Response to Public Question not submitted in advance of the Meeting

Goff Welchman

At previous meetings I have asked questions about 3 Rivers Developments Ltd and have been very dissatisfied with the replies given which I believe to have been at best evasive and at worst highly economical with the truth.
At the recent Audit Committee meeting the following statement was made by the Council's Auditors concerning 3 Rivers, I quote "Risk Management is the responsibility of the Board of Directors, whether this is the management of Health and Safety, Programme Delivery or Financial Performance".

My question is; given the continued and escalating losses incurred throughout 3 Rivers disastrous history and not just since the pandemic, the war in Europe and the Cost of Living crisis as has been implied by some, I fail to see why this Committee refuses to apportion blame for the apparent gross mismanagement and incompetence which has led to these extensive losses of public funds? In fact, if these business amateurs had presented 3 Rivers to Lord Alan Sugar and asked merely for a quarter of a million pounds not the £23 million actually borrowed, his answer would have been "you're fired". Therefore, why are those responsible getting clean away with it and in some cases enjoying generous pay rises?

Answer: With regard to your opening statement we note you have asked numerous questions on the subject of 3Rivers and that you appear to remain dissatisfied with our responses. We can confirm that all of our responses have been consistent and accurate and given within the confines of the commercial sensitivity that would clearly be applied when reporting on a trading entity.
Returning to your questions I can confirm that the Committee, as you know, commissioned a working group to look into the activities and history of 3Rivers, which reported back to this Committee and we agreed all of its recommendations. This effectively concludes our interests and our role of scrutiny. Your continued request to apportion blame and reference to mismanagement, is I believe unfortunate. As the decision makers who set up the company and were ultimately responsible for the approval of business plans, project business cases and the oversight of company performance are now no longer in positions of office, this rather negates your proposal.

Response provided by the Deputy Chief Executive (Section 151) Officer

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