

Additional Statement by Councillor Janet Duncan for Mr Tim Revell

1. In the Labour Group there is a practice that we have a minute taker. This was agreed by a previous administration but the practice has been retained as it enables the Secretary to participate in meetings to a fuller extent than if they are taking minutes. The minute taking is sometimes taken by the Secretary or another member but it became the practice for various members of the secretariat to take minutes for which they were paid separately.
2. Last year after Councillor Macdonald became Deputy Leader she objected to members of the secretariat taking minutes at Group Meetings. She had been a councillor for four years before this and had not objected to it once in that time. Last year she raised her objection at Group but Group wished to keep a minute taker. She contended that this was misuse of Group funds (it isn't) and set out to stop the practice (she hasn't) although minutes are now taken by someone external to the Civic Centre. As Secretary to the Group at that time I assured the Group that I was happy to take minutes if that was the Group's wish and decision but the Group did not wish me to do so.
3. Although she had lost the vote at Group this did not deter Councillor Macdonald from attacking the minute taker by talking about reporting the officer member of the secretariat staff who usually took the minutes. Various members spoke to her to try and dissuade her from dealing with matters in such an aggressive and job-threatening way when the press at that time was reporting large cuts and job losses in local government budgets.
4. I spoke to her in September 2010, as Secretary of the Group at that time, before going on leave. I said I understood that she was not happy with the minute taking arrangements and asked her not to do anything more until we could discuss the matter further and agree a way forward. She said she would not report the officer and would wait.
5. But unbeknown to anyone in the Group she had already reported the officer to their manager. This was done without the knowledge of anyone in the Group and in a completely unilateral manner. After a while she again secretly approached the manager of the member of staff and asked what progress had been made about investigating them. The manager then came over to the Group offices and Councillor Macdonald's covert reporting of the officer became known.
6. Councillor Macdonald had acted in a way that was totally contrary to the Group's decision and was a shock to everyone when it was discovered.
7. She had also been bullying the officer in a very objectionable way since about August 2010. She would phone her at one minute past nine and one minute to

five on many occasions to make sure she was there. It was not her job to check officers' hours of work and there was no issue with this as the member of staff kept good time and would even stay late (unpaid) if there was a lot of work that needed to be done urgently.

8. On one occasion Councillor Macdonald thought she was going to attend a meeting of residents objecting to the closure of Yiewsley Swimming Pool. When the officer pointed out that the meeting she was attending was a community safety one and not on Yiewsley Pool she disliked being advised of this although it was done to help her and in a pleasant manner. She complained about the officer for doing this putting a very negative construction on it.
9. When she started systematically bullying and harassing the member of staff the victim was frightened and her health affected. She had to go away from the office to cry. There are witnesses among the officer and member bodies to this. She was advised to keep a log of the incidents and started to do this but gave up as she was too upset by what was happening to her. She began to say that she couldn't carry on but was fearful of lodging a complaint against Councillor Macdonald.
10. Not all councillors come into the Civic Centre on a daily or regular basis but those that did are well aware of what was happening and disliked Councillor Macdonald intensely for the bullying behaviour she carried out against this very loyal and hardworking member of staff. They tried to support the member of staff and help her maintain her morale in the face of almost daily attack.
11. Councillor Harmsworth and I returned from leave in October 2010 to find that the member of staff was no longer taking minutes and her health was even more badly affected with the extreme stress of the situation. She had felt too frightened to continue taking minutes and had stopped. In the interim at Group meetings other members of the Group had taken minutes including Councillor Macdonald herself at one of the meetings.
12. At the first Group meeting we attended after returning from leave Councillor Harmsworth asked what had happened about minute taking in our absence. Councillor Macdonald explained her views and that she thought the Secretary should take the minutes. She said anyone could take minutes and that she had done so while we were away. Councillor Harmsworth said that if she was offering to take minutes he had no objection to that. She stated this was not what she meant. The Secretary should take the minutes not her. It was the Secretary's job. It was pointed out that this was not what the Group wanted or agreed. She then swore, burst into tears and rushed out of the room.
13. Later that week she submitted complaints against both Councillor Harmsworth and myself to the Local Government Committee. Her complaint against me was

underperformance (I was not writing minutes and reports to a satisfactory standard in her opinion. I can produce ample evidence that I was). Her complaint against Councillor Harmsworth was that he had attacked her at a Group meeting (this referred to his questions concerning the minute taking). He had done this quietly and politely as all members attending the meeting could confirm. The complaints were referred back to Group to deal with as Group business. As Secretary I wrote asking for the full wording of the complaints as part had been missed off the paper I had. I was informed that Councillor Macdonald had withdrawn the complaints "in the interests of peace". I replied that that was probably wise particularly as there had been approximately 14 witnesses to what had occurred.

14. The Group's collective view was that she had succeeded in driving out the minute taker contrary to the Group's express decision. Members of the Group who knew what had been happening with the member of staff were angry and resentful of Councillor Macdonald's aggression and cruelty to the member of staff and the fact that she would stop at nothing to get her own way.
15. She also was responsible for the matter being reported to the regional Labour Party where her husband sits on regional appeals panels and knows regional officers. Out of the blue the Group received a letter from a London regional officer saying paying minute takers was costly and wasteful of Group funds. Group members wanted to know who had reported this to London. Councillor Macdonald denied having anything to do with this and told a Group meeting that "It's nothing to do with me". Later her husband admitted that he had done this on information she had given him. Their dishonesty and deceit were not appreciated by Group.
16. As the Labour Group had approached staff in the secretariat about minute taking in the first instance it is the Group's responsibility to deal with any matters arising from this.
17. When I became Chief Whip in May 2011 I arranged for the Group Fund account to be audited as part of my duties and particularly asked the auditor about inland revenue obligations. The auditor made a particular point of contacting HMRC and requesting the most up to date information available including petty cash payments for work. This information was all presented to Group. The auditor attended the Group meeting and answered members questions on accounts. He made a point of explaining the Group's tax situation to all members present. The Group agreed the audited accounts and had no further questions.
18. I believe it was Councillor Macdonald's systematic and unprovoked bullying of an innocent member of staff that caused her to lose the Deputy Leadership. Her lies and aggressive conduct towards others on occasion were contributory

factors also. She appears to be totally blind to her own faults and with little apparent awareness or care of the destructiveness of her behaviour on individuals or the Group. When asked about the officer she had attacked she is reported to have said that it was "all over" and she (Councillor Macdonald) had "moved on".

19. I have not attacked Councillor Macdonald in past months but sought to reason with her. Her attack on me was therefore as unprovoked as her attack on the member of staff but there is no doubt that it was just as deliberate. If I had not taken steps to defend myself and position as Chief Whip past experience has shown that she may well have kept up a concerted, bullying offensive against me and I was not prepared to suffer this.
20. Even against this background of limited information I submit that it is self-evident why the Group did not vote for Councillor Macdonald to continue as Deputy Leader.
21. I did not reveal the true extent of what was happening in the Group and with the member of staff in my interview on Monday 8 August because I didn't wish to detail such cruel behaviour or put the member of staff, who has suffered enough, in a difficult position. I think it was wrong of me not to be more open about these matters as it obscured the true situation.
22. In the meantime the member of staff has come to me and given me a short statement about Councillor Macdonald's bullying. With their consent I am submitting this with mine as corroborating evidence and now feel less constrained about giving information.
23. There are witnesses both in the officer body and amongst Group members to testify to the truth of my statement and I can supply names should this be necessary.



Councillor Janet Duncan

10th September 2011