

What Cost Democracy?

Written by John Eager

Friday, 16 March 2012 14:21 - Last Updated Wednesday, 04 April 2012 14:03

Ledbury resident, constituent and tax payer Rich Hadley dropped a metaphorical bomb shell on Ledbury Town council last night when he suggested that the council consider holding elections.

Mr Hadley said that, as there had been rumours circulating about councilors resigning, it would be more democratic to hold elections than to go through a co-option process.

Mr Hadley also suggested, to the sound of scoffing from one councilor present, that the whole council resign en masse, and to hold an election which would enable free and open debate and create a real democratic mandate.

Mr Hadley criticised a council that rarely had elections, but produced councilors through co-option.

Mr Hadley told council "We need the best people, the most competent people [on the council] and... electors need to know what people stand for."

The mayor, Mr Conway, replied to Mr Hadley telling him he was 'happy with his council.'

The deputy mayor, Mr Bradford, described Mr Hadley's words as a 'character assassination' on the council and told him within the council there was 'no conflict.. we debate, we vote, we do not get personal.'

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Ward councilor, Mr Watts, asked Mr Hadley if he had considered the cost of an election.

Mr Hadley replied that it was 'a price worth paying for accountability' and that money was set aside for elections. He told council that a 'free and open election' would give 'a statement of democratic aspiration'.

Councilor Roberts, rumoured to be a hopeful future mayor, told Mr Hadley 'people cannot be bothered to turn up' to meetings.