

■ ROTTEN BOROUGH ■

DUBAI TO ALL THAT

SO. FAREWELL then Stephen Mansbridge, who has quit as leader of Tory Guildford borough council. In May we reported that many in Guildford felt “the best thing he could do would be to resign pronto” following his shameless public support for his “close friend” Monika Juneja, the borough’s former lead member for planning, who had pleaded guilty at the Old Bailey to charges of forgery, deception and “wilfully pretending to be a barrister” (*Eye* 1393).

Mansbridge, who is also stepping down as a councillor, said he had quit on a matter of principle over various minor council “changes in governance” which he “could not accept”. Much more a resigning matter, one might think, would be the fact that Mansbridge was recently caught misleading councillors and the public about his involvement in a petition raised by his pal Juneja in favour of Guildford adopting an elected mayor system. Back in May, days before her appearance at the Old Bailey, Juneja was offering Surrey university students £1 for every petition signature collected, with bonuses of £25 for 100 names (*Eye* 1395).

When asked at a council meeting in July if he had any involvement with the petition, Mansbridge said “irrelevant and no” before ranting about how he was the victim of an “orchestrated campaign” of “discreditation” [*sic*]. What he didn’t say, and has now been revealed by excellent local website *Guildford Dragon News*, was that back in March Mansbridge had personally and successfully lobbied Surrey university students union to support proposals for an elected mayor – just weeks before his crooked pal Juneja handed out wads of cash (estimated at more than £5,000) to students in exchange for signatures. Where might Monika have obtained that kind of dosh? A substantial amount, it emerges, came from Guildford nightclub owner Michel Harper, who told the *Dragon*: “I did put funds in, yes.” Earlier this year, Harper announced that he hoped to build a £19m “Dubai-style complex” in the town centre and had been in communication with Mansbridge about it.



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