

Mr Mark Durkan MP
SDLP
Second Floor
23 Bishop Street
Derry
BT48 6DJ

19th October 2010

Dear Mr. Durkan,

Further to the recent visit to the home of Pauline Mellon by Cllr Shaun Gallagher we received a letter from Cllr Gallagher in response to our original question. In light of Cllr Gallagher's behaviour directed towards a mother of three children we felt it prudent not to write to Cllr Gallagher directly.

In response to Councillor Gallagher's letter of 16th October to the question posed by the GCRG:

We would like to raise the following points:

1. Cllr Gallagher states that apparently after the disbandment of the 'Shantallow Partnership Board' all names were transferred to the ONNP.
2. Cllr Gallagher states he has not attended an ONNP meeting for at least 12 years.
3. Cllr Gallagher states that Mr. John Thompson was chair of the organisation – and may be able to give more accurate dates.

Residents made contact with Mr. John Thompson and elicited the following information:

1. Mr. Thompson is unaware of the existence of, or has he ever been a member/chair of any organisation called the ' Shantallow Partnership Board'. Mr. Thompson also clarified that he has never been a member of the ONNP in any capacity, and has not been a member of any organisation whose membership was transferred to the ONNP.
2. Mr Thompson was chair of the Greater Shantallow Area Partnership, this organisation was not disbanded, and is currently based at the Northside Complex, mere minutes from Cllr Gallagher's home.
3. Cllr Gallagher's claim that he has not attended a meeting of the ONNP for at least 12 years is interesting in that: the ONNP was established in 2005 -(see attached screen shot from ONNP website). So how could Cllr Gallagher claim to have attended meetings of a group that was not in existence 12 years ago?

Cllr. Gallagher's assertion that he did not know he was a member of an urban renewal body, based minutes from his home is quite disconcerting. That a sitting Councillor is not aware of which groups he belongs to is startling, especially ones that have such a direct bearing on not on the community where he lives, but the community he represents. This matter is also compounded by the facts that residents have an email to all members of the ONNP inviting them to the June 2010 meeting. Cllr Gallagher's name is clearly listed on this

document, and his party colleague Mary Bradley MLA is also a member of the ONNP board.

Cllr Gallagher states that we implied that he lied or misled the committee and ourselves, and asks us to withdraw our comments. We made no statement that Cllr Gallagher lied or misled the committee, we presented the information we had to hand and asked Cllr Gallagher to clarify his position in respect of membership of the ONNP, this is evident from the letter we sent to Cllr Gallagher.

Cllr Gallagher also relates his visit to the home of GCRG member Pauline Mellon, Cllr Gallagher states in his letter that 'it became very clear that either yourself (Mrs. Mellon) or a member of the group will be standing in next years council elections.'

If a member of the community should choose to stand in any democratic election it is a matter for that individual and bears no relevance on the question posed by the residents group. However it must be noted that Cllr Gallagher was an attendee at a meeting last year at which Mark Durkan MP & Colum Eastwood were also in attendance, at this meeting residents stated categorically that if they felt they were not receiving adequate support from their local representatives that they reserved the right to stand a community candidate.

Cllr Gallagher also makes an allegation that Mrs. Mellon referred to the SDLP in Shantallow being all liars. This allegation is unwarranted, unfounded and completely without merit. Both Mrs. Mellon and the GCRG have publicly thanked members of the SDLP for their support and given recognition when it was due.. This is evident from not only the residents website, but can be confirmed by party members Pat Ramsey MLA, Cllr Sean Carr and Mark Durkan MP for Foyle, Mr Pol Callaghan, aide to Mr Durkan & prospective MLA can also be used for verification in this matter.

It must also be noted that not only was the diatribe from Cllr Gallagher directed at Mrs. Mellon overheard by a neighbour, Cllr Gallagher was observed leaving Mrs. Mellon's front door still directing comments at her as he walked up the street.

In his final assertion Cllr Gallagher accuses the residents of having a hidden agenda revolving around this issue. We have been unequivocal in our call for support from all quarters. That Cllr Gallagher would attempt to besmirch, tarnish and demean the good work carried out by not only members of our community, but members of his party shows a complete lack of understanding of the issues and concerns that residents had.

He also goes on to say that he is withdrawing his support for 'yourself'. We would respectively seek clarification on this, is Mr. Gallagher withdrawing support for Mrs. Mellon, and could he clarify in what capacity has he provided support for Mrs. Mellon. Or is it that Cllr Gallagher is withdrawing 'support' for the residents group? This is interesting in itself in that if a city councillor is asked to clarify a comment he made by a group of constituents then does this preclude any support? This is a matter for Cllr Gallagher's discretion; we would however like to acknowledge the fact that residents had to appeal to councillors from outside our area for support, as none was forthcoming from our local elected representatives.

Councillor Gallagher's letter raises more questions; he makes statements that have no basis in fact. He makes allegations about the nature of the campaign residents have invested their time their energy and their money in. We would like Cllr Gallagher to clarify his position and to clear the ongoing confusion about his role within the ONNP and the time frames involved.

We would also call on Cllr Gallagher to withdraw his outlandish allegations, we refute and reject those in the strongest possible terms.

Because of Cllr Gallagher's recent intimidating behaviour directed at Mrs. Pauline Mellon at her home we are presenting this response through Mark Durkan's office in the hope that Cllr Gallagher or his party may be able to shed some light on the matters contained herein.

We look forward to your response.

Regards

Galliagh Concerned Residents Group