



Back to Work after extended Summer Break!

Friday 23rd August 2019

I have to admit that during the last three months, there has been a lot of soul searching in our house. When I first stood to represent the good people of Avondale in 2007, Fiona & I never thought that my work as a local councillor would ever come close to costing us our lives. However, the attack on our family and our home during the early hours of Monday 20th May 2019 has forced us to rethink a lot about what is important and how to continue.

Thank you!

Before I talk about my future as one of three local Avondale Councillors, I'd like to first of all thank a few people/organisations:

- 1) First of all, to the young lad who stopped on Hamilton Road and hammered on our door to wake us up just after 1-AM, this brave young man possibly saved our lives! Another ten minutes and our bedroom was full of toxic smoke so this young man, who we have met and thanked face-to-face: without a doubt helped us raise the alarm much quicker than we might have, if we'd waited to waken with the car exploding or smoke filling our bedroom.
- 2) Next, I'd like to thank the fire service based in Strathaven. Having this lifesaving and vital service in the town meant they were onsite and putting the fire out within ten minutes of the 999-call going out. These guys did a fantastic job and their speed and professionalism without a doubt: saved our home.
- 3) Next, I have to thank the police for their efforts in detecting who was responsible for this attempt on our lives. I hope everyone understands that I cannot go into any detail but Fiona, Craig and I really do appreciate the lengths our police have gone regarding this incident.
- 4) Finally, I'd like to thank all the councillors and this community for their support and kind words. Fiona, Craig & I have received incredible emails, letters, IM's and telephone calls of support from so many SLC councillors, not just in my own party but from the SNP, Labour, LibDem's and independents. I've had calls from MSP's, MP's and senior members of the Westminster Government; all horrified to hear an elected member and their family were attacked, just for doing their job. All this a-side: I'd like to thank everyone in this community for their support and understanding. I immediately went off on extended leave, while Fiona and I concentrated on having our home repaired and we both discussed (many times) whether I should continue as a councillor (or not).

The Council!

Just like the councillors from all political persuasions, I've received so many kind wishes and support from council officers at all levels. However, the way I was treated by the Chief Executive's office, left me bemused and disappointed! Instead of support, I had a call from a senior council representative: reminding me not speak out against the council and if I did: there could be negative consequences for me. The complete lack of any human emotion and the twisting of events, which felt like they trying to direct some of the blame towards myself: left me wondering if South Lanarkshire is somewhere I want to live, never mind a council I want to be part of. It is true: time can heal and the fact SLC is now searching for a new Chief Executive leaves me hopeful that whoever takes on this role during the coming months, I hope they focus number-one on the people of South Lanarkshire and the council employee's tasked with delivering our local government services.

Back to Work!

Resigning my seat and giving up has been an option Fiona & I have discussed many times over the last three months. However, those of you who know me, will realise: I don't give up so easily!

When I first stood for council in 2007, I did it to give something back to the community that has enabled Fiona & I to bring our two boys up in a fantastic location, surrounded by incredible people and a gorgeous countryside. I've never hidden my Conservative values, but I feel that I have discharged my duties as a councillor, putting this community ahead of party politics and I hope to continue this going forward. The fact that there are some in this community who care little for democracy, the rule of law and of course life itself: just makes me more convinced that I must be doing something right, so as long as the majority in the community want me to serve them, I will try my very best.

Across Avondale we have fantastic schools, improving roads and social services being brought into the 21st century. In the next few years, Strathaven will also get new council housing so working in partnership with CLLR Cooper and Dorman, I feel we are achieving good things in (and for) this community; and with so many council officers who genuinely care about the council services they're charged with delivering; I'm returning to my duties as one of Avondale's three locally elected members. While I've had to make changes to my security and the security of my family, I hope this community will continue to work with us, as we do our best to improve this place: we all call: "home."

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