

And here, dear reader begins our tale.

A Leaders’ meeting took place, when all party leaders and deputy leaders attended, on the Tuesday after the elections. John Campion outlined his organisational plans for the year. We were content with them and told him so. He said he was offering all 3 Scrutiny Chairs plus 2 Vice Chairs (why not all 3?) to the opposition parties and would leave it up to us to agree allocation. He would only arbitrate if we couldn’t agree – very reasonable – or so we thought but.....!?

So we went round the table – Health Concern said we would like one Chair (Regeneration), Labour said, one Chair (Commercial Services), Lib Dems said no Chairs, but one Vice Chair. Too easy isn’t it? Reasonable people sitting together sorting it out! One Chair left for the Liberals then? No – they want TWO! No democracy or consensus there then – just selfish, power seeking, arrogant, self importance – as usual. Stuff the rest of you! Impasse then - no decision, no consensus because two Liberal councillors put themselves before democracy (We might suggest, at this point, that when they stopped being Liberal Democrats some years ago and became “Liberals”, the word “democracy” was dropped, because they don’t understand the meaning of the word anymore.)

On the following day we spoke to the Tory Leader of our individual bids and the impasse. He said there would be nothing for Labour and two chairs for the Liberals and one for us. We said that our first choice was “Regeneration” but, in view of the seat split (HC – 10, Libs – 6) we should really have two chairs.

Over the weekend we sent him an Email suggesting 3 options -

1. Two Chairs for Health Concern
2. One Chair for HC – with us having our first choice (Regeneration)
3. We put our amendment to Council and the Tories don’t vote – effectively letting opposition members decide on balance of power.

It's actually called "negotiation" and an attempt to broker a deal – the principle is lost completely on the Tories – the idea is to work to a mutually acceptable compromise. Clearly Tory Party Central Office doesn't include it in party indoctrination courses? Sorry – I mean party training courses. Did they cut it for "How to be a B.....d in one easy lesson?" Just after the course on "Do what we say or else" Lovely people?

We received no substantive answer other than "so I presume you are taking what's on offer?" Err, no John!

We, did, however, not receive any further written communication outlining Campion's final decision until mid morning on Tuesday, just over 24 hours before Council. It allocated us the Commercial Services Chair plus one scrutiny Vice Chair and a couple of minor chairs. It gave the Liberal (undemocrats) 2 Chairs and the Liberal Democrats one vice chair. It also came with a friendly "Can I have your names by return please?" Err, No John – we discuss things in HC.

We met, as a group, on Wednesday morning and agreed who we would allocate to the positions offered. We also said we would move an amendment about either having "first choice" of Chairs or two Chairs with the Liberals having first choice – compromise! Also, we confirmed that our bid for Howard Eeles to be WFDC rep on County Health Scrutiny would stand. The names were phoned to officers at 11.30 ish.

Campion phoned at 12.30 and left message saying "ta" for names and presuming we were now content and wouldn't move an amendment. We were eventually able to have conversation at 2.30. We said we would move an amendment but it would not be critical of him or the Tories – it would berate the Liberals for being so selfish and intransigent in their demands. We offered a compromise in that we would withdraw our amendment if he would support our nomination for Howard Eeles to sit on the County Health Committee (actually, that was what we wanted most – much more important than Chairs.) He said he would discuss it with his group at 4.30 but we needed to understand that some of his group didn't want HC to have anything. (Which members of your group, John? .. Fran Oborski and Graham Ballinger?).

We met at 5.00 and he said – "if you put an amendment in we withdraw our offer of Chairs, you'll get nothing! Irrespective of any of this, we will support Fran for Health Scrutiny." That is Tory democracy, negotiation and compromise presented in true thug in a suit fashion from a Tory who lies about being inclusive, taking all groups with him and working with all!

At 5.10 the committee allocation papers were distributed with no Health Concern names included. The papers, we are informed by officers, had been printed sometime earlier! One of the Vice Chairs has gone to the new 23 year old Councillor who has yet to attend a committee meeting – and Chumpion says he has allocated responsibilities on experience?! Err! No John – you have given responsibility to people who won't rock the boat in you own party and to the political mercenaries who masquerade under the banner – Liberals.

You couldn't buy Health Concern and you couldn't blackmail us with crumbs from your table. Your lack of political shrewdness and savvy will be your downfall and we promise you a fun year ahead! All that the collective nastiness that comes from the Tories and Liberals serves to do is drive up our determination to stay around and fight harder for what we want. You really aren't very bright are you? You still don't understand what we are about after 9 years! Until you get your heads round that you won't know what makes us tick!

We said in our election leaflets - a Vote for the Tories is a Vote for the Liberals
and vice versa! How right we were!