

# Statement

- THE RT HON PETER LILLEY MP

**From:** LILLEY, Peter  
**Sent:** 16 December 2015 18:42  
**To:** David Leal-Bennett  
**Cc:** PERCIVAL, Christine  
**Subject:** Re: Disciplinary Hearing re (Cllr Leal-Bennett) - February 2016

Dear David,

Please feel free to use anything I have said about this.

My general position is this:

Long before you had issues with NHDC's interpretation of these standards rules I had concerns that they were sometimes being interpreted by some local authorities (including NHDC) in a restrictive fashion, which was not their intention.

In particular there was a danger that Councillors who had specific knowledge of an issue or took a particular interest in it, even though they had no personal financial interest, were being excluded from discussions whereas they would have been best placed to contribute to the Council's decision making. This is why I took an interest in your case and raised it in Parliament with the Minister responsible for introducing the original legislation.

I believe that when Parliament enacted the powers under which these Rules were established it intended to stop financial corruption and abuse of office.

None of the complaints against you in any way relate to the sort of thing that Parliament meant to bear down on.

Even if all the criticisms of you are valid they should not in my opinion be dealt with under these powers.

Above all these rules should not be used to silence criticism (whether or not those criticisms are valid) – yet the charge sheet seems to relate explicitly to criticisms you have made.

On the original issue of the Officers' advice that your directorship of the Town Hall Trust was a pecuniary interest, I do not perceive any beneficial interest to you which should disqualify you from participating in debate, let alone once you had ceased to be a Director. In any case, as I understand it, it is up to Councillors to decide, after considering any advice received, whether they have a conflict of interest.

Best regards

Peter Lilley

---

**From:** David Leal-Bennett  
**Date:** Thursday, 10 December 2015 14:28  
**To:** "LILLEY, Peter (2nd Mailbox)"  
**Cc:** Christine Percival  
**Subject:** Disciplinary Hearing re (Cllr Leal-Bennett) - February 2016

Dear Peter

Please see attached, for a heads up.

I realise you are busy, so perhaps a short note re support to date on the things you have said which we can extract and attach. In particular Mr Roache's comments on the predetermination issue you raised with the minister may warrant a comment. At the time I believe I copied you on his email so you were fully briefed.

Kind regards

David

---

**From:** LILLEY, Peter  
**Sent:** 07 December 2015 17:48  
**To:** David Leal-Bennett  
**Cc:** PERCIVAL, Christine  
**Subject:** Re: Press Comment re Disciplinary

Dear David,

I am happy for anything I have said along the way about this bizarre process to be quoted.

I hope it goes well and is finally resolved.

Best wishes

Peter

---

**From:** David Leal-Bennett  
**Sent:** 07 December 2015 14:29  
**To:** PERCIVAL, Christine; LILLEY, Peter  
**Cc:** 'Matt Stephens'  
**Subject:** Press Comment re Disciplinary

Dear Peter

Please see attached article from last week's Comet together with a statement I propose to make tomorrow. I have had discussions with Matt over this whole affair which now seems to be taking over my life! I was going to comment on Lynda Needham but have been persuaded to deal with this within the Conservative Group. (Lynda provided a statement which basically criticised the manner in which I chair Hitchin Area Committee! somewhat strange because many have congratulated me and the current Chair of Baldock, John Harris, wishes to emulate my style)

Matt has stated that he will support me, especially as I am up for election next May. I would hope I can receive your continued support but understand should you wish to distance yourself from this. If I mention you it is likely that the press will ask for a statement, the same goes for Matt of course.

I look forward to hearing from you as well as Matt.

Kind regards

David

Previous emails from The Rt Hon Peter Lilley MP

**From:** LILLEY, Peter [mailto:peter.lilley.mp@parliament.uk]  
**Sent:** 17 December 2014 16:01  
**To:** David Leal-Bennett  
**Subject:** RE: Hitchin Town Hall - Directorships

Dear David,

They seem desperate to stop anyone who has relevant knowledge from participating even in discussion on a subject!

By definition you no longer have a close association to HTH ltd given that you are no longer a Director.

If their interpretation of the rules – applying the close association rule to past associations even though the rule is written in the present tense – were applied generally it would exclude lots of Councillors with relevant knowledge from lots of debates e.g. former pupils and teachers of a school would not be able to participate in matters affecting that school; former members or officers of sports clubs ditto; former owners of businesses re parking/planning issues affecting local business etc.

However, it will be virtually impossible to get any minister to opine on their (mis)interpretation of the rules in time to be any use to you.

**I think if I were in your shoes I would state at the beginning of any session that you acknowledge that you previously had a relevant interest but no longer do have a close association so you do not accept the advice of the officials and propose therefore to participate in the debate – (but perhaps not the vote?).**

Best of luck

Peter

---