

From: [Jeff Barber](#)
To: [Charlotte Palmer](#)
Cc: [Matthew Watts](#)
Subject: Ponders End
Date: 02 August 2017 13:50:24

Dear Charlotte,

I was asked by Matthew Watts of Enfield Council on 31st March 2017 to mediate in a dispute that had arisen in the Ponders End and District Smallholders Association (PEDSA) on the Falcon Fields allotment site. There were two committees on the site claiming the right to manage the site leased to PEDSA by Enfield Council, one elected at an AGM in October 2015 and the other elected at an EGM on 4th March 2017. Both regarded themselves as legitimate bodies duly elected and both were collecting rents from tenants on the allotment site. The London Borough of Enfield is a local authority member of the National Allotment Society and I agreed. I did ask that both parties did not continue any further action until I had received the quite substantial amount of material I requested and had had enough time to come to a considered view. From Matthew Watts I received one contact from each party. Linda Marsh was one of those contacts.

Enfield Council provided the material that was required and which they held - principally the lease agreement with PEDSA and Enfield's allotment tenancy agreement. The committee elected on 4th March 2017 provided me with material relating to the EGM and evidential material relating to the activities of the Committee elected in October 2015. The Committee as elected in 2015 provided me with material which, largely, was anecdotal. What also happened was that both parties seemed to be indulging in activities on the allotment site that had the potential to increase the difficulties. I make no comment in relation to either party as to the relative proportions of proactive and reactive activity. It seemed to me that I was being dragged into the dispute incrementally rather than trying to act as a neutral and independent mediator. Accordingly I halted the process and made that known to both parties on 22nd April 2017 and to Enfield Council on 24th April 2017. I do not accept that I withdrew because to continue to accept material relating to activities after the date on which I started to look at the situation would not have been conducive to reaching any agreement nor was I "assisting" either party. I was contacted by Linda Marsh after my email of 22nd April 2017 and had to repeat it and also by another member of PEDSA to whom I had to relay the same message.

There were external factors that also suggested that the process needed to come to an end earlier than I originally intended. Among the documents sent to me was one that contained the draft accounts for the previous year. At the time of my involvement those accounts had not been presented to the PEDSA members and therefore not agreed. Of course accounts are passed if they represent an accurate record of financial transaction over the past financial year and the independent examiner/auditor judges them on that basis. I am of course

presenting the point of view of an allotment tenant but the copy of the accounts I saw contained some unusual material relating mainly but not solely to the activities of the social club which is on the Falcon Fields site. Those accounts were examined and reported on by Vallance Lodge & Co, Chartered Accountants, Units 082-086, 555, White Hart Lane, London N17. I do not know if those accounts have been presented to the PEDSA membership for their agreement. It is this area, of course, that is relevant to your responsibilities and position within Enfield Council but am aware that holding a licence to sell alcohol brings with it a whole series of obligations.

The other external factor was the dealings PEDSA had with the Financial Conduct Authority which seemingly involved fines for non-submission of accounts and notice of possible de-registration, neither of which should be taken lightly in my view. The FCA was working to its own deadlines and I submitted my report to Enfield Council on because of the internal distortions that were occurring within the PEDSA membership and because of the external deadlines set.

Best wishes,

Jeff Barber