

My name is David Watts. I live in Paignton and I'm the elected Chairman of the Paignton Neighbourhood Forum.

Thank you for allowing me to speak on the Forum's behalf.

Paragraph 2.19 of the report refers to the Committee meeting (PDDG) that took place on 6 November 2017 in the Town Hall. What the report does not say is how unusual the meeting was. We are extremely grateful to all those Councillors from across the political spectrum who were able to attend the meeting, some we know at very short notice. Councillors heard from all 3 Forum Chairs our deep concern over the content and 'negativity' of the officer report presented for information at that meeting.

Councillors heard first hand the reasons for our concern and made it very clear how they valued the Forums, even when views we express are not always in agreement with the Council. Quite rightly, this was seen to be at the heart of democracy. As the report at paragraph 2.19 says, the meeting supported renewal of the Forums in all 3 areas.

Because of the specific concerns raised, each Forum was asked to provide a statement saying why the renewals should be approved. All 3 Forum Chairs have presented this as a Joint Statement which now forms Appendix 2 to the report. This is in addition to the applications submitted. In answer to our concerns about the report presented, we were given the opportunity to make comment on the final report being considered at the meeting this evening.

We received the draft on 22 November and returned it with our comments on time. We were asked to comment on the 'tone and accuracy' of the report. We responded with amendments to two thirds of the covering report and further amendments to the background information in Appendix 1. The offer we received is referred to in paragraph 2.4 of the report now before you.

What it does not tell you is what the changes were and how they have been treated. Some involve important information regarding membership details referred to in paragraph 2.17 or correction of statements made.

Comparison of the two versions shows that some of our changes have resulted in amendments to Appendix 1, but not to the covering report. We recognise that brevity and style may be the reason. However some of the points involve ensuring completeness and accuracy of information being given. This is important because the decision being made is open to legal challenge as conformed in Appendix 1 to the report.

Despite meeting the request for membership information, the detail we provided was completely excluded. This is important because the Paignton Forum in particular, is accused of being unrepresentative. This is totally wrong. More than 400 local residents are registered members of the Forum covering every part of Paignton. It has the largest membership of any Forum in the Country and clearly shows how important the community see planning in our area to be.

The second problem is the view that continues to be perpetuated, incorrectly, that the Paignton Forum is against development. Again this is totally wrong. We have supported a number of key developments. Anyone who takes the time to read the Neighbourhood Plan will see it shows in very great detail how it supports the effort being made to encourage net job growth and how the housing trajectory of the Local Plan is being met in full. Yet the report you have still attempts to imply that this is not so. It is simply not correct.

Fortunately paragraph 2.21 of the report correctly states that any remaining concern about this is for the Independent Assessor to look at. It is not a matter for this report.

Literally thousands of working hours have been given on a voluntary and unpaid basis by Paignton residents to produce the Neighbourhood Plan. It has given confidence in the planning of the town and renewal of the Forum

status will help this to grow. We have reached the next stage in helping to secure sustainable development in our community; we have not reached the end of the process, as implied in the report.

We therefore ask you to approve the renewals as proposed in the recommendations of the report.

Thank you for listening