

# Why We Investigated the Anonymous Posts by Councillor Ruth Milsom

A member of our Facebook group raised concerns about an anonymous post that appeared unusually informed, potentially factually inaccurate and politically positioned. Group admins investigated and confirmed that the author was Councillor Ruth Milsom (Labour, Crookes & Crosspool) and Labour Council Whip and Co-Chair of the South Yorkshire Police and Crime Panel, who had been posting anonymously in the group over several months.

This was not a decision taken lightly. Our action was based on three key principles: **council ethics**, **Labour Party social media policy**, and **the public's right to open, honest debate**.

## 1. Council Ethics: A Duty to Be Open and Accountable

Elected councillors must follow the **Nolan Principles of Public Life**, which include honesty, openness, and accountability. Councillor Milsom's anonymous posts gave the impression they were from an ordinary resident, not an elected decision-maker. We feel this may have:

- Misled residents during public discussions on the Local Plan and greenbelt.
- Avoided the scrutiny councillors are expected to face.
- Breached the principle that councillors must not bring their office into disrepute.

## 2. Labour Party Policy: Honesty Online

The Labour Party's social media guidance is clear: representatives must be open about their identity online and take responsibility for what they post. Anonymous accounts are explicitly discouraged.

By choosing to post anonymously in a political discussion, Cllr Milsom may have acted against these principles and fallen short of her duty to uphold the party's reputation for transparency and honest engagement.

## 3. Public Trust and Democratic Integrity

Our community has a right to know when a public official is influencing debate, especially on critical issues like housing, planning, and the environment. Cllr Milsom's actions may have:

- Undermined fair public engagement.
- Given a false impression of grassroots support or neutrality.

- Risked distorting the democratic process.

Group admins acted to protect the community from this kind of potential hidden influence.

### **Why the Admins Were Right to Act**

We followed a fair and appropriate process:

- The posts were already public.
- We had verifiable evidence of authorship.
- We did not speculate, we presented facts.

This is entirely in line with council standards processes and similar examples from other local authorities, where anonymous political posting by councillors has led to formal investigation.

### **Conclusion**

Elected representatives have a responsibility to be visible and honest when engaging with the public. By posting anonymously on a politically sensitive issue, we believe Cllr Ruth Milsom may have breached that trust.

Our decision to investigate and raise this publicly was justified, measured and made in the public interest. Communities deserve honesty, not hidden influence, especially from those elected to serve them.

Members of the Chapeltown, Ecclesfield and Grenoside Community Group