

Dear Members of the Independent Group.

For quite some time I have wrestled with my conscious concerning the way in which the Indy Group has conducted itself since the results of the last election. I fully understand that losing power and several colleagues was a considerable blow to many of you who relied on their support. Sadly, our democracy and the first past the post system is brutal, meaning you are in one day and out the next. For those long-standing members who have enjoyed Cabinet responsibility/receptibility it must have come as a more substantial blow.

If I am brutally honest, it became apparent to me, when first elected in 2017, that a small group of Independents ruled the roost within the Independent Group. I of course except that many of them had been on the Council for many years and perhaps felt entitled to feel they deserved respect and a place at the top table. What I did not expect was the secrecy and colluding (with others) to push forward an agenda which was alien to others' views regardless of concerns raised. The relationship between some Independents and the Lib Dems was far too cosy. For those of you who were with the Indy group before the election in 2021, you may recall that I predicted the number of Independents and Lib Dems who would be elected in May 2021 would decrease dramatically. Many scoffed at this, many of which lost their seats in 2021. I was proven correct.

Since the election in 2021, what has concerned me is the lack of willingness from some members of the Indy Group to work with the current administration. Some members try at every opportunity to undermine what the administration are trying to achieve. Those members being former cabinet/portfolio holders. "Tory Bashing" seems to be the main hobby of these members. For eight years the Indy Group were in coalition with the Lib/Dems and again it seems to me that some are unwilling to let go of mummy's apron strings and see the need to refer to the Lib Dem leadership on almost every issue.

The job of a Councillor is to work for the people of the area to which they have been elected. To represent those people and address their many concerns. To scrutinise Council policy and working practises, set budgets, ensure vital service are provided and funded and above all to always act within the code of conduct and show others respect when conducting Council business.

The behaviour of some of the Indy members over recent meetings has been, in my opinion, disrespectful to the Chairman to the point of rudeness. As an example, at our last Full Council meeting on Tuesday the 17th of January 2023, Cllr Andrew Mitchell refused to sit down when asked to do so by the Chairman and spoke over her, which was totally disrespectful. Trying to raise spurious "Points of Order" to try and derail a debate, or cause confusion is also a tactic which has been used to the embarrassment of many members who consider this practice unacceptable. Members should not go against administration policy just for the sake of it. Yes, being in opposition and to bring the administration to account is a vital part of our democracy however, I feel that the Indy Group and the Lib Dems are not conducting themselves in a manner to which the public would expect. Cllr Colin Martin is an example of how NOT to conduct oneself at a meeting. Those who wish to make a name for themselves and who aspire to obtain higher office both locally and nationally seem to use the chamber to bandstand and shout (metaphorically) "Look at me, aren't I great". Whereas the public look at them and think quite the opposite.

Sadly, I have reached the conclusion that I no longer wish to be a part of this current Independent Group. I am therefore crossing the floor of the chamber to sit with the Conservatives and an "Independent, Conservative Aligned" member of Cornwall Council.

I have a lot of respect for some members of the current Indy Group and less for others. If you ever wish to regain an active role in the running of Cornwall Council, as part of any future coalition, I believe that you need to take a long hard look at how you conduct yourselves in public and try and remember who you there at County Hall to serve, that being of course the people who live in our wonderful Cornwall and not your own political machinations.

God save the King.

Cllr Paul Wills CC

Cornwall Councillor: St Columb Major, St Mawgan and St Wenn Electoral Division

