

## Mayor Denies Meeting with Tesco

Written by John Eager

Saturday, 20 August 2011 10:03 - Last Updated Thursday, 03 November 2011 13:56

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<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OSh4XaA-Kb4>

An obviously hostile Mayor of Ledbury, Allen Conway, angrily denies that he had a meeting with Tesco grocers. He asks us to make up our own minds. So, let's look at the facts surrounding this well-documented meeting between selected town councilors and Tesco grocers back in May.

Mayor Allen Conway had already told the Ledbury Portal [31st May 2011]: "The meeting was informal and not minuted, either by a Councillor, or by the Tesco representative."

The clerk to the council, Karen Mitchell, told the Ledbury Portal [2nd August, 2011]: "As for Tesco; this was merely a meeting, called by an outside organisation, to which the Town Mayor was invited to attend."

These are admissions that a meeting between Tesco and Ledbury councilors, the mayor included, did take place.

One of the councilors present at the meeting told the Ledbury Portal that they could not talk about what happened at the meeting because they had been 'sworn to secrecy'.

I reported this 'secret' ('informal', 'unminuted', 'mere') meeting to Ledbury Council at their public meeting on 19th May, 2011. The councilors ignorant of the meeting were in general uproar describing it as 'out of order' and 'secret'.

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One councilor wanted to know why Herefordshire planning officers were not present as they should have been. Other councilors wanted to know why they were not invited. Mayor Allen Conway told them there had been "too little time to invite or inform" them. This was greeted with derision and cries of 'nonsense' from councilors.

### [Tesco's 'Secret Meeting' with Selected Councilors](#)

So why is this important?

Firstly, what is the significance of this meeting with Tesco and the fact that councilors were sworn to secrecy and refuse to discuss the events of that meeting? We will probably never know, but it leads to all sorts of allegations that include corruption, deception and conspiracy.

If they have nothing to hide, why are they hiding what happened?

This was no 'mere' meeting, this was a meeting with one of the largest corporations in the world that plans to change the retail profile of Ledbury.

Secondly, this video shows the mayor, Allen Conway, being economical with the truth. Why does he now deny a meeting that he has previously admitted took place?

This is not the first time that Mr Conway has been confused about council meetings since he was elected mayor.

I addressed the council meeting on 26th May, 2011, to ask questions about the Tesco meeting. The chairman, councilor Yeoman, refused to allow the mayor to answer my questions. I left the meeting, but later discovered that the mayor had taken the opportunity at this meeting to publicly criticise me and the Tourist Information Centre. The mayor's criticism was inaccurate.

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I talked to the mayor on the following Saturday and asked him why he had publicly attacked me in the council meeting. The mayor told me that that part of the meeting had been private. Amazingly, the mayor was backed by councilor Yeoman, who verified that the council had been in private session.

There were members of the public and other councilors present who have told me that it was not private. I asked for clarification from the clerk to the council who responded: "I can confirm that discussion on Agenda Item 9.2 took place in open session, with members of the public present."

Did the mayor launch his public attack on the myself and the TIC because I had dared to ask questions about his secret meeting with Tesco? The timing is coincidental.

Why did the mayor confuse an obviously public session of the council with a private session?

And why is the mayor now denying he ever met with Tesco?

Is the mayor's obfuscation cynically deliberate or sadly amnemonic? You can make up your own mind!